UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in

Lingue Moderne per la Comunicazione e la Cooperazione Internazionale

Classe LM-38

Tesi di Laurea Magistrale

Refugees in the system of Higher Education (HE): the role of the mentor for inclusion and the development of new intersectional programs for refugees/asylum-seekers

Relatrice
Prof.ssa Fiona Clare Dalziel

Laureanda
Giulia Casati
n. matr.2021026/LMLCC

Anno Accademico 2022-2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

This dissertation discusses the crucial role of 'mentors' in the inclusion of refugees in secondary and higher education (HE). The arrival of an increasing number of refugees, mostly in Europe, has dramatically changed societies and laid the foundations for new challenges in terms of inclusion in education. While many studies focus on refugee integration in compulsory education, only recently have scholars shed light on the challenges migrants face in accessing secondary and higher education. In the last few years numerous universities and institutions have taken action to create tailor-made projects to ensure 'Diversity, Equity and Inclusion' in HE. Mentors, collaborating in regional projects of inclusion, could be seen as the ideal figures to collaborate in academic refugee inclusion projects, since they share the same backgrounds as the person they are supporting, they are already members of the host country and they can work on the creation of emotional ties and a relation of mutual trust with refugees. The aim of this work is to answer a few research questions:

1) *Which kind of mentors, why and how can they be included in academic inclusion programmes?*
2) *How can we adopt an intersectional approach to mentors programmes?*
3) *What are the views of stakeholders as regards the role of mentors for refugee inclusion in higher education?*

Introduction

By mid-2020 the number of displaced people was 79.5 million, a number that had dramatically increased both from 2010 (41 million) and 2018 (70.8 million), and that represents all the people that, forced by persecution, war, violence and violated human rights, fled their country to pursue better chances for their future. However, once they reach the new country their search for a different life usually begins like an uphill path full of obstacles. Moreover, a refugee crisis is also a crisis in education (Alvey and Said, 2017): as reported by the UNHCR, half of the world's refugees are children and more than a half of children who are of school age are not receiving an education[1].As refugee children grow older, the barriers preventing them from accessing education become harder to overcome and the percentage of refugee students progressively decreases[2]. This becomes dramatic data, if we consider that education, particularly higher education, and the learning of the language of the host country is seen to be a synonym for resilience and the promise of a better future for a refugee student. Higher Education has benefits for everyone alike and at all levels, socially, economically and psychologically and the literature tends to identify individual and societal benefits (Ferede, 2018: 6). Indeed at an individual level, having a degree opens the doors to higher skilled and better paid labour positions, access to well-connected social networks, and entry into the middle class, while at societal level, it increase political participation (Ma et al., 2016). Specifically concerning refugees, higher education participation also promotes a positive identity of themselves, protects them from the circles of violence and increases social relationships and wellbeing, giving refugee people a "voice". Despite the fact that this specific need for an education is clear to many refugee access to higher education still remains a remote possibility for the majority of them who need to struggle with challenges of the most diverse natures, before having the chance to enrol in a university course.

---

[1]UNHCR (2017). It's time to turn the tide: https://www.unhcr.org/turnthetide/

[2] UN (2023). Refugee education in crisis: https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/refugee-education-crisis-more-half-worlds-school-age-refugee-children-do-not-get

UNHCR has put effort into tracking the percentage of refugees who are actively attending a university course or other trainings of tertiary education who, however, only represents the 3% of the global number of displaced people.

In the attempt to pursue the mission of refugees inclusion in higher education and collaborate with the UNHCR goal of increasing the number of refugee students from 3% to 15% by 2030, many of the Italian and European universities and organizations I analysed financed and committed themselves to several projects of inclusion. One of the main aims was to fight against early school dropout and to protect many young refugee people form an even more complicated life. All those projects were remarkable for different reasons and the dedication they put into those initiatives was exemplary: among those initiatives we can name the UNICORE project and ARQUS project. In particular, the ARQUS project embraces different missions: the Action Line 2 (AL) for the Inclusion and Diversity, dealing with the problem of refugees inclusion in higher education. Different universities from different European countries are engaged in the ARQUS project in order to compare their different academic systems and to think about new solutions together, creating a cohesive structure at a European level.

As part of my study, during a phone call with the coordinator of the projects with migrants of the Venetian region D.V., I had the chance to talk about refugees arriving in the Italian context and she introduced me to another figure for inclusion, the mentor. I thought about the possibility to investigate the importance of including this role in the academic context too. Indeed, the type of mentoring that is included in those projects, is usually a person that had experienced migration in first person, and that has then adapted to the new context, becoming familiarised with institutions and the municipality, or anyway who has the most similar background to those of the person that he/she is mentoring. In the context of the regional projects with migrants, mentoring is usually used in support to Italian L2 courses or in programs where refugee women are supported during pregnancy. Mentors usually aim at creating a relationship based on respect and comfort with the mentee and the choice between mentor and mentee should be made on the basis of a particular connection that is created between the two parts. Needless to say that it is a type of mentoring that goes far from the

existing forms of academic mentoring or working mentoring that usually resemble types of tutoring that are usually envisaged for students.

For this reason I started to wonder if the type of mentoring that was reported to me by D.V., could be helpful for those refugee students that usually become lost in the higher education paths because they are not properly guided; I wondered if it could be useful to integrate, in the existing projects of inclusion, some mentors that could truly understand refugee students approaching the new academic system in the hosting country and to be very attentive to their needs.

I thought that the best way to investigate this topic was by conducting a qualitative analysis, interviewing experts in the field on the subject of the case study, that is on the possibility to include mentors in the projects of refugee inclusion in Higher Education (HE). Indeed, giving space to their voices and collecting their opinions was important for me in order to understand what could be truly useful for inclusion, directly from those who has made of this purpose one of his/her missions.

As I mentioned above I had the chance to talk with teachers, the head of the International desk of the University of Leipzig and three coordinators of projects of the Venetian region with migrants. However, thanks to one of the stakeholders, I was lucky enough to have the possibility to talk with a refugee student, which meant that I could include in this research both the parts that are discussed in this study (the institutions and the refugees) and that I could listen to one of the most truthful testimonies about which direction we should follow in order to help refugee students to be included in higher education.

This thesis is divided into three chapters, where Chapter 1 and 2 will be of a theoretical nature and Chapter 3 contains the findings and analysis of the interviews. In Chapter 1 I will analyse the profile of the mentor, exploring the different types of mentoring and the type of training each mentor should receive. In this section I will open up a discussion on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), as one of the main abilities that should be developed by mentors, and other skills they might need to master. In section 1.3. I will discuss risks and support for mentors, which should be planned for them at all levels (e.g. psychological support, organizational support etc.) and a last section will

focus on the gendered aspect of resettlement and will give space to women: in section 1.4. I will talk about the necessity of creating mentoring programs specifically for women.

Chapter 2 will focus on refugees in higher education and their struggle to continue their studies: first of all, in this chapter, it will be important to clarify the main terms used for this dissertation like refugee, higher education, and global gross enrolment ratio, used to talk about percentages of students. Then, I will talk about the presence of refugees in the Italian, European and US systems, about the challenges they need to overcome in order to participate in higher education and I will explain why education is specifically important for refugee students as a synonym of resilience. I will then explore some diversity and equity projects of inclusion and I will close the chapter by discussing the need for more a more intersectional perspective when we talk about inclusion.

Chapter 3 will contain the qualitative analysis and the findings collected during the interviews. It will include a section containing all the details of the interview settings, such as the questions, the profile of interviewees involved and the explanation of the type of qualitative analysis which was adopted, thematic analysis. In conclusion I will report all the findings which will be divided into three different sections: answers to the questions of Table 1, additional information collected during the interviews and the themes.

Finally, in Appendix I will report the transcriptions of the interviewees involved.

1. The profession of 'mentor', new horizons for inclusion for refugees

In the present study on refugee inclusion in our changing societies and particularly in Higher Education (HE), new horizons for inclusion will be explored and discussed.

In this chapter I will introduce the figure of mentor and talk about his/her profile. First of all, I decided to give a definition and to analyse the different existing types of mentoring. This will help in understanding what type of mentor I would like to explore in the present research. Second, I will talk about training for community mentors, describing the diverse competences they need to develop. I will focus specifically on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), empathy and the theory of communication, dedicating a section to each one. In the section on ICC, I will also mention a few core concepts, such as that of culture and identity, as they might help in understanding better what ICC is. In section 1.3, I will briefly describe which risks might occur during mentoring and argue that mentors need a network of professionals supporting them when they encounter a problem. Finally, I will conclude Chapter One with a section about the need of creating mentoring programs specifically for women. Indeed, migration has gendered aspects and women find themselves experiencing a totally different type of resettlement during which violence is a constant presence. This is the reason why during this research I decided to dedicate this and other parts to women, and to reflect on the idea that in this case too we need to pay specific attention to gender issues.

 The process of globalization and the arrival of an increasing number of migrants in Europe and in other countries of the world has increased cultural diversity (Claeys-Kulik et al., 2019) and created a number of subsequent obstacles for refugees and asylum-seekers. Indeed, young refugees for example face a range of challenges such as acculturative stress (Oberoi, 2016). First, they encounter the problem of institutions and the host society that at times is not willing to work towards their inclusion. Sometimes different laws or the absence of others can challenge the inclusion of migrants. Indeed "the integration of migrants into destination societies and economies is an issue of considerable and increasing public policy significance" (Graeme, 2005) and it can be

hindered by many factors. First, there is the perception by the host population of unwillingness of migrants to embrace aspects of the mainstream society, what translates into immigrants living together in spatially concentrated ethnic communities. Another factor of migrant exclusion regards "Exclusionist elements in social, education and other policies, which unfairly exclude immigrants from access to health, education and social security systems" and "elements within labour markets, which discriminate against immigrants by non-recognition of qualifications, exclusion from some jobs on the basis of background rather than qualifications or proven ability and experience" (Graeme, 2005: 14). In addition, restrictive citizenship and residency permit guidelines often prevent migrants and children from gaining access to their rights and necessary services. Furthermore one of the main factors that lies at the basis of migrant isolation is racism and racial harassment, which "cannot only be enormously distressing for immigrants but it can also be a substantial barrier to them adjusting to the host society" (Graeme, 2005: 15). Finally, migrant groups' cultural, linguistic and religious rights are not recognised in some host societies, when they should be seen as basic rights and thus respected.

In the experience of one who migrates then, acculturative stress derives from the process of adaptation to the host culture (Bart-Plange, 2015) and it is often conceptualized in "a bi-dimensional framework, with two independent issues: the degree to which people wish to seek involvement with the host culture, and the degree to which people desire to maintain their heritage culture" (Berry et al., 2010). This process involves various aspects of the migrant's life such as language, identity and values: a refugee can decide to modify them in order to include those of the host country, while retaining the values of his/her culture of origin (Bart-Plange, 2015). Navigating between the home and host cultures can be difficult and stressful: as a matter of fact, acculturative stress could be its direct result. Acculturative stress is defined as: "a stress experienced in response to conflicting life events that are rooted in intercultural contact" (Mena et al., 1987) and the literature has highlighted the negative impact acculturative stress has on mental health on refugees, especially adolescents.

Acculturative stress can translate into depressive symptoms, academic underachievement and more. It can inevitably have a great impact on the path of

inclusion of refugee students in higher education and on their possibility of continuing their studies. However, acculturative stress can be just one of the barriers that prevent refugees the access to secondary and tertiary education. Some of them will be discussed in the next chapter. Nevertheless, one aspect needs to be anticipated: with respect to other disadvantaged groups, the refugee condition represents a further challenge. As reported in the document "The super-disadvantaged in higher education: barriers to access for refugee background students in England" (Lambrechts, 2020):

> It is argued that while some of the barriers to access are shared with other disadvantaged groups, the difficulties may be especially pronounced because of the unique conditions of refugees, with further barriers being specific to refugee background students' (RBS) circumstances.

In the work of inclusion translators, interpreters and cultural mediators play a crucial role, representing the cornerstones of a process that could be longer than expected. New areas of expertise of these professions have developed on account of the necessity to render as clear as possible the communications in the main institutions and structures that receive migrants. These main bodies (hospitals, schools, courts etc.) are united under the name of 'Public Services'. In this context, a new specific area of the Translation Studies took the name of *Public ServicesTranslation and Interpreting* (PSIT) and studies the communication that occurs in public services settings between service providers and clients (Valero Garcés, 2012). When clients deal with public services, they often experience unfamiliarity, which not only concerns the language, but also extends to systems of values, practices and representations present within the host society (Valero Garcés and Mancho, 2002: 15-23).

As Valero Garcés (2012: 14) reports, TIPS plays a crucial role as linguistic support in those communicative situations where two or more cultural groups might interact and it helps in building a favourable environment for this coexistence to be maintained. (Valero Garcés, 2012: 14).

 Scholars and researchers have already underlined the importance of a system of translators and interpreters jointly working with the staff of Public Services (PS); and even if these professions still lack state recognition and professionalization, much

progress has been made in this direction. Indeed while linguistic professionals are aware that the linguistic component is necessary to achieve migrant inclusion and to consolidate multilingual society, not everybody recognizes linguistic issues as part of the road to inclusion. As Valero Garcés (2019: 90), "policy makers at local, national, or supranational levels do not always seem aware of the risks and costs of not providing interpretation and translation services." Despite this, Public Services Interpreting and Translation (PSIT) (Valero Garcés, 2019: 88)has been slowly moving towards a professionalization and in the EU, and courses available for public service interpreters and translators are becoming increasingly available:

> [...] either as continuing education programmes (e.g. courses in PSIT at Universität Graz), as part of graduate and postgraduate translation and interpreting (TI) programmes (e.g. at London Metropolitan University, Heriot-Watt University or Universität Graz), wider-ranging programmes (e.g. the MA in Refugee Integration at Dublin City University), or PSIT-specific programmes (e.g. the MA in Intercultural Communication and Public Service Interpreting and Translation, MICIT, at the Universidad de Alcalá, Madrid or the BA in PSI [Tolkning i offentlig sektor] at Stockholms Universitet) (Valero Garcés, 2019: 90)

In this flourishing ground another defining figure is emerging: the mentor. It is with the analysis of its role that this dissertation will start taking shape. Although its nature is still experimental and investigational and there is not a broad literature on the subject, a multitude of interesting case studies and projects especially promoted in the USA in America, North Europe and Australia and official guidelines have revealed that mentors are an important resource for inclusion.

As will be explored in the next sections, tertiary education for refugees has a beneficial effect for their future. However it has been seen that, too often in the experience of refugee students, schools are places of social isolation and failure (Dumenden, 2011). In the article written by Dumenden (2011: 472) stresses that "the ways in which one-on-one tutoring and mentoring provided the necessary platform by which this refugee student was able to acquire the necessary capital that effected a positive change in his educational trajectory." There seem to be various benefits of peer-to- peer and other mentoring programmes to inclusion.

The following sections will focus on the characteristics and the types of mentors, and the training designed for them. Additionally, other sections will give some advice and instructions for mentors' protection. The last section will contain a follow-up regarding women refugees and why mentoring programs are of the utmost importance for them.

1.1 Profile of the mentor: mentors and inclusion

Through a first reading of a great part of literature on mentoring a first assumption comes to the mind of the reader: mentoring is a very complex activity and therefore it is challenging to describe it in all its aspects and forms. Indeed, thanks to the interviews with stakeholders belonging to different fields (see Chapter Three), it was possible to observe that mentoring can be applied in different areas of expertise. Different researchers, fields and areas use the term 'mentoring' and associate it to different definitions. In order to understand which type of mentoring is tailored for one specific context, it is important to analyse and fully investigate the types of mentoring and their definitions. Mentoring can be proposed by anyone and at any time, and existed before being a tool for refugee inclusion because, in its definition, provided by the Oxford Dictionary, it is recognised as: "the practice of helping and advising a less experienced person over a period of time, especially as part of a formal programme in a company, university, etc."[3]Reconciling the various approaches requires particular attention to details and context, including human, technical and institutional constraints (Bagnoli and Estache, 2019). Likewise, mentoring for refugees presents a complex dimension by reason of the multiple approaches that are created for each refugee group's need. However Elby et al (2007: 7) have formulated a useful preliminary vision that can summarise the various features: mentoring reflects a unique relationship between individuals; it involves the acquisition of knowledge; it is defined by the types of support provided by the mentor to the protégé and is outcome-oriented; it is reciprocal, yet asymmetrical; and it involves a dynamic relationship that evolves over time.

From a deeper perspective, Bagnoli and Estache (2019: 6), provide readers with a further definition, underlying the aspects of mentoring and its mission of inclusion: "we define mentoring as an interpersonal relationship of support, exchange and learning, in

---

[3]Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, definition of mentoring
 Online version, 2022 Edition https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/mentoring

which one person (a mentor) invests his or her experience to help another r person (the mentee) acquire skills and achieve professional goals, through regular meetings over a certain period of time". Additionally Castellani, psychotherapist of the Gestalt Institute for Industrial and Organisational Psychology, speaks about the importance of these relationships and the fact that peer-to-peer mentoring usually brings excellent results. Indeed a crucial, even if not mandatory, aspect of mentoring is that when the mentor and mentee share the same background or resettlement they are more likely to establish a successful relationship. So for example, during a phone call, Castellani explains that one project held in Venice with children from Bangladesh appeared this to be true. The protagonist was A., a child coming from Bangladesh to the Venetian capital, who can be considered one of the first community mentors in the region: once he was resettled in the host country and after he was included in the school system, he started promoting scholarships to his friends from Bangladesh who had arrived later, practising the first forms of mentoring. The support of peers who resettled before is crucial for people who have just arrived.[4]

In fact, one of the approaches that are often mentioned in the work on mentoring is peer mentoring. As reported by Gower et al. (2022), peer mentoring occurs between two individuals who are peers and one of them is more experienced and encouraging the other individual integrating or developing skills. In addition:

> Peer mentors are individuals who share some common characteristics, attributes or circumstances such as age, ability, and interests; and who have more experience along with additional training in how to assist another in acquiring skills, knowledge and attitudes to be more successful (Gower et al, 2022: 3)

Peer to peer mentoring bases its foundations on the principles of social justice, access and equity; furthermore, it has been seen that it brings much beneficial improvement to the life of a refugee student:

> Sharing personal migratory narratives helps to build intimacy and connection within the group, promotes perceived social support among participants, and

---

[4]The information was retrieved by the writer, during a call with Laura Castellani, in July 2022.

facilitates communal learning in a safe and relaxed environment (Gower et al, 2022: 3)

Moreover, it could promote a sense of belonging, improve health and wellbeing, enhance quality of life and provide refugees with strategies and confidence to overcome challenges and barriers. Vickers, McCarthy and Zammit. (2017: 3) add that peer mentoring has often been adopted in university programmes because its benefits also extend to greater student satisfaction, commitment to university, increased civic engagement, civically-minded attitudes, and self-esteem.

However, despite peer mentoring being used to support communities of refugees, very few programs appear to have used an appropriate method: "The ability of peer mentoring programs to meet the specific needs of refugee and unskilled migrant women remain relatively unexplored" (Gower et al., 2022: 3). Research examining impacts on the mentor has been described as an understudied area (Weiler et al., 2013; p. 237). In an extensive part of literature it is confirmed that mentoring programs vary across university contexts and non-university contexts; in addition, as will be analysed in Chapter Three, many stakeholders suggest to reducing the use and application of the word 'program or project' when talking about 'mentoring'. Indeed in their view, it is preferable to consider mentoring as an integral part of university procedures and they put much effort into making progress in this direction. Due to this multiplicity of types and shades of mentoring, it is difficult to find in the literature a document that could summarise all the existing types of mentoring. Each author, relying on the personal experience, has presented a different classification. Below I will report a couple of classifications that I considered useful and interesting.

The work entitled "Mentoring Labor Market Integration of Migrants: Policy Insights from a Survey of Mentoring Theory and Practice"(Bagnoli and Estache, 2019), generally recognises four types of mentoring: each type represents a stage of refugees' lives or a particular setting they are living in. In particular, the literature recognizes four macro categories of mentoring (even if these categories are probably not the only ones and many features overlap): youth mentoring, academic mentoring, mentoring to work and workplace mentoring. First there is *Youth Mentoring (YM)*: the positive impact for a youth mentee depends on the quality of the personal connection they establish with the

mentor. The success of mentorship depends both on the level of mutuality, trust and empathy that their relationship reaches and on three processes that the mentor launches once the connection with the mentee is solid. Mentoring for Youth will: enhance the youth's social relationships and emotional well-being; improve the cognitive skills through instructions and conversation; and foster a positive identity development through role-modelling and advocacy (Rhodes, 2005: 6).

To report some practical examples, in 2011 the USA had over 5000 mentoring programs serving over three million young. It was seen that YM led to the decrease in the educational segregation of young refugees.

The second type, *Academic Mentoring (AM)*, is based on the apprentice model, where both academic and non-academic support are provided outside the classroom by seniors. Many case studies emphasise the effect of minimising the ethnic gap in achieving test scores and socio-emotional abilities produced by AM. Additionally, studies on AM gleaned three insights into Academic Mentoring and migrants inclusion: focusing on the target of mentoring and language was effective and produced long terms effects; the nature of the support is important as well and AM can be used to deliver both career-support (such as direct training) and emotional support (such as encouragement); it is beneficial to focus on alternative forms of mentoring (Bagnoli and Estache, 2019: 6).

Continuing with *Mentoring to work (MtW)* by definition, this is a type of relationship where the mentor supports the mentee in his or her labour market integration. Despite recent academic analysis, there has been little insight to describe this kind of practice. First, MtW is only one of many tools used in migrant integration because alone it produces few efforts and it is just a complement of Public Service work (Bagnoli and Estache, 2019: 7). Second, important success factors also determine the success of MtW because not all the mentoring relationships work well and it depends on five elements such as: the match of mentor and mentees according to sector of activity; provision of clear guidelines for both parts; a good follow-up of the relationship; an attentive supervision of mentors; knowledge of the target population. Third, MtW might be complementary to another element of inclusion, that is to say, language learning.

Finally, *Workplace mentoring (WM)*provides assistance to the mentee in the orientation in the organisation in which they work, in the socialisation in the profession and in terms of career advancement. Unlike Mentoring to Work, WM regards the part of labour right after the hiring: indeed this form of mentoring focuses on helping individuals keep a job and grow into it (Bagnoli and Estache, 2019: 7). In this case the two insights that emerged regard: the need of considering both objective and subjective career outcomes when measuring the performance of mentoring programs; that subjective and objective outcomes can be achieved through both career-oriented or psycho-social mentoring.

Clayton (2022), instead, reports the results obtained by the U.S. department of Education: it identifies four key types of support for the development of socio-emotional wellness for newcomer youth. The four types are:

Formal, adult-led. Formal adult-led support can be implemented in diverse ways. "Schools can collaborate with relevant community-based organizations to provide support for newcomer students" (Clayton, 2022: 20). It is planned in order to give information about college planning, service-learning projects and other relevant topics in regards to college applications. Formal mentoring programs are also seen as an option to promote student participation in clubs, service projects and sports. In addition, it provides parent and family workshops in home languages on relevant topics such college planning, tax preparation, immigration assistance, health clinics, and internet skills (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Benefits deriving from formal, adult-led mentoring are numerous. It promotes a sense of stability for refugee youth, minimized fear of acculturation, a sense of importance and belonging to the community. Furthermore, these students proved to be more able to meet their social-emotional needs and other benefits derived from the training to maintain consistent communication, what strengthen their ties with the community.

However the formal nature of these programs might not be as beneficial in terms of reducing isolation and the socio-emotional challenges that come with feeling set apart from one's peers (Clayton, 2022: 20).

Informal, adult-led. This gives the possibility to newcomers to speak one-on-one with an adult in a confidential and informal environment, which shows refugee students, that there are adults who care about their well-being before their academic results. This produces trust and allows students to open up about their needs more easily. The informal support of adults permits to connect refugee youth to support services and can also mitigate the negative effects of acculturation and isolation. (Clayton, 2022: 21) Some example of informal adult-led mentoring are advisory programs or school counsellors.

Formal, peer-based. Examples of formal, peer-based mentoring include pairing a high school student (mentor) with an elementary newcomer student (mentee). It can also include cross-age programs (Clayton, 2022: 21). The benefits deriving from this relationship are reciprocal, as both newcomers and their peer mentor gain benefits. In this way the newcomers could gain a sense of independence; both of them develop a better understanding of the other cultures, benefitting the development of emotional intelligence.

Informal, peer-based. Examples of informal peer-based mentoring include opportunities to converse in informal social settings or the possibility to interact with others from the same cultural background (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Informal, peer-based models of support provide opportunities for peers to have interethnic interactions that improve their English and also assume leadership positions. Both formal and informal peer-based mentoring proved to mitigate the effects of resettlement, acculturation, isolation and to develop of good psychosocial competencies (Clayton, 2022: 22).

These classifications are just two examples of the various existing categorizations of mentoring; however, they illustrate the focus of institutes when programming tutoring or mentoring projects. Some of these categorizations are focused on the relationship between a senior and a newcomer, and more on technical and informative aspects of academic life. Clayton (2022) also introduces the issue of cultural background, considered important in the work with refugees. Indeed, talking with some experts that work in non-academic contexts (see Chapter Three), it was possible to recognize another type of mentoring that we could name here 'community mentoring': in the projects of the *Regione Veneto*, they often use paired mentors to make feel refugees

supported and feel more confident. Mentors that decide to take part into these initiatives are usually volunteers and share the same background as the individuals they are helping. Indeed this kind of mentoring is intended as a 'vocation' or 'calling' mentors receive and institutions put great effort into pairing mentors and mentees who share as similar a background as possible, a determining factor for the success of these projects. One example is a project launched to support women during the period of maternity and birth: the coordinators of the project observed that they managed to obtain positive outcomes when they paired mentees with mentors that had the same life experience in their background.

Discovering a great number of types of mentoring was interesting but at times challenging; the already existing forms of academic mentoring are extremely useful. At the same time, it was enlightening to reason on the fact that pairing refugees with a mentor that has a great emotional understanding of what they are living through could be truly useful for newcomer students facing infinite obstacles to have access to HE. From this reasoning, there arose the following proposal: exploring the possibility to combine the existing tutoring or mentoring programs with some elements of community mentors, such as a similar background and a great empathy or sensibility of the newcomers' experience. However, the Clayton (2022) classification was found to be truly relevant and combining these four types of mentoring could have positive outcomes as well.

In the following section I will define both which types of knowledge a mentor should have and which kind of 'training' s/he needs to receive.

1.2 Training for mentors: Intercultural Communicative Competence

Despite the categorisation of types of mentor in the previous sections, in this context, for reasons of cohesion I will adopt the term 'community mentor' (or simply mentor) to start discussing what knowledge a mentor should have and which training he/she should receive in order to be prepared to give concrete help to the mentee. The inspiration for this section is taken from a few guidelines prepared as training for community mentors: the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union (IOM, UN migration) compiled an official document called "Paths to inclusion. Training for

community mentors: communication, intercultural and social skills" (IOM, 2021) which can guide any mentors through preparation. This document includes chapters on the importance of self-evaluation before, during and after mentoring and provides special sections on training modules, which are special protocols or procedures suggested to mentors: the modules regard both the phase before the first meeting with mentees, the follow-up and the continuous self-evaluation of mentors; it also contains some advice for mentors to protect themselves and establish their boundaries, which will be discussed in 1.3.

It is best to start from the beginning of the p1rocess of resettlement, that is to observe what happens at the arrival of the refugees in the incoming countries. In fact it is very common for a refugee to live a first period of excitement (IOM, 2021: 9): after a long and tortuous path they succeed in escaping from their condition of oppression. However, there might then come a feeling of frustration and stress when they discover that resettling will challenge their resistance and resilience: for example many barriers may prevent the recognition of their documents and qualifications, together with the experience of trauma deriving from the hardship that may damage their mental health - already tested by isolation, loneliness and sense of lack of roots deriving from migration. In this stressful condition, there is evidence of the benefits of pairing refugees with members of the resettlement community, who voluntarily dedicate their free time to engage in activities with refugees (IOM, 2021: 9). Attention to refugees is effective only if mentors commit to specific training: first of all they need to pay attention to the needs and characteristics of a specific group of refugees; they also need to be aware of refugee vulnerabilities and they should commit to a age-specific, inter-linguistic and intercultural communication.

This work of acknowledgement needs to be combined with other tools for the support of the mentor (mentorship agreement), with specific objectives and goals, as in the document "Paths to inclusion. Training for community mentors: communication, intercultural and social skills" (IOM, 2021), which contains a model proposal that is based on self-evaluation and training modules. There are four modules and they explain in detail which kind of knowledge a mentor should have and how to obtain it before the beginning of mentoring. However the first step is self-evaluation. Self- evaluation is a

strategic tool for mentors to be aware of themselves, their sensitivity, capacities and limits; this tool should be used before the beginning of training but it may equally serve at the end of the modules and during all the process of mentoring. This tool is a questionnaire of 26 questions, concerning personal data, mentoring and the function of mentoring, the skills a mentor should have and the mentor's relationship with others. Mentors can compile it before the training in order to understand which is their level of knowledge. In Figure 1 some examples of reflection questions are illustrated.

16. What should a mentor be good at?

Choose the options that you think apply, and rate their importance from 1 to 5, where 1 is the minimum and 5 is the maximum.

Building relationships

☐1☐2☐3☐4☐5

Listening

☐1☐2☐3☐4☐5

Managing conflicts

☐1☐2☐3☐4☐5

Coaching

☐1☐2☐3☐4☐5

Promoting self-reflection

☐1☐2☐3☐4☐5

Figure 1: The self-evaluation questionnaire (IOM, 2021: 14-21)

Self-evaluation is the first step in the training for mentors; the guidelines suggest four modules that, if followed, provide a mentor with a rich cultural baggage of useful information about mentoring. From these documents it is possible to draw a few insights that might help in drawing up a complete mentor profile.

As already mentioned, the phase of resettlement may be challenging for new refugees: despite host institutions accompanying them through the whole process and helping them access social devices and becoming self-reliant (IOM, 2021: 23) it is often necessary to provide them with a mentorship program. First of all it is then useful for a mentor to understand what s/he is and what s/he is not, in order to understand their role in the inclusion process. According to IOM a mentor is:

> A friend and advisor, a facilitator, guide coach and role model; a person with the knowledge or expertise to nurture another person's interests and life skills; a person who is willing to share what s/he knows with no expectation of reciprocation or remuneration; a person who is open to developing their mentee's confidence, as well as their creative problem-solving and decision-making skills, by providing new opportunities to learn (IOM, 2021: 23)

Mentors often associated with the concept of a bridge because they can connect the local community and refugees who otherwise would be forgotten at the margins of it. However it is important to remember also that they are not teachers, providers of financial support, saviours and most of all professionals. Remembering the volunteer nature of their role is crucial to distinguish mentors from programme staff or case managers who are responsible for the welfare of beneficiaries. The main aspects of mentoring are instead that they act as trusted advisors and counsellors on issues they have already experienced.

In this process of growth, one of the core concepts that needs to be pointed out in this study is Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). This is the ability to function actively across different cultures, to communicate and interact appropriately with people of different backgrounds. The definition explains why it is crucial for a mentor to develop Intercultural Communicative Competence: indeed according to the IOM (2021: 28) "the strength of mentoring process in assisting refugee integration is that people

from different backgrounds and experiences work together and learn from each other". Many scholars have written about intercultural communication and Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), giving their own definitions on such a complex concept.

The first question we aim to answer is "Why ICC is important?". The study of ICC has tried to answer the question "How do people understand one another when they do not share a common cultural experience?" (Bennett, 2013), a question that we face every day, living in our multicultural societies. Barrett et al.(2013) remind their readers that it is important to address ICC when people are trained to work with other cultures, because: "Mutual understanding and intercultural competence are more important than ever today because through them we can address some of the most virulent problems of contemporary societies" (2013: 9). These issues are prejudice, discrimination and even hate, which can arise in situations of socio-economic, political or cultural inequalities. Indeed as already mentioned, the globalization that the world has experienced in the last decades, together with the internet and world-wide mass transportation spread, has led monocultural individuals into intensive contact with multiple cultures and cultural others (Anderson and Boylan, 2017). Stereotypes have been the most immediate and blind reaction in order to exert control on those feelings of anxiety that arose from diversity: "It offers ready-made categories that explain away the strangeness by giving it a (pseudo) explanation" (Anderson and Boylan, 2017: 2).

Bennett (2013) gives a useful definition of the term "stereotype": in his view stereotypes arise when we pretend or act as if all members of a culture or group share the same traits. They could be connected to different indicators such as race, religion, age, gender, ethnicity or national culture. Even if there is the possibility that these characteristics could be appreciated, what turns into a positive stereotype, most of the time they take a negative connotation, they are negative stereotypes. Bennett (2013) affirms that both types of stereotypes are problematic, for example because they may create a false sense of understanding the other (Bennett, 2013).

Other definitions of this term, taken from the dictionaries, might help in understanding the various definitions this term is given. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Online a stereotype is "a fixed idea or image that many people have of a

particular type of person or thing, often not true in reality"; the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online defines it as "a belief or idea of what a particular type of person or thing is like. Stereotypes are often unfair or untrue"; lastly, the Collins Cobuild Advanced Dictionary defines that: "A stereotype is a fixed general image or set of characteristics that a lot of people believe represent a particular type of person or thing." (cited in Anderson and Boylan, 2017: 7).

In order to understand the concept of ICC there are several related concepts that needs to be clarified: among them there are the concepts of identity, culture, intercultural encounter and competence. By defining those core concepts one at a time, it is possible to understand what connects one to another and gradually understand the whole meaning of intercultural competence.

Barrett et al. (2013) state that the identity of a person is the "sense of who they are and the self- descriptions to which they attribute significance and value." (2013: 14) People can use both social and personal identities to describe ourselves. We define personal identities as: personal attributes, interpersonal relationships and roles, and autobiographical data; social identities, instead, regard the participation into one social group (e.g. a religious group, an ethnic group, a generational or gender group etc.) (Barrett, 2013: 14).

In the definition of 'identity', Helm (2018) gives a contribution stating that identity could be defined as multilayered, fluid, and in constant flux (2018: 19). In particular, she explores the relation between language and identity: she suggests that individuals tends to negotiate identities through actions and languages (2018: 19),stressing the limits of the structuralist conceptualisation of language that is taught as a static, bounded entity and system. Helm (2018: 21) cites Firth and Wagner (1997) when they note that "the imposition of an orthodox social psychological hegemony on second language acquisition has had the effect of reducing social identities to 'subjects'". Poststructuralist theories, see language as a social phenomenon and users use utterances to create "meanings in dialogue with others". According to Block (20017/14 in Helm 2018: 21): "Poststructuralist social scientists frame identities as socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narratives that individuals perform, interpret and project in dress, bodily movements, actions and language".

To conclude, people often assume different identities in different situations or, even more across they define themselves with identity that are the result of the intersection of multiple identities (Barrett, 2013: 14).

Focusing on the concept of culture, through the literature it becomes clear that it is a notoriously difficult term to define (Spencer-Oatey, 2012: 1) and there is a lack of cohesion in its multiple definitions. Spencer-Oatey (2012: 2) reports a number of definitions (2012). Summarizing these, it is possible to describe the essential core of culture by traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially the attached values of a group (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952: 181; cited by Adler, 1997: 14). Culture is the complex union of all knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and habits acquired, by a human being belonging to a specific society (Tyler, 1870, cited by Avruch, 1998: 6), during experience, or created by the individuals of a population; this includes those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves (Schwartz, 1992; cited by Avruch, 1998: 17).

However to better understand the concept of culture we could draw some considerations. First of all the difficulty of defining such term derives from the fact that cultural groups are heterogeneous and embrace a range of diverse practices and norms that can change over time and different members of the group can accept or reject them subjectively (Barrett et al., 2013: 13). Spencer- Oatey (2012: 3) argues that culture is manifested at different layers of depth. Indeed we can distinguish three levels at which culture manifests itself: observable artefacts, values and basic underlying assumptions. The first can also be called 'material culture' and consists of the physical artefacts that are commonly used by members of a cultural groups for example goods, foods, tools etc. (Barrett et al, 2013: 13). This level is problematic because the data are visible but difficult to interpret; however, Spencer-Oatey (2013: 3) suggests that we could describe this level as how a group organize and build its environment.

Schein (1990) explains that:

> When one enters an organization one observes and feels its artifacts. This category includes everything from the physical layout, the dress code, the manner in which people address each other, the smell and feel of the place, its emotional intensity, and other phenomena, to the more permanent archival manifestations such as company records, products, statements of philosophy, and annual reports (Schein 1990: 111)

The second level regards values, also called 'subjective culture' by Barrett (2013: 14): it consists of beliefs, norms, attitude, values, collective memories. However, this level is obscure as well: values are hard to observe directly and it is often necessary to deduce them from the members' behaviours. The reasons for their behaviours remain unconscious or concealed.

To truly understand a culture, and deeply understand a group's values, it is necessary to delve into the underlying assumptions. These are often unconscious, but are descriptive of how a group perceive, feel and think (Spencer-Oatey, 2013: 3). Underlying assumptions are basically learned responses: a value generates a behaviour that aims to solve a problem, and once the response is found, such value transforms into an underlying assumption of how reality is according to a cultural self or group (Spencer-Oatey, 2013: 13). In this way, in order to understand a group 'identity' it is desirable to observe these taken for granted assumptions because they may be less debatable than expressed values then, and more representative of a group's culture.

Another interesting definition is given by Barrett: in his view, culture is the result of the mixing of diverse dimensions, like the already-mentioned material and subjective cultures and social aspects of cultures. Social aspects of culture regard the social institutions of the group such as language, religion, rules of social conduct, cultural icons or folklore (Barrett, 2013: 14) the difficulty of defining culture resides in the fact that: "groups of any size have their own distinctive cultures [...] all people belong simultaneously to and identify with many different cultures" (Barrett, 2013: 14).

Another contribution, given by Holliday (2012) needs to be brought to attention. In his paper, Holliday introduces the concept of 'Small culture' opposed to that of 'Large culture'. Indeed, in the studies on culture, the default notion of 'culture' has become that which refers to ethnic, national and international identities and which Holliday has renamed as 'Large culture'. In opposition to this paradigm, he introduces the term 'small cultures' to indicate a " small social grouping, or activities where there is cohesive behaviour, and thus avoids culturist ethnic, national or international stereotyping" (Holliday, 2012: 237). He highlights that people have the tendency to consider the paradigm of 'large culture' as the correct one and the 'norm', while they consider 'small cultures' as metaphorical.

In short, everyone participates in multiple cultures, all cultures are fuzzy and variable according to subjective decisions and desires. The way a person affiliates to a culture is personal as well and multiple identities and cultural affiliations intersect in a person's experience. The way people participate in their cultures is context-dependent and changes over time, as the cultures themselves (Barrett, 2013: 15).

The encounter with another person of a different cultural affiliation is described as an intercultural encounter: cross-cultural encounters can provide an excellent opportunity for personal growth as they place us in situations where our understanding of the cultural self we are engaging in conversation with is challenged (Montuori and Fahim, 2004: 244).

Finally, the term competence is used in diverse ways; for current purposes, it is intended not only as a set of skills an individual has, but more as a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action (Barrett, 2013: 16). It is defined as the capacity to resiliently respond to different types of situations, among them intercultural encounters. Through the definitions of identity, culture, intercultural encounter and competence, it is now possible to start talking about intercultural communicative competence. ICC is a combination of attitudes, knowledge and skills which enables one: to understand and respect different cultural selves; respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully in those intercultural encounters, build positive relationships with them; and understand their cultural affiliations (Barrett, 2013: 17).

To develop ICC, language is truly important and it involves an individual's plurilingual competence. It also requires the participants in the intercultural encounter to have a good level of awareness of the possibility that one person could have a different level of language competence.

In order to understand which are the components of Intercultural competence, it is possible to use Byram's model. Indeed, despite many models of ICC exist, one of the most widely known is that of Michael Byram. Byram summarises the components of ICC as: "Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviours; and relativizing one's self. Linguistic competence plays a key role" (Byram, 1997: 34). In fact, the author stresses that "a successful communication it is not judged solely in terms of efficiency of information exchange (Byram, 1997: 3) but it is equally important to "focus on establishing and maintaining relationships" and always considering the differences of beliefs, behaviours and meanings (1993: 3) that might co-exist in a cultural interaction. To better understand the model, it is necessary to introduce the concept of "intercultural speaker". the term intercultural speaker was coined by Byram and Zarate in a working paper written for a group preparing what eventually became the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages of the Council of Europe (Byram, 2009: 321). This terms identifies the ability of a person to interact with other cultures, accepting other perspectives of the world and mediate between them (2001: 5).

Indeed the relationship that establish between two people depends on several factors and a person's ICC too. According to Byram's model it is possible to identify five components which can make up a person's ICC: attitude, knowledge, kills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and social interaction and critical cultural awareness.

1. Attitude (*savoir être*): according to Byram attitudes are the pre-condition (Byram, 1997) for successful intercultural interaction. The type he considers in these case are only those attitudes towards people who are perceived as different (Byram 1997: 34), which are frequently characterized as prejudice or stereotype and are generally negative. To have a successful interaction, however, attitudes need to be not simply positive but they need to be "attitudes of curiosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief

and judgement with respect to others' meanings, beliefs and behaviours" (1997: 34). Moreover he suggests that "there also needs to be a willingness to suspend belief in one's own meanings and behaviours, and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging" (Byram, 1997: 34). Finally, it is possible to summarise attitudes as the capacity to relativise one's own beliefs in order to decentre your own perspective.

2. Knowledge (*savoirs*): refers to the amount of knowledge that individuals bring to an interaction with someone from another country (Byram, 1997: 35) and it can be divided into knowledge about social groups and their cultures in one's own country and similar knowledge of the interlocutor's country on one hand; and knowledge of the process of interaction at individual and societal hand on the other hand (Byram's, 1997: 35). Particularly, the second kind of knowledge about concepts and process of interaction is fundamental for successful outcomes but not acquired automatically.

Knowledge and attitudes are preconditions of a successful communication but in the perspective of acquisition, teachers need to know that students will not have the opportunity to practice them. However, there are few skills that students will have to learn in order to become intercultural selves: these skills are comparing, relating and interpreting.

3. The skills of comparing and relating (*savoire comprendre*): it is described by Byram (1997) as the "The ability to interpret a document from one country for someone from another, or to identify relationships between documents from different countries", "to explain it and relating to documents and events from one's own" and it "is therefore dependent on knowledge of one's own and the other environment" (Byram, 1997: 37).
In addition when it is not possible to anticipate all the knowledge needed, it is important to acquire the skill of finding out new knowledge like, for example, understanding how to ask people about their values, beliefs and behaviours and to talk correctly about it.

4. Skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*): the skill of discovery "may also be operated in the individual's own time, but equally it may be part of social interaction" (Byram, 1997: 37) and it comes into play when an individual has none or a partial existing knowledge framework (1997: 38). It is the skill of building up a specific

knowledge of the beliefs, meanings and behaviours occurring during a phenomena. It is also defined as the 'ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the real time communication and interaction' (Byram, 2001: 6). One mode of discovery is obviously through social interaction (Byram, 1997: 38).

5. Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*): the ability to evaluate critically or on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives and practices in one's own and other cultures (Byram, 2001: 7).

Deardoff (2006) also reports another definition of ICC components presented by Lambert, who identifies five components of intercultural competence: world knowledge, foreign language proficiency, cultural empathy, approval of foreign people and cultures, ability to practice one's profession in an international setting (Lambert, 1994, as cited in Deardorff, 2006: 247).

Deardoff attempt to find a definition and appropriate assessment of intercultural competence as agreed on by internationally known intercultural scholars. However, having found Byram and Lambert's models to be the most relevant, she also identifies the three core elements: awareness, valuing and understanding of cultural differences; experiencing other cultures; self-awareness of one's own culture (Deardoff, 2006: 247).

1.2.1 Empathy

In the document "Path to inclusion" the experts of IOM (2012) talk about 'competence' and not 'knowledge', because collecting information about a culture is not enough: it is necessary to experience a culture until the point that one develops the ability to feel empathy for the other people and attempt to see things from their perspective.

Indeed, as mentioned above, empathy is another aspect that could truly help mentors to have positive outcomes when they try to help refugees to be included in the new country and in higher education. Although being empathetic may be considered an innate skills, mentors should insist on developing empathy as much as they can. To this purpose, understanding what 'empathy' means could be useful. According to Dohrenwend (2018), empathy has not to be intended as a basic listening skill, but more as a master listening skills which requires more than reflective listening skills (Dohrenwend, 2018). Empathy is not even compassion, sympathy or "putting one's self in another shoes".

Instead it:

> "[Empathy] involves being sensitive, moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in his/her life, moving about in it delicately without making judgments, sensing meanings of which he/she is scarcely aware" (Dohrenwend, 2018: 1775)

Another definition describes empathy as "Borrowing the feelings of another in order to really understand them, but never losing your own identity-this is basic in empathy" (Kalisch, 1973). The author claims that empathy is the ability to enter into the life of another individual and to accurately perceive his/her current feelings and most of all their meanings (Kalisch, 1973).

At this point, after defining the core elements of intercultural competence, a further consideration will be made on the process of acquisition of these competences. Anderson and Boylan (2017: 19) describe the process of understanding "others" as a continuum that goes from rejecting cultural diversity to understanding it completely. One side is the ethnocentric pole: the first step of the model regards three superficial kinds of understanding cultural diversity as they are all centred on the self-assumption that we are predisposed to consider reality as monocultural (IOM, 2021: 30) ; indeed this phase is divided into denial, defence and minimization. During the denial phase, a person cannot recognize the other culture as different and most of all, real. They prefer to remain socially apart. This phase is followed by defence: here differences are recognized but kept distant; they associate aspects of a different culture with negative stereotypes and their main interest is keeping their privileges intact. During the last moment, the minimization phase, people tolerate differences but consider them as 'folklore'; they are more focused on highlighting similarities because they need to convince themselves that such differences will never regard them as something distant (IOM, 2021: 30).

Diametrically opposed to the self-centred and manipulative way of "understanding others" is the kind of understanding that Bennett locates on the other side of his continuum, the ethnorelativist pole (Anderson and Boylan, 2017: 21).

The second part of the model corresponds to the moment ICC concretely starts to develop and when we start to recognize and respect the different world of cultural others (Anderson and Boylan, 2017: 22). This phase is divided into three moments as well: acceptance, adaptation and integration. In the first place people recognize but also respect and appreciate differences between cultures even if they are still re-reading reality; the second phase is very proactive, as individuals search for a third dimension between their culture and that of the other. The second and third phase of Bennett's model permit us to communicate with other cultural selves using common references. It is at the third level that we establish the bonds of solidarity and trust. In the difficult task of a mentor, the range of knowledge s/he needs to acquire is endless, but Intercultural Communicative Competence seems to be one of the most important.

1.2.2 Theory of Communication

Last but not least a major part of the training regards the theory of communication, or rather: the types of communication, asymmetric communication, and rules for effective communication. Indeed a great part of a mentor's work regards establishing good communication with the mentee, and beyond all the skills that are mentioned above, a great part of his/her training needs to be focused on developing communication skills.

First a mentor should be aware that two types of communication exist: verbal and non-verbal communication. While verbal communication is: the use of words to share information with other people and then "interpreting the meaning of spoken words" (IOM, 2021: 34), non-verbal communication is a powerful tool in order to understand others (Eunson, 2012). Non-verbal communication includes all body language that accompanies verbal communication and has several functions: it replaces verbal communication in situations where it may be impossible or inappropriate to talk; it complements verbal communication, thereby enhancing the overall message; it modifies the spoken word; it contradicts, either intentionally or unintentionally, what is said; it regulates conversation by helping to mark speech turns; it expresses emotions and interpersonal attitudes; it negotiates relationships in respect of, for instance, dominance (Eunson, 2012:256). Connected to this last point, especially as concerns mentors and mentees, it is possible that asymmetric communicative events might occur. Indeed asymmetric interactions are defined as communicative interactions in which the interlocutors do not have equal communicative rights and duties, and participants have

unequal access to manage the power of interaction. (IOM, 2021: 36) It is useful for a mentor to recognize these asymmetries when they occur and try to avoid authoritative and judgmental behaviours in order to create a positive environment.

In order to be prepared in such delicate events, mentors are suggested to engage in developing their effective communication. Mentors are crucial to mentees: for this reason they need to create a community of practice in which they help mentee socializing (IOM, 2021: 37). To achieve this, it is suggested that mentors:

> manage their frustrations about the difference between expectations and reality; understand the cultural standards of both the mentee and people belonging to the culture(s) of the country of resettlement; find a meeting point between respective definitions of 'appropriate behaviour'; and identify the features and needs of different communication scenarios (IOM, 2021: 37)

1.3 Risks and support for mentors

Until now this dissertation has focused on which measures a mentor should adopt in order to protect the mentee, but it is also necessary to reserve a space to discuss the psychological impact on mentors and the way to avoid mentors being absorbed by mentoring. Indeed also mentors need support because interacting with and helping mentees can be challenging (IOM, 2021: 47) and emotionally hard. This is why mentors are inserted in a network of professionals that can help them with difficult situations and any questions; same way, it is profoundly recommended that mentors attend monthly debriefing sessions.

Mentors should be aware that anytime they meet the mentee they are exposed to the phenomenon of 'secondary post-traumatic stress'. Figley (1995) defines such a phenomenon as: "the natural consequent behaviour consequent resulting from knowledge about a traumatising event experienced by a[n] … other. It is the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatised or suffering person" (Figley, 1995).

Because of secondary post-traumatic stress, mentors could experience a sense of fatigue, feel the mentee's feelings or fears as their own and burnout themselves: in this case training will be then useful to understand signals of secondary post-traumatic stress (PTS) and adopt some measure such as contacting their organisation or taking one week of rest, on the condition that the mentee is notified.

However there is much behaviour that can prevent the possible negative consequences of mentoring; the most important tool to face stress is the setting of appropriate and useful boundaries. Mentors must clear their own boundaries with the mentee and respect them so that mentees will have a realistic expectation of what a mentor can and cannot do for them. Boundaries are personal (IOM, 2021: 48) and each mentor can establish them in terms of emotional and time engagement.

Boundaries regard the following: the amount of time to spend with the mentee and how to treat last-minute requests; the space where to meet the mentee (in public spaces or at the mentor's home);the way a mentee should use to contact the mentor.

The respect of their own boundaries is so important because, due to cultural differences mentors will need to be ready to deal with many issues that can arise and prove uncomfortable: for example a mentee may ask for financial help; another case is that of a mentee belonging to a culture in which social interactions are constant, that means that they could consider it normal contacting other people without boundaries and at anytime. As the mentoring training explains, mentors will need to compile a planning file considering all the features presented until now as prior to the first meeting. In addition, mentors are asked to engage in autonomous learning: another tool of protection of their mental health is having the largest cultural baggage about the culture of origins of their mentee, resettlement issues and the mentoring relationship.

1.4 The case of women: mentoring programs for women refugees

Even if the main focus of this dissertation is centred on refugees and higher education, before starting, it is also relevant to dedicate a short section to a group of refugee people that is dramatically hit by all the challenges deriving from the resettlement and need to be provided with tailor made mentoring programs for the whole process of resettlement. Indeed, even if resettlement represents a challenge for everyone, women often live in a

condition of vulnerability and often experience another set of challenges. Among different researchers Kamabu (2018) states that there is no doubt that women, especially from Africa, experience a totally different type of resettlement (2018: 2). Indeed in her thesis "Resettlement challenges among African refugee women living in Winnipeg" (2018), Kamabu deepens the gendered aspect of refugee movements, reporting the words of Watkins et al. (2015 in Kamabu, 2018) when they state that "gender factors shape the experience and effects of forced immigration, disadvantaging women, who are at high risk for gender-based violence, exploitation and discrimination during all phases of the refugee. In addition, we need to understand that women experience gender-based discrimination in any moment of their migration path: from both their countries of origin and their "second home" (Kamabu, 2018: 11). Wachter, et al. (2016: 878) explain that pre-arrival women are often victims of rape, sexual slavery, mutilation, coercion for sex in exchange for food, protection or favours or they can be forced to witness the tortures of their beloved ones.

In Kamabu (2018) it is underlined that compared to their male counterparts women are considered more vulnerable to physical and mental health challenges. It is therefore crucial to introduce the concept of vulnerability. According to Tastsglou et al. (2014) the concept of vulnerability is also gender-based:

> Women are overrepresented in the refugee and internally displaced communities as well as disproportionately bearing the familial and communal care and responsibilities during global disasters and war […] in addition to economic, educational, labor, social, and geographic vulnerability, there are physical vulnerabilities from the loss of community protection, sexual violence, domestic abuse, police targeting, and sexual manipulation as they flee and seek refugee status. These vulnerabilities often become embodied in the search for asylum (2014: 69)

Hawkins et al. (2021) remind us that in an effort to provide culturally safe care, it is imperative that providers working with refugee women recognize this vulnerability and seek to prevent the occurrence of re-traumatization (2021: 5). Re-traumatization may be perpetrated by a husband or partner, or even inadvertently by a provider. When it is an operator that plays on re-traumatization, it is called "secondary victimization". This

"refers to behaviours and attitudes of social service providers that are 'victimblaming' and insensitive"(Hawkins et al., 2021: 5).

All the atrocities women are forced to experience in their pre-resettlement phase negatively influence their post-resettlement phase causing them anxiety, fear and insecurities (Kamabu, 2018: 12). Below I will explore how gender-based violence plays a role in refugee women's lives.

However, first of all we can draw some conclusions on the main challenges faced by women in the resettlement phase. Among different factors, the literature identifies: psychosocial factors, language and culture, housing, parenting and barriers to education and employment.

From the point of view of psychosocial challenges, as mentioned above women tend to experience multiple atrocities, including: sexual terrorism, poverty, disease, deprivation, violence, disconnection from one's culture, shock, alienation (Kambau,2018: 15). These experiences increase distress and depression and lower their chances for positive social integration (Bokore, 2015). Bokore (2015) also suggests that sometimes trauma deriving from such experiences is so deep that families experience "trauma transference", when a mother's trauma is transferred to other generations (Bokore, 2015: 8).

Concerning language challenges, it is interesting to observe how Beiser and Hou (2000) state that "language is a powerful predictor of successful resettlement"(2000: 312). In the next chapter I will investigate observed the importance of language acquisition for a refugee. Refugee women, in most cases, are the primary caregivers of their children, which leaves them no space for joining language courses (Kamabu, 2018: 17). Delays in language can place women in a disadvantageous position compared to men in chances of employment or educational chances (Kamabu, 2018: 17), isolation and depression. Other challenges experienced by women regards parenting and housing. In particular Stewart at al. (2015) report some of the challenges that new refugee mothers often experience during their resettlement. Indeed one of the most common challenges regards the feeling of loneliness they often experience before and after birth because of the lack of social networks and family support (Stewart et al., 2015: 1149). Another

relevant issue regards marital conflicts, when internal relationship conflicts or breakdowns were having a bad influence on parenting. In these situations, "culturally appropriate marriage counselling was not available according to these refugee parents." (Stewart et al. 2015: 1150).

In the next chapter, I will discuss some of the possible barriers that refugees commonly experience during the resettlement phase; however also in access to work or training opportunities, women face several additional challenges. Particularly, the main factors that prevent women from accessing the labour market, according to Ozturk et al. (2019), are in first place the legal status of arrival of refugee women, health and psychological conditions (2019: 49).

Another set of challenges resulted from a phone interview with Professor Dolores Viero, coordinator of European and regional projects designed for the prevention and elimination of discrimination on ethnic-racial bases and for the promotion of inclusion of third-country nationals. Women often experience a lack of trust in institutions both because of their violent backgrounds and because of the lack of preparation of the receiving institutions. Too often an abused woman asks for help from the institutions but does not find it: taking the context of the hospital as an example where a lingua franca is used to communicate with patients, conversations risk being very general. Describing health problems or episodes of violence in a language that is not one's mother tongue is risky and produces in the patient a feeling of not being understood, comprehended or helped at all.

Despite the former example, it is necessary to understand to which extent gender based violence plays a role in refugee women's lives as one of the first factors that influence their existence including during all the steps of resettlement.
Freedman (2016) reminds us that:

> The insecurities inherent in the journey have been highlighted in the media by
> shocking images of capsized boats and drowned refugees, but far less attention has
> been paid to other forms of violence and insecurity which refugees experience, and
> in particular the many forms of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual
> violence, experienced by women refugees (2016: 18)

Indeed, in the experience of women who decide to migrate, violence is a constant presence; however it is first necessary to find a definition of gender based violence. According to UNHCR (2023), gender-based violence refers to "harmful acts directed at an individual on the basis of their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms." In this section I will use both the acronym GBV and the acronym VAW (Violence Against Women) to talk about the phenomenon.

As the UNHCR reports on its page[5], it is in times of crisis and displacement that women and girls suffer the most violence. Refugee women that are victims of GBV are commonly victims of repetitive victimizations, which means that a refugee woman is a recurrent victim of a specific crime or offence, such as domestic violence, rape, sexual violence etc. (Farrell 2005: 145).

It is necessary to understand that some factors can create favourable contexts for the number of violent episodes to increase, such as the lack of language competence, unemployment, isolation by the host society, trauma and gender inequalities.

This justifies the insistence of the need of a mentor who can comprehend women's cultural needs and protect victims from entering the circle of victimisation. To do so a mentor should also know both context and consequences of GBV: to explain the context that fosters the creation of violence the World Health Organisation (WHO) created the so called "ecological model". Ecological theories consider the responses of human beings in the environment. Indeed they " stipulate that individuals are engaged in an on-going transaction with their environments; mutually influencing and being influenced, shaping and being shaped by the world around them" (Kamabu, 2018: 2).

The model serves to explain how all the four levels implied in it, influence and promote violent behaviour. The ecological model is illustrated below in Figure 2.[6]

---

[5]UNHCR (2023). Gender-based Violence:
https://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html
[6] This image was taken from the site: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/about/social-ecologicalmodel.html
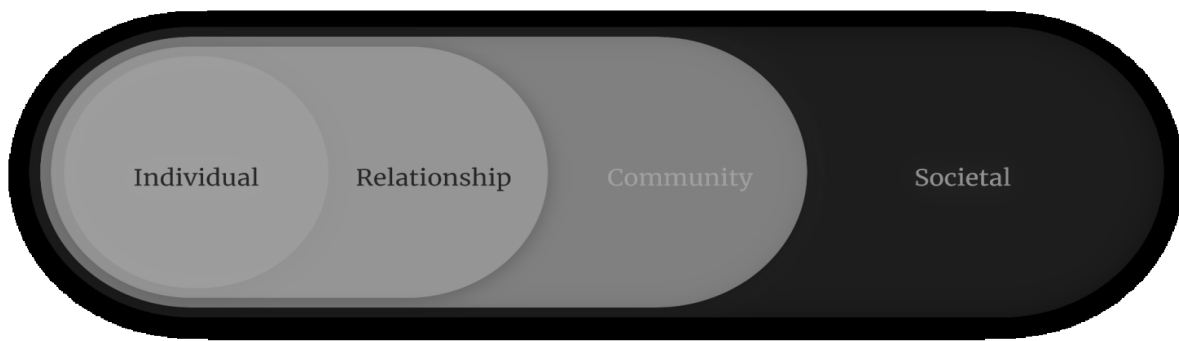
Figure 2: The ecological model (Centres for disease control and prevention)

Researchers have tried to analyse the complex phenomenon of violence against women over years and have tried to elaborate theories to explain the multi-dimension nature of it. As reported in Fulu and Midema's work (2015): "The integrated ecological model suggests that intimate partner violence (IPV) is influenced by a complex array of interconnected factors across individual, relationship, community, and macro-social levels" (2015: 1).

At an individual level, many factors also contribute to the victimisation of refugee women such age, gender, disability and unemployment. In particular poverty is one of the most influential factors as economic precariousness makes them more vulnerable as they might economically depend on male figure. Refugee women can also be easily lured or deceived by traffickers who, promising them a better future in Europe, detain them in the downward spiral of human smuggling and prostitution (European Commission, 2019: 19).

At the level of relationship, violence can systematically be reproduced, with family, intimate partners and friends. Violent behaviour for example can spring from: family dysfunctional behaviour, parental conflict involving violence, low socio-economic status, family honour that is considered more important than female health and safety (UN Women, 2013), as happens in the case of forced marriage. The third and fourth level regard both the communitarian relationships and the position a woman can occupy in society in general.

However a fifth actor that plays a role in migrating women's life is their legal position. Refugee women at the moment of resettlement experience many forms of social exclusion and isolation also for legal reasons: limited access to residence permits and to

41

the social security system, difficulties of access to the healthcare system and to the labour market (EU, 2019: 17). The loss of their social network can lead to self-isolation and expose refugee women to a higher risk of violence. Due to all the aspects of resettlement that increase the arising of new forms of GBV, a more comprehensive model was elaborated that also takes into account the migrant context: it includes five levels including: individual, relationships/family, social context, migratory context, society and it is identified as "the ecological model: comprehending violence, including in the migratory context" (EU, 2019).
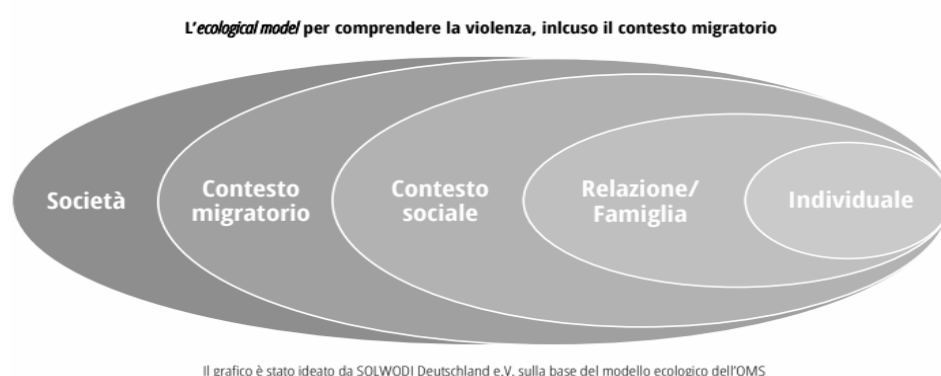
Figure 3: the ecological model of violence, including in the migratory context (European Commission, 2019:17)

The social consequences of VAW act at different levels. It is possible to identify three social levels of consequences. First of all, at a lower level, a male partner could influence a woman to the extent that she cannot participate in the social life of the community: she cannot develop ideas, talents because her freedom and movements are limited by a man. This has a direct incidence on the woman's capability of integrating in various areas of her new life: she can experience a loss of friends and social status, loss of work and new opportunities but most of all risk losing the documentation needed to reside in the new country (European Commission, 2019: 18).

At a medium level violence can create an unstable domestic life, above all for the children that can suffer from traumas and stress. Lastly, at a higher level, gender based violence direct consequence is that it strengthens gender stereotypes itself because it is a circular phenomenon.

Other types of consequences regard the financial domain: talking about economic costs can be divided into direct costs and indirect costs: direct costs include sanitary expenses on account of the physical and psychological damage provoked by violence; indirect costs refer to the loss of income because of the separation from the partner or due to labour loss (European Commission, 2019: 18).

Sanitary consequences can be divided into three types: physical, psychosomatic and psychological consequences. With respect to EU citizens, refugee women tend to suffer from harder and more lasting consequences, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and psychiatric disorders (European Commission, 2019: 19).

Legal consequences might occur if a refugee woman decides to report an episode of gender based violence. Violetta Bertino, author of a thesis project at the University of Genoa called "Interpreting and Mediation, a compatible experience of the figure of mediator interpreter in cases of gender-based violence, a field trial.", reminds that very often refugee women do not have a regular residence permit and are afraid to be repatriated and to lose their children, which makes them desist to proceed legally (Bertino, 2017).

This discussion of GBV in the context of asylum aims to make it clear why a mentor is crucial in the assistance of victims. In the last part of the European Commission guidelines of 2019, in the section dedicated to inclusion and prevention of violence, researchers often suggest well-coordinated projects with interpreters and mediators. Indeed in many cases the latter mainly focalize on language barriers and the main responsibility of an interpreter is "to grant communication among participants who do not speak the same language and do not share the same cultural background" (UNHCR, 2017). It is also suggested that interpreters often play the role of cultural mediator at the same time. However, collaboration between different professionals might ensure positive outcomes; the role of the mentor should at least be considered and included in the network of support for refugee victims. The complexity of their role, their ICC and wide background, enables them to take on a job of different nature: mentors are in the right position to follow their mentee through all the difficulties they encounter but most of all, thanks to their successful relationship of trust, to encourage the mentee in their inclusion. This reasoning is to be applied also to the case of refugees in Higher

Education; the following chapters will approach the topic of resident refugees and their silent struggle for inclusion in Higher Education and illustrate mentoring projects in the EU, USA and Australia.

2. Resident Refugees and their silent struggle for inclusion in Higher Education

Until now the main goal of this dissertation has been that of exploring the profile of the mentor, which has been seen to be complex and, at first glance, a useful player in refugees' inclusion. A second part of this analysis must be dedicated to comprehension of the relationship between refugees and Higher Education. First, some definitions will be given in order to better understand what is intended with Higher Education, Refugees and HE institutions. Then a short analysis will try to give the more comprehensive picture of data concerning the enrolment of refugees in Higher Education: due to the difficulty of tracking refugees in the university contexts because of the lack of constant attention and care of the system, it is hard to understand how many refugee people continue their academic career instead of looking for a new job. In addition, there are many barriers that hinder refugees' access to Higher Education: it is currently estimated that the global gross enrolment ratio of refugees (GER) in HE stands at about 3 percent (UNHCR, 2020).

Understanding which are the main barriers and difficulties that refugees have to deal with could help to explain the low rate of refugee students in the faculties of international universities. However it is important to stress the benefits and positive aspects of the participation of refugees in academic life: besides ensuring better Future prospects, having a degree has several benefits such as serving protective function, offering a positive identity, providing access to social/economical mobility and contributing to the public role of Higher Education (Ferede, 2018: 10).

In support of the background information, a part of this chapter will be dedicated to some examples of inclusion projects: some of them consider diversity and equity as two strengths for inclusion and for a future strategy of inclusion. There will be a reflection on the need of adopting an intersectional perspective in the creation of projects for refugees. However, to ensure the inclusion of refugees in higher education it is important to create a single path for all students, a single strategy that could consider refugees as an integral part of HE, more than creating tailor made projects only for

them. What needs to change is the whole system and this will be discussed in the third chapter.

These two prior background chapters are considered an introduction to the third and last chapter of this thesis: the analytical and qualitative analysis. Experts will take the floor and give their opinions on the topic. Previous knowledge on the issues that will be explored by the stakeholders is considered necessary and useful for a better understanding and formulation of further opinions on this complex theme.

2.1 Refugees in Italian, European and US Secondary schools

2.1.1 Defining new terms

When dealing with a new topic it is important to define the key-words that are frequently used to talk about it. Indeed, words such as Higher Education or Refugee are used with a high frequency but not always clearly defined, and it is interesting to observe their specific nuances. Being a refugee for example implies a particular living conditions that are, for instance, different from that of other migrants or an asylum-seekers. According to UNHCR (2019), the 1951 Refugee Convention is a key legal document for the definition of a refugee as it consider him/her as: someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (UNHCR, 2019)[7].

The UNHCR added some elements to the previous definition when in 2018 it established that:

> The refugee population also includes people in refugee-like situations that include groups of people who are outside their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to those of refugees but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained (UNHCR, 2018)

---

[7]UNHCR (2019). What is a Refugee?:https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html#:~:text=The%201951%20Refugee%20Convention%20is,group%2C%20or%20political%20opinion.%E2%80%9D.

Another condition is that of asylum-seekers that, differently from refugees, are people whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed. UNHCR affirms that anybody has the right to ask for asylum and deserves to obtain it. Since the topic of this discussion focuses on the role that these actors play in the context of Higher Education, it is useful to define what HE is. Higher Education means so much more than 'simply' university. It can be equally named 'tertiary education', 'third-level education' or 'post secondary education' and "is an optional final stage of formal learning that occurs after completion of secondary education" (Wikipedia, 2022)[8]. Indeed, according to The World Bank Higher Education tertiary education is "instrumental in fostering growth, reducing poverty, and boosting shared prosperity" (The World Bank, 2021)[9]. It refers to all forms of post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges and technical training institutes or vocational schools (The World Bank, 2021).

A list of the institutions forming part of Higher Education is reported below: for this purpose I will use the International Standard Clarification of Education (ISCED) description (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], 2012) reported by Ferede (2018). The ISCED distinguishes between:

- Short-cycle tertiary education programmes at ISCED level 5 (at least two years);
- Bachelor's or equivalent first-degree programmes at ISCED level 6 (three to four years);
- Bachelor's or equivalent long first-degree programmes at ISCED level 6 (more than four years);
- Master's or equivalent long first-degree programmes at ISCED level 7 (at least five years);
- Doctoral level - the successful completion of ISCED is usually required for entry into ISCED level 8 (Ferede, 2018: 4).

Indeed HE includes all the universities, educational establishments, centres and structures of higher education and centres of research that are approved by the

---

[8] Wikipedia, (2022) TertiaryEducation
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertiary_education
[9]The World Bank (2021). Higher Education:
https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/tertiaryeducation#:~:text=Tertiary%20education%20refers%20to%20all,poverty%2C%20and%20boosting%20shared%20prosperity.

competent authorities (Ferede, 2018). The aim of higher education is that of educating at a mastery level and also to nurture high order thinking (Hashim, 2022).

The last definition that is useful in this case is that of the global gross enrolment (GER) ratio, which according to the world data bank is "Gross enrolment ratio is the ratio of total enrolment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown" (The World databank, 2022). The measurement of gross enrolment ratio (GER) will be useful for the comprehension of some details in the following section: I looked for census or enrolment data of refugees in universities from all over the world since one of the main aims of this chapter was to understand, on a global scale, what is the actual condition of refugees in Higher Education and how numerous is their presence.

2.1.2 Refugees in Italian, European and US Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)

As already mentioned, one of the hardest tasks (confirmed also by stakeholders), is to understand the percentage of refugees who have access to Higher Education in their host countries; many HEIs do not provide census data to track refugee students or the latter are not informed about the initiatives prepared for them. As Martin and Stulgaitis (2022) states:

> Refugee students are often enrolled as international students at HEIs. Important data and privacy regulations often prohibit the capture of information about refugee or immigration status within higher education enrolment management systems, and therefore HEIs do not usually account for refugee students as a separate category (Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 16)

However, in this context, data provided by UNHCR efforts to provide data will be considered as official, since this body put great effort into tracking the number of incoming refugees and that of refugees who had the chance to continue their academic career.

In the last few years access to Higher Education has increased worldwide: this is due to a rapid development of private higher education.(Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 15). From 2000 to 2018 the total number of students has increased from 19 to 38 percent

(Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 15) marking an increase also in social aspirations to higher education for future students from all over the world. Indeed, refugees represent a marginal proportion of the HE student population worldwide, but a growing one in some European contexts where demand is rising steadily. (Détourbe and Goastellec, 2018). Détourbe and Goastellec write: "The increasing number of young people both seeking asylum and aspiring to take up or pursue HE has led a growing number of countries to open access to HE more widely to this specific category of international (non-domestic) students" (Détourbe and Goastellec, 2018: 186).

Despite this increase, there are wide differences that need to be taken into account. First, there are differences of access between Central and Eastern Europe regions, standing at the top of GER, and sub-Saharan regions (85.3% versus 9.2%). Another difference regards GER in higher education for men and women: women tend to access tertiary education more than men. Lastly, there is a huge difference between the higher education access of non-refugee students and international students who move thanks to international mobility and refugees. As already observed for refugee students, access to education, to all types of education, is very challenging. Indeed "When compared with other disadvantaged students from the host country, refugee students face what is called a 'super-disadvantage'" (Lambrechts, 2020: 819).

By mid-2020, the number of displaced people was 79.5 million as a result of persecution, wars, violence and violated human rights. This number doubled the figure of 41 million of refugees registered in 2010 and increased with respect to the 2018 figure (70.8 million) (Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022:12). The refugee crisis is also a crisis in education (Alvey and Said, 2017). For this, of these people, only a small percentage continued their studies because education is not often included in the humanitarian responses (Dryden-Peterson and Giles, 2010). Refugee people face challenges at all levels of education: the extended nature of displacement and the lack of possibilities for education in exile mean that most refugees miss out on their one chance for school-based learning (Dryden-Peterson and Giles, 2010). The number of challenges they often face has the strongest impact especially at the Higher Educational level.

The several barriers they need to overcome include financial, information, language, and social challenges, what may prevent them from being included in HE. This topic will be discussed in detail in section 2.1.3.

However, the UNHCR estimated that the global gross enrolment ratio increased from the 1 percent in 2016 to the 3 percent in 2020 (Ferede, 2018: 12). This agency and partners formulated an educational strategy to bring the number of refugee students from the GER of 3% to that of 15% by 2030. The work was preceded by the Global Compact for Refugees: on 17 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), after two years of extensive consultations led by UNHCR with Member States, international organizations, refugees, civil society, the private sector, and experts (Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 9). It consists of a framework for social responsibility and responsible behaviour that stands for the right of refugees and for the fact that "a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation."

During the GCR it was stated that:

> in line with national education laws, policies and planning, and in support of host countries, States and relevant stakeholders will contribute resources and expertise to expand and enhance the quality and inclusiveness of national education systems to facilitate access by refugee and host community children (both boys and girls), adolescents and youth to primary, secondary and tertiary education (UN General Assembly, 2018: 26)

The importance of insisting on education at all levels is then recognised by all the main agencies, like UNESCO and UNHCR, as one of the main goals for sustainable development, part of the 2030 Agenda and an essential part of all humanitarian responses that need to be "aligned with development goals and approaches" (Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 12). The 2030 Agenda is thus aiming to provide "inclusive and equitable quality education for all at all levels" (Martin, and Stulgaitis, 2022: 12) and in section 2.1.4 benefits deriving from the attendance of refugees to higher education will be described in detail. Indeed, the right of refugees to access (Higher) education is grounded in international and regional policy frameworks, but is not always simple

translating it into national legislation. Indeed in the working paper on education policies "Protecting the right to education for refugees" by UNESCO (2017) it is said that: "All individuals, refugees, migrants and forcibly displaced people have the right to education, which is considered to be an indispensable means for the full realization of other human rights." (UNESCO, 2017: 6). Furthermore, the international community has become committed to human rights and fundamental freedom through a body of international human rights law that established the inalienability of the right to education (UNESCO, 2017: 14). Countries systems are taking actions, but the obstacles they encounter are still visible.

In addition it is evident that it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of refugees' access to higher educational systems. However, many countries and bodies put some effort into collecting enrolment data. This is the case of UNESCO, which in the Background paper prepared for the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report, entitled "Migration, displacement, and education: building bridges, not walls. Higher Education for Refugees" analysed a list of countries' statistics on refugees' access to HE. The main idea was that despite the number of refugees in higher education being calculated as an average, there was variation at a country level. To study inclusion at a country level means to obtain a global idea of enrolment data.

To achieve this goal UNESCO selected one country for each of the regions they wanted to consider. The regions which were selected were: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East, and North Africa (MENA), Europe, North America and South America; the countries respectively were: Ethiopia, Australia, Turkey, Germany, Canada and Brazil.

In the continent of Africa, Ethiopia is one the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, second only to Kenya, that at the end of 2017 hosted 883,546 refugees. Of these approximately 1600 were studying in different Higher Educational Institutes: 1300 were enrolled in state-owned Universities; 300 in the German government-funded DAFI scholarship Programme (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative), a scholarship programme that offers refugee students the possibility to pursue an undergraduate degree in their country of asylum (UNHCR, 2021-2022).

As regards Middle east and North Africa, Turkey is the largest Syrian refugee host, with 2.9 million Syrian registered in the country. In 2011 at the beginning the number of Syrian that were enrolled in higher education was very low and equal to 4000; in 2016-17 had increased up to 14,000 students: of them 12,127 were attending Bachelor Degrees, 1,102 Associate degrees, 1,067 Masters Degrees and 335 Doctoral Degrees.

Australia represents Asia and the Pacific region: in 2009-2014 a group of researchers at the University of Melbourne examined HE enrolment of students from refugee backgrounds (using data from the Department of Education and Training's Higher Education Statistic Collection) (Ferede, 2018: 13). It turned out that 3506 refugee students were enrolled in Australian HEIs. In Australia they also observed a strong gender variation by country of origin.

Talking about Europe, in Germany the number of refugee students enrolling in German education is increasing: according to a survey conducted by the German Rectors Conference (HRK) in 2016-17, 5700 refugees were enrolled in language and prep courses in winter, an increase of 80 percent from 2016 summer term. Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees reported that 13 percent of all refugees enrolled in degree programmes in 2016 already held a HE degree.

As regards North America, in 2016 the Canadian census proved that almost 31.5% of refugees who received permanent resident status, continued their academic career. In this census it emerged how financial constraints and obligations may play a factor in the selection of Higher Education Programmes (Ferede, 2018: 14).

Finally Brazil (for South America) is the largest country of South America and, being this region being sensitive to refugees' hosting, the country received more refugees than any other country. In 2016, they received 2100 refugees. Despite data on HE enrolment are not available, it is known that institutions launched a vast number of initiatives for inclusion: the University of Santa Maria for example launched an initiative for vulnerable refugees and immigrants' access to higher education programmes (Ferede, 2018).

Another important step forward was possible thanks to a project developed in the Italian context: the UNI-CO-RE project, University Corridors for Refugees. The pilot project was launched in 2019: in the first phase six students were welcomed in two Italian Universities; this number increased up to 20 students in 2020 and 45 in 2021. In its fourth edition the project expanded and opened its doors to refugee students coming from Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria.[10]At present 33 Universities participate now in the UNICORE project and give the possibility to 69 students to continue their academic career in Italy. They give the possibility to refugee students to regularly arrive in Italy where they can study and take part in university programmes. Together with Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, UNHCR, Caritas, Waldesian Diaconia, Astalli Center and local partners, they pursue the UNHCR and UN for Refugees' goal of strengthen the safe and legal entry channel for refugees and of achieving the 15% of enrolment of refugees in Higher Educational programmes in the hosting countries.

Although there are many projects that could be analysed in order to have the clearest possible picture of refugees' presence in tertiary education and despite this work being of utmost importance, the aim of this paragraph was that of obtaining a general picture of worldwide enrolment of refugee students in higher education. Some more information about projects of inclusion will be found in the section 2.2 of this chapter. However, the next sections will analyse both the barriers refugees encounter in accessing HE at their arrival and during resettlement and the benefits deriving from the participation in academic life in the host country.

2.1.3 Barriers to Higher Education for Refugees

With the previous knowledge, it is possible to highlight two pieces of evidence: first, that a completion of the educational pathway is vital for every refugee; second, despite this need, there are multiple barriers in the refugee student's life both generally and academically that may prevent the achievement of this goal.Indeed, as said in the paper, "Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls. Higher Education for Refugees": "Many refugees face financial, information, language, and social

---

[10]FEDER manager, Corridoi universitari per studenti rifugiati: il progetto uni-co-re prosegue
https://bologna.federmanager.it/corridoi-universitari-per-studenti-rifugiati-il-progetto-uni-co-re-prosegue/

barriers, and sometimes credential issues, which combine to make their access to higher education particularly difficult." (Ferede, 2018: 16), but this is only scratching the surface. All these factors and more, impact on their possibility to access higher educational institutes, creating challenges for young refugees. Having a good understanding of the existing barriers to HE, is the first step to having a good knowledge of the phenomena and starting working properly on refugees' inclusion. In the paper, this set of barriers is also defined with the term of "super-disadvantage":

> Rather than establishing a hierarchy of relative disadvantage, this idea acknowledges the unique barriers facing refugees. This is especially important when many countries still do not include specific higher education access policies in their migrant integration plans, and may not consider refugees as a group with distinct obstacles and particular needs (EACEA, 2019)

These barriers do not act in isolation, but always coexist in the experience of an asylum-seeker. Furthermore, even if in this context may be associated with the experience of a refugee student, such barriers often also affect other marginalized groups such as women, students with disabilities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community and cultural or linguistic minorities. The main barriers to higher education for refugees will be described below.

NATURE OF DISPLACEMENT AND LACK OF PREPARATION

The first set of barriers regards the phase of displacement itself, as explained in the document prepared as guide for the MUN for REFUGEE CHALLENGES by the UNCHR and entitled "Access to Education for Refugees": "By its very nature, displacement disrupts children's education because of the difficulties and dangers they face in reaching safety, accessing vital basic resources, acquiring new identity documents and helping their families in often vulnerable situations" (Wessels, 2022: 2). This is one of the reasons which can constitute the root of this problem: in the case of socio-political disadvantage or the outbreak of a war, for example, children's instruction is suddenly missing.

Another complication is connected to the lack of preparation that characterizes refugees' flight. Unlike other migrants, who usually have time to prepare their displacement and resources to rely on, refugees do not have time to prepare, have no social network and little knowledge of what awaits them in the hosting country: the direct consequence in Higher Education is, as will be discussed in the next points, that they do not have information on the rights they will have in the hosting country and on the academic possibilities they will have. As a consequence they may not have the time to carry with them the documentation useful to recognise their previous educational career: the possibility for them to take part into a higher educational program will be something very distant (Bajawa et al., 2017).

INTERRUPTED EDUCATION AND GAPS IN LEARNING

Interrupted schooling and gaps in learning is another phenomenon that plays a crucial role in preventing refugee inclusion in HE. With the closing of schools during conflicts, children are often forced to interrupt school: interrupting school poses a high barrier to higher education. There are three reasons: first, a diploma is required to access higher education; second the gaps in learning needs to be addressed which means that refugees need to complete their cycle and the years they have missed, prolonging their career and adding costs and time for the refugee student and institution. (Ferede, 2018: 18) Third, those who experience a learning gap, could also experience frustration and lack of motivation to continue their education. The UNHCR observed that the learning gap is a pronounced phenomenon in women's lives, so that it can be considered an issue of gender. As was already mentioned, higher education serves a protective function, especially for women and this is the reason why UNHCR is putting effort on reducing learning gaps in women's experience.

HOST COUNTRY RESTRICTIONS AND CONTEXT

The host country has a strong influence on the possibilities of access to higher education for refugees. First of all there is the legal level: indeed refugees in the host country may face legislative challenges of those countries in which "institutional ordinances and regulations make it difficult for higher education to provide access and support for Refugees" (Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 33). Furthermore according to the UNHCR, 86% of the world's refugees resettle in middle and low- income countries (Martin and

Stulgaitis, 2022: 32), where conditions are quite insecure. This can reduce students' stability and their academic opportunities. Coffie (2014) describes security constraints that affect refugees (and also nationals) in Guinea to be the main factor that causes refugees' limitation of access to HE. Indeed, he found out that, for example, Liberian refugees were more limited in accessing Higher Education in Guinea than in Ghana (Coffie, 2014). In addition to this, administrative and bureaucratic factors act as a massive barrier in a refugee's experience both in the academic field and in their entry into the labour market.

INFORMATIONAL BARRIERS

A lack of knowledge or understanding of the higher education system of a country is the first barrier and one of the main reasons why often refugees desist from pursuing their studies: they experience lack of knowledge about available opportunities, the higher education system, the application process, and support mechanisms in the host country. This can be worsened by the lack of counselling services and tutoring. Refugee students often consult that information via social media or the web, sources which may not be accountable, official or precise. Besides, in many rural geographic areas, the poor internet connection and access to technology represents an additional barrier. A final issue pointed out by Crea and Sparnon (2017) is a possible cultural and linguistic mismatch between Western-oriented online education and students' background, which can create further obstacles in the comprehension of the HEIs.

When, on the other hand, the information is provided, it is often inadequate, inconsistent, not up to date or nonspecific for refugee access; the lack of information is a barrier during the whole process of access to HE and after. During their academic career, refugees lack of knowledge about benefit entitlements, the details of a scholarship, financial and legal logistics, and academic expectations they could aspire to.

FINANCIAL BARRIERS: PROHIBITIVE COSTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PRESSURE TO EARN

It is common knowledge that higher education has prohibitive costs for many: those are tuition fees, documentation, testing and study materials, health insurance and the costs of living during this period of time including lodging, transport and food. For a refugee

who is in the middle of the resettlement phase and probably lacking family and social support, this constitutes an authentic barrier to higher education.

> Beyond the immediate and actual costs of higher education, there are opportunity costs associated with losing out on earnings (often derived from work in the informal labour market) over the course of study, as well as years of potential debt that many students must balance with the expectation that they will support their own families (UNESCO, 2018)

Reconnecting to this quote, a last problem is represented by the "pressure to earn": refugee adolescents often carry the responsibility of economically supporting their household and relatives. This often pushes young refugees to desist from the possibility to study and to look for a job quickly. In the hosting country, refugees' main aim is generally that of finding a profession in order to send money to their home countries.

RESTRICTIVE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

In the literature, there is constant evidence of the importance that is given to linguistic knowledge as one of the main skills providing integration. For example Abou-Khalil et al in their article entitled "Language Learning Tool for Refugees: Identifying the Language Learning Needs of Syrian Refugees Through Participatory Design" (2019), write that "Whether they are in a transition country waiting to relocate or settled in their final destination, language learning is often an essential part of their journey" (2019: 1). Also the British Council (2018) seems to defend the idea that language enhance resilience in five ways: it creates the foundations for shared identity, belonging and future study; promotes access to education, training and employment; promotes social cohesion as language-learning activities are the basis to develop resilience, dignity, self-sufficiency and life skills; is a support and a means to address loss, displacement and trauma; it helps building the capacity of teachers and strengthening educational systems (British Council, 2018: 9). However, authors confirm that among the different stages of refugee resettlement, that can be of three types (the pre-migration and departure stage, the transit stage and the resettlement stage), language presents as a primary challenge (Abou-Khalil et al., 2019: 2). Having little proficiency in the language of the hosting country both obstructs higher education access and social life; having an insufficient

linguistic knowledge also hinders access to information, the ability to comprehend the application process, qualify and participate in the national education system " (Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 35).

Some countries require a high level of linguistic skills for accessing education, like admission tests (OFA tests in the Italian universities) that demand the refugee student to achieve a high level of proficiency of the language of the host country, which may stop refugees from continuing their career (Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 35). Moreover, HEIs address them to websites and highly detailed online resources for support, which students found difficult to navigate on their own ((Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 35).

LACK OF DOCUMENTATION, QUALIFICATION AND CREDENTIALS

One of the most complex aspects of reintegration is documentation, which of course is a barrier to higher education as well. Two insights could be drawn in this respect. First, in the chaotic experience of displacement, refugees may not have the time, chance, or possibility to bring all the documents with them: the documentation might be damaged, lost or simply non-existing. Indeed, most countries do not assess or acknowledge informal education; achieving or obtaining a copy is a long and costly process. The direct result is that refugees may need to repeat the missing years of school, wasting money and time. The second aspect is that if refugees are in possession of their documentation, the hosting country must recognize it and equalize it, which is not a simple task when two very different schooling systems are compared.

A last aspect is indicated in the paper "Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls. Higher Education for Refugees" by Ferede (2018). In addition, when exile is the result of government-inflicted persecution, governments from refugees' countries of origins may be unwilling to offer support and substantiation of enrolment and credentials and the direct consequence is that they will not provide refugee students their original documentation (Ferede, 2018: 17).

PSYCHOSOCIAL AND NEWCOMERS' CHALLENGES

One of the aspects that are normally forgotten includes mental health and psychosocial challenges, both linked to refugees' past life in the country of origin and that as newcomers. Refugees may have experienced detention, torture, war, encampment,

exploitation, and a lack of essential resources and in the new country they may experience "discrimination, harassment, and social exclusion that can further affect their mental health generally and students' ability to enter into higher education" (Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 36). Additionally, once they arrive the number of challenges and barriers they need to deal with is so extensive that dealing with mental health is just not their priority (Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 36).

2.1.4 Benefits of Higher Education to Refugees: why does it matter?

Higher Education has benefits for everyone alike and at all levels socially, economically and psychologically. The literature tends to divide its benefits into individual benefits and public or societal benefits (Ferede, 2018: 6). At an individual level, the benefits are visible and robust if the data on students who completed a bachelor's degree are observed. Ma et al. observed that higher education grants access to higher skilled and better paid labour positions, access to well-connected social networks, and entry into the middle class (Ma et al. 2016). At a public level, the benefits also regard political participation: educated people usually tend to give a lower burden on criminal and social services and increase the social responsibility of people who are more interested in the politics of a country. Literature explains that higher or tertiary education has a special role particularly for refugees for several different reasons (Martin and Stulgatis, 2022). First, it promotes a positive identity and protects from violence. Observing the psychological aspects to begin this analysis, it is understandable that loss and fear are typical of to the collective imagination of "refugee-ness", apart from being two of the most common feelings during resettlement. Having the chance to identify as a "student" offers refugees a more positive vision of themselves because they can benefit from the positive connotations of this term, a term full of possibility and hope. Together with that and despite the challenges that it brings, studying hard to earn a degree is encouraging, satisfying and helps them see a brighter future. Lastly, it helps with social cohesion and prevention of conflicts, which can make them feel better. Higher education for refugees improves their quality of life and offers a sense of hope and as reported by Dryden-Peterson in the UNHCR "Refugee education. A global review" (2011), "Post-primary education gives young people "voice" (2011: 50).

Ferede also promotes offering specific educational paths for women and girls to avoid the risk for them of being marginalized within their communities in order to respond to the goal of gender equity of institutions. As Martin and Stulgaitis (2022: 26) say: "Higher education is also significant for gender equality and empowering girls and women to become role models and contribute to peace-building and reconstruction". That is why higher education also has specific benefits for women. It also serves a protective function from abuse and isolation, and other kinds of violence refugees can start to suffer in the country of origin and that continue in the hosting country.

From a career point of view, higher education incentivizes students to complete their basic education: "Several studies indicate that the mere availability of higher education can serve as a great incentive for refugee students to complete basic education. It has been found that in instances when higher education was available, refugees reported higher motivation to finish primary and secondary education levels" (Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022: 25).

In these previous sections it was observed how existing barriers can prevent refugees' approach to the continuation of their studies and, at the same time, they stressed the need for overcoming them in order to permit refugees to take full advantage of all those benefits deriving from education. In support of the theoretical part, I will rapidly explore a few projects that confirm that both a special attention to diversity and equity and the presence of a mentor are needed in order to create the best opportunities of refugee inclusion.

2.2 Including asylum-seekers and refugees in higher education: inclusion through diversity and equity based projects

Providing some information about the projects for refugee inclusion that have been launched may give an idea of how many steps ahead have been made and how many will need to be taken and in what direction. In this section both projects including mentoring and projects including other operators will be examined. However, a consideration needs to be made prior to this further analysis: the type of mentoring that is intended in this field is still an experimental approach and more often the literature writes about tutors or guides. In this context, when we talk about mentors, we mean a person that can guide refugee students through the whole academic career, encouraging

the student but also providing all the information he/she needs to know, from the enrolment procedures to admission tests. Furthermore, in this case we also suggest thinking about the mentor from another perspective and searching for mentors with another characteristic, which is usually typical of community mentors or other types of mentoring that have developed in other contexts and for other purposes. During my qualitative analysis and comparing other professionals who work with mentors, it emerged that if mentor and mentee share the same background of migration, the interaction is more efficient and the emotional bond is stronger. To this purpose, having a mentor that has experienced the same feelings, fears, problems can make the refugee more comprehended and safer. It is thought that probably the mentor can understand better the struggles a mentee is living through and probably also in which way his/her help could be more useful, how to communicate, what they need. However, this is just a proposal and it will be explored in depth in the third chapter through stakeholders' opinion and words. This section will be limited to the presentation of some of the note-worthy projects that have been carried out.

UNIVERSITY OF TRENTO: ASYLUM-SEEKERS TO UNIVERSITY PROJECTS

Due to the increasing number of asylum-seekers that have been arriving in Europe since 2015 and relocated in Trentino, the University of Trento decided to offer special programmes for a number of selected and keen students that have the necessary qualifications to attend university. The project consists in offering every year a scholarship and accommodation to five students: the duration is at least of three years but still to be determined. The project is in collaboration with the *Autonomous province of Trento* and *Opera Universitaria*; the partners are the University, the Department for Health and Social policies, and the Department for University, research, youth policies, equal opportunities, and development cooperation.[11]

The project is coordinated on behalf of the Prorector for Equality and Diversity Policies, Barbara Poggio, by Paola Bodio, Nataša Vučković, and several offices of the Student and Academic Services Division.

---

[11]UNIVERSITY OF TRENTO, Asylum seekers to University Project, 2015.

https://www.unitn.it/en/ateneo/60469/asylum-seekers-to-university-project

The pilot phase started during the academic year of 2015-2016 following these goals:

- provide guidance on academic choice;
- assess the students' foreign qualifications so that they can attend single courses and later enrol on degree courses from the following academic year;
- exempt students from tuition fees due for single courses and Italian language courses for foreign speakers;
- reserve a number of places for asylum seekers, if all departments agree on the proposal, to facilitate their access to education given that all courses have admission tests and places are limited;
- provide support and guidance through the tutoring service;
- provide support in the enrolment process from the next academic year and help students apply for scholarships and accommodation at *Opera Universitaria*. (University of Trento, 2015)

The University of Trento also insisted on the importance of talking about equity and cultural diversity as two strengths for every project of inclusion: "We are aware of our role in society in the training of citizens and professionals and we are committed to foster, both in study programmes and in our organization, a culture of justice, equality, transparency, openness and equal opportunities" (University of Trento, 2015).

To achieve such goal the University of Trento approved three plans of positive actions that includes tools and measures to identify every possible discrimination based on religion, gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, occupation, or disability, insisting that diversity is not a reason for discrimination but rather a value added to the community.

UNIVERSITY OF PARMA: UNIVERSITY PLAN FOR REFUGEES

From June 2016, a group of 30 university professors and collaborators at the University of Parma come together with the aim of creating of an academic plan promoting the inclusion of refugees. They created around twenty initiatives, with the aim of facilitating the recognition of the documents and degree certifications and promoting inclusion and the right to education for every refugee. The activities can be classified in six different areas:

- Projects and initiatives for didactics and tertiary education;
- Projects and initiatives for education and formation;
- Projects and initiatives for the right to education and inclusion;
- Artistic, cultural and expressive projects and initiatives;
- Research and scientific divulgation projects and initiatives;
- Projects and initiatives for linguistic acquisition.

(Deriu, 2018: 2)

All the initiatives respond to the need for including refugees in every single aspect of higher educational paths.

UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA: UNI-CO-RE, UNIVERSITY CORRIDORS FOR REFUGEES

The third Italian University that is committed to the refugee inclusion in higher education is the University of Bologna with the project UNI-CO-RE, University Corridors for Refugees. The University of Bologna put at the centre of its university program the creation of study programmes and the inclusion in Italy of youngsters with refugee status. Within the project UNICORE, similarly to what happened in the University of Trento, the international desk supported by other agencies like UNHCR, ER.GO and Caritas decided to support the arrival in Italy of five motivated students of the University of Macallé, to give them the chance of continuing their studies with a Master degree in Bologna or other Universities of Emilia Romagna. Last September, thanks to the UNI-CO-RE project, five students who escaped from the dictatorship in Eritrea were welcomed by the University of Bologna and by a network of support that could show them a more positive future perspective.[12] Other Italian universities collaborate in the UNICORE project, among them the University of Padua.

KING'S COLLEGE OF LONDON: PROUD TO BE THE FIRST REFUGEES WELCOME UNIVERSITY

The title of this university plan says it all. Citizens UK, a people power alliance of diverse local communities working together for the common good[13], commit every year to empowering communities and motivating them acting together for power, social justice and the common good. It also has been in the front line to ensure that the UK

---

[12] I recollected these information during the interview between A.S. and M.B. reported in the Appendix.
[13] Citizens UK (2023) About us: https://www.citizensuk.org/about-us/

becomes a more welcoming country for refugees. In 2020, Citizens UK announced King's College London as the first "Refugee Welcome University". This college put effort into a migration research programme and inclusion into the curriculum of issues faced by migrants, and is also trying to bring a refugee family to London under the UK's Community Sponsorship Scheme. Their objective is to provide families with structured all-round support and a fully-funded undergraduate scholarship: they give refugees opportunities to rebuild their lives and careers[14].

STAR: STUDENT ACTION FOR REFUGEES

A good example of the benefits deriving from peer-to-peer help is the network STAR, Student Action for Refugees. It is the national network of students aimed at building a more understanding and just society where refugees are welcomed and can thrive in the UK.[15] The team works at different levels focusing on important missions:

- Volunteering locally by working directly with refugees, building understanding and connections
- Campaigning nationally for policy change and equal access to higher education for refugees
- Learning about refugee protection and the asylum journey in the UK with experts and peers

However, the mission that is most relevant to this discussion is the mentoring project they launched to support 100 aspiring students from refugee backgrounds to apply for higher educational institutes and scholarship. One of the mentors that actively participated in star's mentoring projects provided a testimony on how mentoring works for them.

The way the programme is structured allows each mentee to access help in a much more personalised manner than a FAQ page or Google would provide. The training that STAR mentors receive from UCAS and the STAR staff team is thorough and detailed: "With the young person I mentored, we made an extremely detailed plan on

---

[14]King's college (2020). King's is proud to be the first 'Refugees welcome university': https://www.kcl.ac.uk/kings-is-proud-to-be-the-first-refugees-welcome-university
[15]STAR (1994) Students action for Refugees: https://star-network.org.uk/

what his personal statement was going to say. He was having difficulty with how to start, how to analyse what skills he had that were applicable to his course, and the structure of the statement" (STAR project, 1994).

STAR mentors also believe that mentoring is so important because: "There are so many people with high goals and aspirations who have been hindered by political, social or economic barriers they may have faced in their country of origin, on their journey, or while building new lives in the UK" (STAR project, 1994).

SCHOLARS AT RISK NETWORK

Scholars at Risk is an international network of institutions pursuing the mission of granting protection for scholars and promoting academic freedom. Scholars at Risk provides safety to scholars facing hard challenges or grave threats. To do so they provide temporary academic positions at member universities and colleges, advisory services for scholars, campaigns "for scholars who are imprisoned or silenced in their home countries, monitoring of attacks on higher education communities worldwide, and leadership in deploying new tools and strategies for promoting academic freedom and improving respect for university values everywhere". Although in this project mentoring it is not mentioned and the services are of a different nature, the work done is moving in a similar direction.

The projects listed above are just a small part of the existing encouraging programmes and this exploration simply aimed to show how a particular attention developed and is developing to the themes of refugee inclusion. In this network of projects, the position occupied by mentors is still developing and has a particular connotation for the bodies involved. However, the fact that in these projects they consider the need of a tutor, guide or mentor bodes well. In the next chapter, the types of mentors that this dissertation is proposing will be discussed. To conclude this chapter, instead, a last brief section will talk about intersectionality and the need to use this perspective when creating programmes of refugee inclusion.

2.3 The need for more intersectional and inclusive projects

The term Intersectionality was coined almost 30 years ago by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a professor of Law at Columbia University, in the context of a work on critical race theory. "What began as a proposed lens through which to view the experiences of women of color became a more extensive framework of structural, political, and representational intersectionality" (Crenshaw, 1991).

Her intention was not only that of disrupting the binary male/female division, but to find a method to describe the oppressive experience: "Intersectional analysis illustrated why broad categorical constructs such as woman were insufficient tools used to describe the experiences of all women by deesentializing identities such as race, class and gender. Indeed, intersectional analyses troubled not simply the conception of essentialist experiences, but so too their utility in understanding how individuals experienced the world" (Ugangst and Crea, 2020).

In the literature on refugees in higher education, Crenshaw suggested that intersectionality be seen as a dynamic, social-justice framework that could be particularly applicable to education, where the experience of a refugee is a mix of different axes, among them poverty, class, sexual orientation. "The concept of intersectionality also operates as a buzzword within higher education, signalling an acknowledgment of the complex interactions and dialectics of gender, race, and class in particular, although at times "without being concretised" in a meaningful way" (Ugangst and Crea, 2020: 230). As suggested in the paper "Higher Education for Refugees: a need for intersectional Research," taking intersectionality into account in programmes for refugees inclusion would be an interesting achievement. Two points are emphasized in the paper, the lack of attention in the existing scholarship to various aspects of intersectional identities and the potential for research probing existing "intersectional programs" (Ugangst and Crea, 2020: 230). These programmes oppose the idea that HE programs are monothematic and unidirectional and suggest adopting an intersectional perspective. To do so it is first required to guarantee a proficient level of linguistic competencies and lastly that the programmes are transparent and provide continuous feedback. The main goal then is not to provide tailor made programs for each refugee student but to: "offer a menu or suite of programmatic supports related to the identity spectrum, which are co-constructed by individuals who affiliate with

particular religions, gender identities, linguistic groups, as well as acknowledging that every self-identified affinity group itself comprises a multitude of lived experiences and intersectional identities" (Ugangst and Crea, 2020: 331).

The purpose of this chapter has been that of offering a picture of the presence of refugees in Higher Education systems: first, enrolment data has been provided to try to demonstrate that the presence of refugees is still very scarce; then barriers and benefits were discussed to find both the causes of this educational abandonment and the possible reasons why measures to change the situation should be taken; finally, European projects were presented in order to understand which measures have already been adopted.

The third and final chapter will regard instead analytical and qualitative research: it was considered important to leave the floor to the stakeholders, experts, professionals, and refugees themselves. Many themes regarding refugee inclusion will be explored through their words and opinions: in the third chapter I will highlight the importance of melting all these projects into a single path that could be common for all students, refugees and non-refugees and the importance of creating a network of support in which the most diverse figures work together. In this network, the mentor will take his/her place.

3. Qualitative research. Interviews with professionals and stakeholders

After presenting the studies that hold this work together, focusing on the concepts of mentoring, higher education inclusion and the connecting point that could join these issues, the third and last chapter will be of a more practical nature: it will centre on the qualitative analysis of interviews and of one recorded interview which I did not personally conduct, but dealt with the topics of the present investigation. Indeed it was considered vital to let relevant voices speak and give their opinion on such a delicate topic; this helped me to understand in which way, in the future, inclusion may move.

A total of eight people agreed to give this interview and their help was illuminating, visionary and clear. I had the chance to interview and bring together different profiles, including university professors, international desk coordinators, the coordinators of European projects and a refugee student. In addition I had access to a recording regarding a meeting, a moment of exchange, between two professors belonging to two Italian Universities, Padua and Bologna respectively: comparing two different Italian systems of inclusion was a moment of mutual enrichment.

To collect opinions from experts with a very different background allowed for the construction of a complete picture of the present situation of refugees in higher education institutes and of the forms of inclusion; the testimony of the refugee student was precious to understand the needs and requests of somebody who has a direct experience of the issue. Section 3.1 will describe how the interview was planned and realised, with which devices and on which terms and I will add information about the interviewees profiles and why I decided to select them. In section 3.2, there will be the data analysis, introduced by a clarification on what a qualitative analysis is (3.2.1) and completed with the qualitative analysis of the interviewees' voices.

It was decided to use the format of semi-structured interviews for the meetings, as this was considered more suitable for the very delicate topic and for the kind of conversations that could fluctuate from theme to theme. A more structured interview would have been too detached, arid and it would have left little space for reflections. However the main focus was on the topics of the existing programmes for inclusion in the higher educational system in the region or country of origin of the stakeholders and

what was their experience with mentoring and how could it become a resource for inclusion. Many stimulating reflections resulted from the interviews: the most frequent themes will be discussed through a thematic analysis.

3.1 Introduction to the project

As mentioned above, the profile of interviewees, embraced different areas of specialization, so the first part of the research consisted in collecting information about their profiles and backgrounds. To complete this procedure it was necessary to talk with my supervisor and to explore the university sites or sites of competence, in order to understand their professional backgrounds, their areas of interests and the kind of projects or initiatives they had taken part in.

The interviews were structured keeping the focus on the topic reported above, that was "how mentoring could be a useful service for the inclusion of refugee students in higher education". Although this was the prior interest, the analysis of the stakeholders' profile was crucial to understand how to direct the conversation: indeed, every interview started with questions related to their field of studies. A set of questions was prepared in order to have guidelines, a list of the topics I was interested in gaining the respondents' opinion about.

The questions are shown below Table 1:

Table 1: Questions

1	In my experience during my university career, in Genoa and in Padua, I have never had the chance to have a refugee classmate. Do you have some idea of the percentage of refugee students in Italian and European HE?
2	As regards the process of mentoring programs in university contexts, why could this be useful and are there any projects at your university?
3	What do you think could be the most important skills for a mentor who wants to work in the area of the inclusion of refugees in HE?

4	I read in the literature that mentoring is important because there are mutual benefits deriving from the relationship mentor-mentee. Do you think this is this true? What could be the benefits? And which could be other benefits deriving from the relationship between refugees and non-refugee students?
5	When I talked with Professor D.V., who first introduced me to the figure of mentor, the thing that impressed me the most about this figure was that mentors focus their work on the creation of an emotional relationship based on trust with the mentee. It impressed me so much because during all my studies of Translation and Interpreting I have been taught about keeping an emotional distance. What do you think about that? How could a mentor keep a distance when the emotional load is too heavy?
6	In the last few years another term started to be discussed: 'intersectionality'. Since in the life of a refugee many axes cross, do you think it is important to talk about intersectionality in this case? Do you think projects of mentoring for refugees in HE should adopt an intersectional perspective? If so, in what way?
7	Overall, as regards the inclusion of refugees and other "students at risk" in HE, which directions should we follow? What kinds of projects should be created? Which measures should be taken?
8	What could be the future role of mentoring in projects like these?

However, for the semi-structured nature of the interviews, the dialogue usually started with the topic the stakeholder was most familiar with, sometimes simply with the request to talk about their experience or the projects they were collaborating in. The interview then continued following this procedure: listening their opinion on the topics and being inspired by their suggestions was my priority. Indeed the aim was to leave the conversations as free as possible and avoid any constraints. In fact many different and fascinating topics emerged during our interviews which were not in the list of questions I prepared. This was important because at anytime a new piece was added to the global picture, improving my comprehension of the topic: doubtlessly my knowledge on

mentoring itself became clearer and it was thanks to the different voices of the stakeholders that I understood in which way he/she could be an actor for inclusion. What a semi-structured interview is will be explained in the paragraph 3.2.1. In the next section I will explain who were the interviewees involved, what was their profile and how were they contacted.

After clarifying the goals and curiosities that moved the desire to conduct the interviews, several people were asked to participate. The purpose was that of including different profiles of people who had experience in this field, for a number of diverse reasons. Indeed I wanted to include professors who were specialised in the fields of political sciences, sociology, philosophy, language teaching and who were interested in inclusion. I also decided to involve other collaborators, from abroad and such as the head of the international centre of the University of Leipzig's who have direct contact with refugees or students at risk and could bring an international testimony. Other people who were contacted were the collaborators of the region of Veneto who first introduce me to the role of mentor. Although they do not collaborate with the university, I deemed it important to listen to them to receive information on another types of mentoring, to clarify what is the most suitable type of mentor for higher education inclusion and to find common points. Last but not least, I had the honour to talk with a refugee student, who was a faithful witness of the needs and desire of the students who arrive here as asylum-seekers or refugees.

My supervisor, Professor Dalziel, suggested me that I ask those professionals for help and provided me their contact details. The interviewees, in turn, were very willing and provided me with other stakeholders' contacts. Of the people I contacted just one did not have the possibility to participate, while the final number of stakeholders was eight people. In addition, one of the professors I interviewed, provided me with a recording of one of his interviews with an associate professor of the University of Bologna. A large number of the stakeholders were also part of a common project, the ARQUS project, which will be presented in the part of the qualitative analysis.

The main goal of the interviews, as was already mentioned, was to obtain their opinions and feelings about the future of inclusion, expressing their opinions on the role of mentoring.

Table 2: List of Interviewees

	INTERVIEWEES	PROFESSION
1	A.S.	Associate professor in the Department of FISPPA
2	F.H.	Assistant professor of English language and translation at the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies
3	I.3.	Teacher of L2 Italian
4	S.K.	Head of the International Centre of the University of Leipzig
5	D.V.	Coordinators of regional and European immigration projects in the Veneto region
6	E.S.	
7	M.F.	
8	R.S.	Refugee student

Of the eight stakeholders, I included three professors of the University of Padua: one was an associate professor of the Department of Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology, one is assistant professor of English language and translation at the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studiesand one is a teacher and a linguistic of L2 Italian.. The fourth stakeholder is a head of the International Centre of the University of Leipzig. I had the chance to talk with the head and coordinators of regional and European projects in the region of Veneto and two of the referents for the Immigration Service of the Comune di Venezia; I had a group call with the three of them. The eighth stakeholder was a refugee student from Libya.

It was fascinating to work with so diversified a pool of actors, especially because from our interviews what emerged was the necessity of creating more collaboration between institutions and professional figures, and this was a first example of the amount of precious ideas and future inspirations that can emerge from open dialogues.To conclude I want to underline that their help was fundamental for the outcome of my project. Indeed it was during dialogues and just collecting their opinions that I could navigate

among all the different types of mentoring and understand which could be, in my opinion, the ideal form of mentoring that might have a decisive impact on refugee inclusion in Higher Education.

3.2 Findings and analysis

3.2.1 Qualitative analysis: thematic analysis of dialogues

As mentioned above and in different sections of this thesis, this section will present a qualitative analysis of the most frequent themes emerging from the interviews with the stakeholders involved. The selected method for this qualitative research is a thematic analysis, as the semi-structured interviews produced a wide content in which every stakeholder gave their contributions to la long list of themes.

According to Paltridge and Phakiti, thematic analysis is primarily a process which looks for themes that emerge from the data (Paltridge and Phakiti, 2015: 573). They also explain that even if this approach could seem simplistic, the researcher requires a number of skills and has to be rigorous. Indeed, once data have been transcribed, the researcher has to identify key themes and strands in the narrative; second, the researcher needs to have a solid background on the topics, in order to "connect narrative content to broader issues and constructs (Paltridge and Phakiti, 2015: 530).

According to Caulfield (2019), while there are various approaches to conducting thematic analysis, the most common form of it includes a six step process. First, it is important to familiarise oneself with the derived data. This includes: transcribing data, reading, re-reading, taking notes on the frequent themes. Then, the researcher should start generating an initial code, noting down interesting features and collocating data that are relevant to each other (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 16). The next step regards searching for themes, gathering all the data relevant to each potential theme. The fourth step is reviewing themes, generating a thematic map of the analysis, while the fifth is about defining the name of each theme. In the last step, the researcher will produce a report of the analysis.

This is the method that was chosen for the present analysis. In the next sections three different set of findings will be presented. First, I will report the answers to the questions presented in Table 1. Then I will dedicate another section to the factual and

additional information that emerged from the reflections during the interviews. Last, I will present the themes and I will put them in relation to the previous theory presented in chapter one and two. The aim of for this chapter is that of presenting findings and brilliant suggestions for the future of mentoring and inclusion, through the three different types of information presented below.

3.2.2 Mentoring for refugees in Higher Education: findings

As anticipated, this section is dedicated to findings and it will contain three different kinds of information. The first part will focus on the direct answers to questions reported in Table 1. Given the semi-structured nature of the research, the questions were not presented to every stakeholder in the same order but sometimes the answers emerged naturally during the interview. The topics that the stakeholders were questioned about were: number of refugees, existing mentoring programs in their home university, skills required for mentoring, benefits deriving from mentor-mentee relationship, strategies for not being absorbed by mentoring activities, the intersectional nature of mentoring programs and the future of inclusion and of mentoring programmes.

One of the first questions presented to the first stakeholder regarded the number of refugee students enrolled in university courses. I asked: "In my experience during my university career, in Genoa and in Padua, I have never had the chance to have a refugee classmate. Do you have some idea of the percentage of refugee students in Italian and European HE?".

Indeed Chapter 2 contains a section investigating the number of refugees in Higher Education. And by opening a discussion on refugee inclusion in higher education, one of the first needs was to understand the entity of this phenomenon. However, as mentioned in the literature, this proved to be a challenging task since higher education institutions do not usually account for refugees as a separate category: refugee students often register as international students and accessing enrolment data is not always possible when they are protected by privacy regulations (Martin and Stulgaitis, 2022). This administrative void determined the curiosity to discover if, in the universities of the stakeholders, they had a clear idea of this number.

However, when asked the question "Could you tell me more about the percentage of Refugees in the HEI in which you work?" some of them agreed on the answer: the stakeholders pointed me to the UNHCR document that reports the findings of their hard work. UNHCR is committed to tracking the number of refugees accessing education and committed to the 15 by 30 target, which means, ensuring that 15% of refugee women and men will access higher education by 2030. Indeed, as the page of UNHCR reports:"UNHCR's 2019 education strategy [...] aims to foster the conditions, partnerships, collaboration and approaches that lead to all refugees [...] to access inclusive and equitable quality education, including at the tertiary level" (UNHCR, 2021-2022)[16].

The three interviewees who pointed me to this document affirmed that UNHCR, had tried to promote some kind of coordination in their home universities, they confirmed that the number of refugee students in higher education institutes still corresponds to 3%. However, compared to the first consultation of the UNHCR page that I did few months ago, I noticed that the number have increased again: according to UNHCR in 2022, 6% of refugees have access to higher education, an encouraging data if compared to 1% in 2019 (UNHCR, 2021-2022).

Despite the UNHCR information, it was not possible to track the number of asylum-seekers students in the stakeholders' universities. They made several efforts in this sense, such as the professor A.S., who had asked the University of Padua many times to establish a proper census of refugee students or what happens in the University of Leipzig, Germany, where the international centre's coordinators, including S.K., are trying to track the number of refugees as in the case of Ukrainian people:

> we are trying to take numbers from students who come from Ukraine and are about
> to flee the country, not only Ukrainians but also from people all over the World,
> especially from Africa but also from India and Pakistan who used to study in
> Ukraine and don't know where to go and they also travel to Europe, travel to
> Germany (S.K.)

---

[16]On Tertiary education for refugees:
https://www.unhcr.org/tertiary-education.html (accessed last time on November the 14th 2022)

However because of data protection and because they often enrol as international students, all the stakeholders I asked this question, confirmed that it was not possible to obtain a realistic figure of the percentage of refugee students enrolled at their universities. Although, I could trace many attempts they made in order to get the numbers. For example A.S. claimed: "I have been asking my University, to establish a proper census of refugee students at university and for one reason or another it was never possible" (A.S.). Also S.K.'s university made several attempts: "And we try to get those numbers, but for those who actually enrol in the study program we do not have numbers available as it is something that has to do with data protection and the University do not count based on their residence permit or based on their refugee status" (S.K.). The stakeholder explained:"We have a lot of applicant for former preparation courses [...] we have about 80 students learning in those courses. It varies from semester to semester but is higher now, it was a little bit less last year, and the peak was about 100-120 a year in 2017-18 around this. And that's actually a number that we can count, because it works a little bit differently compared to people we enrol. Because these are not people that we enrol" (S.K.). A last testimony on the university of Padua context was reported by F.H.: "There is no way of knowing if there are Refugees or not [...] But I don't think there is many. I mean now we should have an idea because I think they put it on the form that they can chose if they are Refugees. But I've met a couple of Refugees students who didn't know that even Padua had a census for Refugees" (F.H.). In almost all the interviews we talked about inclusion and mentoring projects to understand which was the offer and the actions taken by each country and institution of reference. The interviews revealed that in the Italian context, several universities took actions, but that the most active appeared to be the Universities of Bologna, Parma and Trento. Here they have good programs of inclusion. A great contribution to this qualitative research was provided by M.B., associate professor in the area of political and social sciences of the University of Bologna, who coordinated the first UNICORE project. I talked about the UNICORE initiatives in Chapter 2, and through the stakeholders' contribution it was possible to understand the main ideas behind it.

First, it is a coral and complex action: many collaborators take part in a collective action, as was mentioned by A.S. as a priority for inclusion. As regards Bologna, the actors that collaborate together are the International desk of the area of International

relations of Bologna, UNHCR, ER.GO (Regional Company of Emilia Romagna for the right to higher education)[17] and CARITAS. A fundamental characteristic of the UNICORE project is that students do not enter Italy as refugee students. They usually arrive from disadvantaged areas of the world, which could grant them the international protection. However, in order to simplify the procedures and permit them to go back to their home if they want they usually arrive in Italy with a student visa: indeed, according to law refugees cannot go back to their homes until the conflicts or persecutions that forced them to flight have ceased (UNHCR, 2023).[18] When students at risk arrive here, the international desk in Bologna has the duty of helping them with all the procedures and also verifying their personal documents and qualifications that are needed to be enrolled in the University courses. In the UNICORE projects admission procedures are simplified because students arrive in Italy after selection interviews and after they have expressed the desire of studying in the Universities that collaborate in the UNICORE project. The participation of UNHCR, ER.GO and CARITAS is crucial because they provide students with different scholarship and an accommodation. For example ER.GO offers an additional scholarship with respect to the ones that are provided by the University of Bologna or by UNHCR. CARITAS, instead, has a key role because it put efforts into finding a family for the students who participate in the UNICORE project. This help proved to be crucial because those families agree in hosting and helping the students at risk. Providing a family and other types of support proved to be fundamental for the students of UNICORE: "they arrive here alone, so having a family is fundamental, it is fundamental to have somebody to address and to talk to, because for them at times is also important to take a coffee, to have somebody to talk with" (M.B.). UNICORE also puts a great effort into not making distinction between disadvantaged students: "the idea is that of creating a framework of services and actions for all the weakest cases and people, and not only for those who are formally part of the UNICORE project or formally refugees." (M.B.). For now, it was interesting to observe that ER.GO manifested a clear political input of offering

---

[17]ER.GO (2022). Chi siamo:
https://www.er-go.it/index.php?id=5899
[18] UNHCR (2023). Cos'è il re insediamento dei rifugiati:
https://www.unhcr.org/it/domande-frequenti/

countless scholarships to foreign students, mainly Afghani: "When I asked how many resources could we count on, they answered 'unlimited'" (M.B.).

Talking about their strategy to place students in different courses once they arrive, a success the UNICORE project registered was that of creating a system between the Universities of the Emilia-Romagna region: there is a high connection between the Universities of Bologna, Ferrara, Modena, Reggio Emilia, Parma and the Catholic University of Milan that has one of its headquarter in Piacenza. The coordinating action the UICORE aims to is that of placing in all the Universities included in this network some students on the base of their interests and to gain the maximum benefit from this collaboration. The main goal is that of enabling students to choose where and what they really want to study and to make it possible. This strategy had a strong influence on their motivation towards the path of studies: "This has a positive impact on their motivation because they are really going to University. It is not just renting a room and receiving a scholarship" (M.B.).

However, something different happens in some cases, like in the case of Afghani students: it was important to keep them as together as possible, because the dimension of the 'group' was crucial for them and it helped increasing their motivation.

Lastly, M.B. observed that the post-lauream was also a critical issue, in the experience with students arriving with the UNICORE project. Indeed, since they arrive here with a student visa and the Universities provide them the possibility to continue their studies, sometimes they might feel under the pressure of finding a job that is necessarily connected to what they have studied or they might not feel free of changing ideas along their academic path; at the same time, once they have graduated they might have difficulties of finding a job because that could be out of business. Although, Professors like M.B. align to defend their right of freely pursuing their desire for them and to not let them alone once they have completed their studies.

As regards other inclusion projects that emerged during the interviews, Professor F.H. also mentioned the STAR project. The STAR project is a UK project that uses peer-to-peer mentoring to include refugee students in Higher Education: they had positive feedback from participants: "especially from those who have gone on to attend

university this year. Participants shared that they received helpful signposting to resources and support, and their confidence increased over the course of the mentoring sessions" (STAR Project UK, 2022)[19].

A very important initiative at the European level that joined different realities together and showed that the system is fragmented is the ARQUS project. Four of the eight participants has taken part in the ARQUS initiative. The ARQUS project is an European University Alliance, which brings together seven research Universities from all Europe (Granada, Bergen, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon, Minho, Padua, Vilnius and Wroclaw) that have strong regional commitment[20]. The main goal was to confront on hot topics and relevant issues. S.K. said:

> we are specifically in the Action Line 2 which is about diversity and inclusion. One topic out of those twelve topics was refugees integration into Higher Education system within Europe. So at the beginning we talked a lot about how do things actually work in Italy... versus Germany ... versus Spain ... versus Austria so we discussed a lot, we just realize that although it's the 'European Union', which has a kind of refugee politics or ... no, maybe we can say they have broader policy when it comes to people migrating into the European union looking for asylum but they do not have The one European asylum or refugee policy when it comes to integration into the state, into the higher education or whatsoever [...] And then we tried to organize two webinars where we talked about a European approach that's what we actually wanted to find: the European ARQUS approach to a higher education for refugee students. (S.K.)

An interesting example that could be inspiring is that of the German system of inclusion which will be reported in the next section. The purpose is just that of bringing a positive testimony of a system that has strategically included 'refugee inclusion' as a mission in its university system. A last consideration that needs to be mentioned is provided by D.V. who works at the projects of the region of Veneto and thus in a not academic field. She remarked that they do not call them 'mentoring projects' because their aim is not

---

[19] On star project, https://star-network.org.uk/2022/10/28/applying-to-university-for-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum/ (accessed last time on 16th of November 2022)
[20] On ARQUS project, https://www.unipd.it/en/arqus

that of creating singular paid projects: for her and her collaborators, mentoring is something deeper, it is more like a vocation or a mission somebody voluntarily decides to pursue because of their experience of background. And they usually mentor people in need during other projects. This prevents us from looking at the services as 'external structures' but as part of a cohesive system.

Indeed, despite this number of projects that are listed above, a number of the stakeholders remarked that the real need is that of creating a single path for refugees and non-refugees students. The totality of students would be directed by a pool of actors, and mentoring would be just a part of a whole system.

This part of the interviews was particularly useful to have a clearer picture both of the actual commitment of national and international systems in refugee inclusion and to listen to the needs and suggestions provided by experts.. At the end of the interviews it became clear that the future of inclusion needs to move in one direction: to reduce the number of individual projects and create a permanent system that can work cohesively: in this system the staff and students (refugee and non-refugee) work together, assisted by the help of mentors.

As regards skills and training for mentors, when I asked: What do you think could be the most important skills for a mentor who wants to work in the area of the inclusion of refugees in HE?", the stakeholders agreed on the fact that there are determined skills that are innate and therefore, impossible to acquire: empathy, sensibility and a sense of responsibility. There are no trainings that can prepare you for that; also the background is something personal and it makes part of one's experience.

However there are some aspects a future mentor could train on: active listening and the attempt of decentralizing him/herself, relational competences in order to establish a strong relationship with the mentee, without being too invading or pushing the mentee to consider them as a 'role model'. They need to have a positive experience of active citizenship, they should be aware of how institutions, municipality and the school system work: in particular this aspect is of an utmost importance because mentors have a huge responsibility when they have to address refugees in institutions or in the universities. Missing an information could nullify all the refugees' efforts when for

example during the admission phase a mentee is not told about a needed document or deadlines.

For this reasons the stakeholders confirmed that mentors should be trained or prepared for those practical aspects.

The next question regarded the benefits deriving from the relationship mentor-mentee. Every human relationship has its emotional benefits. Recollecting materials for the theoretical part of Chapter 1, I read that the mentor-mentee relationship has mutual benefits. For this reason, I have decided to investigate this topic during the interviews with the stakeholders. I asked them:

> I read in the literature that mentoring is important because there are mutual benefits deriving from the relationship mentor-mentee. Do you think this is this true? What could be the benefits? And which could be other benefits deriving from the relationship between refugees and non-refugee students?

The interviews confirmed that in the relationship mentor-mentee, benefits are mutual. However, the answers focused more on peer-to-peer mentoring. Among them D.V. affirmed that many universities have experimented peer- to- peer approach as a chance to strengthen the experience of who is new in that context, but also of who already followed that kind of path, adding value to their previous experience. From the point of view of mentee, other stakeholders such as I.3 confirmed that mentoring relationship help the mentee integrating:

> [refugee students] they do not know the system well and they usually become lost [...] so, having a mentor, a person that could follow them closely and explain them all the choices would be beneficial [...]It has huge advantages because it is a totally different relationship (I.3)

As regards this the F.H. answered to the questions "Which are the benefits that can derive from peer-to-peer mentoring in your opinion?" by saying:

> Well the understanding of how the system works, also perhaps mentor is maybe doing a lot with disadvantage youth in the UK. However the mentor is usually

somebody that is much older than them who has, you know, become successful in their career and is somebody to inspire to. I think in refugee mentoring is something different. Maybe is a long similar line, somebody who can help and most of all inspire meanwhile (F.H.)

For question number 5, concerning Strategies to prevent being absorbed by the mentoring relationship, the aim was that of understanding if there are some precautions that the mentor should take in order to not being absorbed by mentoring itself. Indeed, as mentioned before, differently from what happened to translators and interpreters, mentors are allowed to create a relationship with the mentee, in order to instil confidence in the mentee and help him/her. However, in the literature I found for Chapter 2, the IOM claims that mentors need support as well and that they need measures of prevention. These measures should help preventing psychological disorders such as the Secondary Traumatic Stress (Figley, 1995) or prevent being too absorbed by mentoring programs when a particular mentee is demanding too much help of what a mentor can offer.

Since in my opinion it is a really thorny discourse, I wanted to investigate stakeholders' opinions on this subject. When I interviewed the professor A.S., he suggested that mentors should focus mainly on the ability to communicate and to speak up in the most direct and respectful way:

> I think that in human relationships there is always a level of boundary crossing and there is a level of respect and establishing together what are some boundaries and limits. So for me is basically to cultivate a dialogue which is meaningful and also respectful of both sides. And I don't think is a matter of listing a number of things right from the beginning but definitely to be able to speak up when you feel that something is too demanding or threatening you or eating too much of your whatever it is, family life, professional objectives, you know I think it is also different from people to people (A.S)

Indeed too often guidelines contain lists of suggestions about what a professional should do or avoid; however, everybody should keep in mind that that we are talking about human relationships and that at time problems depend on our ability to establish

boundaries or to communicate. The development of these skills might be one of the main interests for a mentor to 'safeguard' him/herself from difficult situations:

> [...] there should be the ability to dialogue and to express where you see a limit approaching and there should be a level of respect and caution in approaching those limits. For me the core issue is the dialogue, you are helping but you are also able to signal that something is overstretching, your ability ... it is not just about the comfort zone. It is not stretching sometimes not too much your professional or personal life, that's also disabling you from repeating the experience or support to other people (A.S.)

In Chapter 2,I introduced the term *intersectionality*, first mentioned Kimberlé Crenshaw as a "lens through which to view the experience of women of color" (Crenshaw, 1991) before, and then to describe all the oppressive experience. Indeed, intersectionality is described by the Oxford Dictionary (2023) as "the network of connections between social categories such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage"[21]. For a better understanding, Wingfield claims: "Crenshaw introduced the theory of *intersectionality*, the idea that when it comes to thinking about how inequalities persist, categories like gender, race, and class are best understood as overlapping and mutually constitutive rather than isolated and distinct" (Wingfield, 2016). The term intersectionality is useful to describe the refugee experience, which is strongly influenced by discriminations concerning different axis that intersect, among them race, gender, poverty, class, religion etc. That is why, as already reported in Chapter 2, to take intersectionality into account into programmes for Refugees Inclusion, would be an interesting achievement for them.

However, I wanted to understand the point of view of the stakeholders on this topic. It was demanded to the stakeholders how important could be an intersectional approach when working at inclusion of refugee students. Here below two interesting answers are found.

---

[21]Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2023). On intersectionality:
https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/intersectionality

According A.S. it is important to promote an intersectional perspective by:

> supporting open reflection about it. I wouldn't create so many projects. In fact we have too many projects, every new category gets a new project and I don't see that strategy being very effective, I hope that one day we will have effectively the same rights for everybody so we find a general approach that you know, enhancing everybody possibilities and abilities; without every time being inclusive to some different profile. I see more, intersectionality as a type of culture a type of sensibility that we need, to sort of support and also trigger, everywhere not just within a specific program definitely when we see the lack of that type of sensibility. I think it is important to raise awareness and to create situations where we can share knowledge and practices about it." (A.S)

> Well I think is important to get away from the idea that those of 'refugee' is the only identity of the person, purposing only in that is obviously problematic I think. Yes projects can look at multiple dimensions of peoples identity but also the challenges they might face (F.H.)

The answers to the last two questions concerning the measures that should be taken in the future of refugee inclusion and on which will be the future role of mentoring in projects of inclusion, are grouped in a singular section. It constitutes a group of suggestions that can help understanding which direction should we follow in the future.

First of all, the stakeholders suggested creating a community of practice, where the good purposes of active citizenship are translated into actions. Some of the stakeholders suggested to reduce projects and start thinking about a cohesive panorama for all the students. For example Professor F.H .suggested to overcome the systemic issues by co-creating projects "what are the key challenges that can improve Higher Education for everybody. So I think to develop a project I think it should be done with students and refugees, it can be 'calato dall'alto' (top-down). It needs to be developed with the collaboration and kind of co-created project" (F.H.).

Another good action could be that of raising awareness on cultural issues, cultural diversity, intercultural issues by promoting reflection with other professionals; pay attention to language barriers is equally important. What could practically help refugee

students at the moment of arrival would be providing information: finding information itself is a difficult task, so providing information sheets for refugees at least. And also to give them scholarships responsibly and be more tolerant if they do not achieve all the credits, give them more chances.

From the point of view of refugees, it emerged the importance of taking care of the refugees' mental health, not only providing a psychological service (that already exist), but trying to work on cultural aspects that at time prevent them from asking for help. And last, the stakeholders suggested to avoid distinction between refugees.

In the creation of the most inclusive permanent strategy of inclusion, higher educational institutes might be helped by the example of other universities that already took action, like the University of Trento. The University of Trento established a foundation year, a preparatory year: this is a chance to meet and establish a connection with refugees and prepare them in order to support them, understand the degree of their motivation and their competences.

From the perspective of those who work with refugees, the stakeholders suggest to create a compact network, a pool of actors that know the municipality and the territory and place a central figure to mediate and address them. Giving more money to tutors and mentors to invest their time in inclusion might increase their satisfaction and serves to pay back all the efforts they do. As I will deepen in the section that concerns training for mentors, another hint for the future of mentoring, is to invest in their preparation as suggested by F.H.: "also preparing mentors, I mean if you have students mentors who aren't prepared for this, I think, they need to. In the case of your example, there are students with refugee background to then become mentors, if that is the case you know I think they need to be supported"(F.H).

To conclude, from the interview between A.S. and M.B. it emerged the necessity of creating critical mass with other Professors, because higher education is the only area which is excluded for who demand international protection and because the collaboration between professionals of this field could make the difference in practical terms. The hope for the future is to be able to prioritize refugee inclusion in higher education and to pursue this mission at an European level. I want to use the words of

S.K. to close this section on stakeholders' brilliant answers and suggestions:"One of my goals will be to have a look on the European level, to go from the state level, the state exchange or the state interchange, onto the European approach" (S.K.).

3.2.3 Factual/additional information collected during interviews

In this second section of qualitative analysis I will report some factual information that I recollected during the interviews. This data did not regard the topics I wanted to investigate and that are contained in the questions of Table 1. However, other important knowledge emerged during the interviews that for their semi-structured nature made way for reflections and for every data that stakeholders considered relevant for the present analysis. Considering all the information and suggestions they provide as important and interesting, I decided to dedicate this second section to few additional topics that could bring several further reflections.

One of the main goals of this dissertation, during the theoretical research part, was to shed some light on the numerous types of mentoring and to understand which is the suitable profile to play an important role in the inclusion of refugees in higher education. In the first chapter it became clear that many types of mentoring exist. In the academic field, especially in the USA, we can talk about youth and academic mentoring (Bagnoli and Estache, 2019). This kind of service is connected with what in the European dimension would refer to as 'tutoring'. Indeed in many Italian Universities, they offer diverse tutor services provided by students for students (peer-to-peer approach) and paid by the university itself.

Other types of mentoring emerged, during my bibliographic research and during previous calls with the coordinator of European and regional projects of inclusion, D.V. The type of mentoring that the professor D.V. and her colleagues were practicing, has not been experienced yet in the context of Italian universities but in the context of different regional projects with migrants and refugees. However this non academic type of mentoring has interesting features and I wondered if it could be important for refugee inclusion also in the higher education field. The mentor, in this place, has experienced in first person the refugee resettlement and he/she needs to have a similar background to those of the people he/she decides to assist. Then they have usually completed all the phases of adaptation in the hosting country and familiarised themselves with institutions

and the municipality. They had worked on themselves and they are now solid and ready to give their contribution to the community. In this person there usually grows the desire and vocation of helping others and, on a voluntarily base they decide to be part of those projects, to establish a relationship with a refugee and to help him/her to complete the same path of resettlement as they did years before.

This information emerged also during the interviews, but however the stakeholder contribution was especially useful to understand their opinion on mentoring utility and to outline a detailed profile of the mentor that could be included in the university staff. When I opened the reflection on mentoring in Higher Education, asking the stakeholders if they had direct experience with mentoring, they offered me different visions. The existing projects will be examined in the next sections.

It emerged that, apart from the Universities of Trento, Bologna and Parma, in the other universities there was little planning in terms of mentoring in inclusion programs. All the stakeholders put a great deal of effort into participating in external projects and finding new solutions for inclusion. Many of them were participating in ARQUS project, an international network that unites different universities in Europe (Granada, Bergen, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon, Minho, Padua, Vilnius and Wroclaw)to open a common dialogue on relevant issues such as 'Refugee inclusion in HE' (see section 3.2.2.). However few of them had direct experience of mentoring, but they had a clear opinion on which characteristics would be preferable for a mentor; some points of reflection and pieces of advice will be provided in section 3.2.3. In any case they gave some suggestions such as the following.

A.S. suggested that, at times it is better to talk about 'mentoring' and not of 'the mentor': it is important to create a dimension that does not involve just one actor but instead a pool of actors. "Sometimes a pool of these people and ability to discuss issues can provide a most readymade solution because they can tap from different language, knowledge, family, knowledge, expertise"(A.S.). The stakeholder specified that in his experience with refugees, they benefited from the multiple efforts of people who knew the language and other who had an understanding of the school system (from primary school to university).

Other professionals expressed their doubts on which kind of mentoring would fit the best in inclusion programmes: D.V., as a coordinator of regional projects, took part in many mentoring programs and she used 'community mentoring' in fields that differed from the higher university context. She pushed me to reflect on the fact that usually a refugee student who wants to approach higher education path has already completed the resettlement phase and should already be familiarized with the school system. We were reflecting together on the fact that probably they would have all the instruments to be prepared for experiencing their university journey autonomously. "Considering that we are talking about an Italian University such as the University of Padua or the Venetian Ca' Foscari, if the refugee student already has a proficient level of Italian or he/she has undertaken a course of study here in Italy, in what should mentoring consist?" (D.V. my translation).

These doubts may be resolved thanks to the testimony of many, among them a refugee student, who confirmed that in his experience he would have benefited from the help of a mentor with a similar background and sensibility to his: "Now, to this regard, the profile that you are analysing is interesting. More than interesting, because if this figure is missing [...] a lot of people like me could go through many issues, they do not necessarily be refugees. [...] Many issues arise mainly because they give you wrong information and they change your destiny as well" (R.S, my translation).

Another stakeholder, E.S., a collaborator of D.V. specified that there are different areas, people and bodies that use the term 'mentoring' and give different meanings to it. It is important for each area of interest to specify which are the characteristics that are most needed for a specific service. "You need to keep in mind the plurality of possible experiences" (E.S.).

In conclusion, taking into account all the suggestions the stakeholders gave to me, I would summarize it in this way: mentoring is an existing profession that takes on different forms according to the specific field in which it is developed. In higher education, until now, institutions have experimented a type of mentoring that is not tailor made for refugees and resembles more what, in Italian universities, one would call 'tutoring': this implies a person that is a point of reference for all questions regarding the university career, who despite being of great importance for all the students, did not

receive any specific formation on refugee issues and challenges. Working with refugee students entails an additional responsibility: they usually have reduced access to information because of linguistic and technical barriers they encounter, so they need particular care. Furthermore, a tutor who did not face some challenges that are typical of refugee resettlement might have little understanding of what they are going through and how to help them properly.

This is the reason why I would suggest investing in a 'tutor or mentor' who has experience of migration and resettlement in his/her background, to face the needs of refugee students for a high level of sensibility and understanding. In this case the suggestion is not to completely replace the existing type of mentoring with a new one: a collaboration between mentors with different backgrounds and prepared for different situations would be preferable and strategic. In order to better design the picture of mentor/mentoring that I intend to propose for higher educational programmes of inclusion, in the following section I will analyse other university of Leipzig model. This example impressed me when I first talked with the Head of the International Centre of the sane university, and I decide to report it as a positive example of a system that works efficiently.

3.2.4. Structure of HE system of inclusion in European countries: University of Leipzig

During the interviews, as I said above, I had the possibility to include S.K. from the international centre of the University of Leipzig, Germany. She gave me information about how her university and the German system in general work in terms of refugee inclusion and I decided to report here her testimony with the aim of providing data for the future. First, talking about the number of refugees in the German higher educational system, she said that almost all universities in Germany welcome a high number of international students (around 400 per University) and over the years, a many universities have prepared and applied preparation programmes for: "since 2016 we have continuously preparation courses for German language; at the moment we have about 80 students learning in those courses." (S.K) Students use support structures from the government, they gain money from it for their living expenses: in this way they can focus on learning German because this is their primary need. What appears encouraging

is that although there are still many obstacles in their paths, Germany has a very structured system: "we have government money put into that but still the obstacles are very high and we work for students learning German until finishing the degree." (S.K) She added:

> I am also thankful that we have a lot of opportunities and we get some moneys from the state of Germany. We can apply for that money, it is called the DAAD. You can apply for scholarships there, you can use international programs and they created programs with German state money to finance German courses as well as refugee initiatives. You have to apply for that kind of money and then you can organize German courses within the university structure; so we get money from there and at the same time we apply for funding from the state government of Saxony which is a region that we have in the east of Germany and they also have certain money available for us, for German courses (S.K)

When I asked her: "Do you have mentoring programs in your universities?", she answered that their structure is a bit different, they have students advisors and especially advisors for students of a refugee background or of a flight background. They also can rely on colleagues of the "Studentenwerk" (Student service organisation): they help with social and financial issues, advising students on these topics. However these are people that are enrolled and have contracts at the university. She added:

> And also we have a program, again financed by the DAD, which is called "Welcome", and it is especially designed for students initiatives, and we have one student initiative for help integrating, to help integrating refugees students. And we have one initiative for also work on guides into the university who gives German lessons as well on different level than the German courses and they help with a lot of questions, everyday life questions, German questions, enrolment questions, other things as well (S.K)

Lastly, their staff are highly trained and also opened to share their knowledge, to talk to each other, to share problems what helps a lot. They also put effort in creating a network: "Sometimes for one person for one individual, one student you need there ...

four ... five people who work there because it is all kind of linking together the problems they have, you need to exchange. The network is important" (S.K).

3.2.5 Access to Higher Education: scholarships, documents recognition, admission tests and consequences of the Status of arrival

As was already mentioned in the chapter 2, accessing higher education has always represented a path full of obstacle. From the interviews it resulted that many of the barriers are systemic.

As concerns scholarships one of the main issues is that there is not a scholarship which is specific for Refugees: that could take into account their specific needs. Usually to get the full scholarship you need to achieve a certain number of credits what is at times difficult for them. Indeed, it happens very often that refugee students do not succeed in taking all the credits requested for the scholarship and they need to give back the whole amount of the scholarship, what means a slowdown in their university career and probably a university dropout. Last, if other types of incentives are planned for refugees, there is too disinformation.

Instead, in the UNICORE project, the scholarship system is well organised, since to the refugee students of the corridors are offered scholarship from UNHCR, ERGO and Caritas what represents a promising data for the future of access in HEIs.

Another obstacle regards the OFA tests or other test of admission: the OFA tests are attributed to the students that passes the admission test with a score that is below the average students score or in case if you do not have all the requirements requested by the course itself. In the experience of a refugee student, in some cases this 'debt' can be cancelled, in other cases this does not happen. For example in the case of a student of Engineering, who did not pass the English Language OFA, he had to work for a year in a warehouse in order to pay back all the scholarship money and he enrolled again. However, this time they said that he did not succeed and lost all the contacts with professors and classmates. The professor M.B. insisted on the fact that is usually up to every University the decision of being more or less severe in terms of OFA or admission tests: in the University of Bologna students can recover the 'debts' during the following year sessions.

What is not up to the Universities or study courses, is the evaluation of documents, recognition and evaluation of competences required for access. Indeed, M.B. in the interviews proved that:

> there is a problem which is related to the possession of documents, there are some students who express their desire to enrol into bachelor's universities and said they have attended high school in Afghanistan, for example, but they did not produce any document, not even an English certificate reporting the name of the college/ high school. They are completely without documents, not even a picture. I mean, if these students produced even a picture of their diploma with a name to track the name of their high school to enrol them in the bachelor, or of a bachelor institute for master courses, we would verify it. [...] there are few of them that do not possess documents at all, in this case it is not possible to welcome them. And it is not possible because regulations avoid that (M.B.)

The last topic of a particular relevance regards the status they have when they are welcomed in the new countries. In fact there are two examples of Universities that welcomed a lot of immigrants as 'students at risks' rather than 'refugees'. We reflected together on the meaning of such decision and this are the conclusions we reached:

> The other issue in Belarus was that the students that were striking they had issues for example if you are critical in Belarus you need to flee the country and go to the neighbour countries. They didn't flee as refugees, in the political sense, but they were like students at risk. [...]The term "students at risk" made more sense for us. We wanted to elaborate it more in the second ARQUS phase, reflect on that issue: how to label this kind of students where do we make a difference, do we make a difference, how do we see them together and how do we see them differently (S.K)

They could benefit of the immediate enrolling into German Universities as they came as students at risk, however "In a political sense they are not refugees but still, somehow they also had to flee their countries so" (S.K) they would have the right to ask for international protection. Also from a psychological point of view, arriving here as 'student' could have a more positive impact on their image of themselves and increase

their motivation; indeed, we need to get away from the idea of 'refugee' as the only characteristics defining their identity.

As regards the University of Bologna, M.B reminds us that in the UNICORE project, refugees are welcomed as students of the corridors. This give them the possibility of going back to their countries if they desire to, and also a direct access to Universities. The status of these people has a 'domino effect' on their studies and future career. In the UNICORE project they enter the country with a student visa. At the end of the university career, they are exposed to the visa renewal and this visa can be transformed into a working visa or not. This is up to the authorities and a reason that pushes them to ask for international protection, soon or later. However here in Italy if you ask for international protection, you cannot enrol into university until you receive an answer. This is the only regulatory gap and the people who enter as international protection seeker, cannot be enrolled until they receive it. He explained they have three options: enrolling them anyway, enrolling them with conditional admission that is confirmed when they officially receive the international protection and enrolling them to single courses what will be transformed into an official study course enrolment with career reconstruction.

3.2.6 Thematic analysis: themes emerging during the interviews

This third and last part of analysis is the thematic analysis itself. It doesn't contain the answers to the direct questions showed in Table 1, nor the factual information I recollected during additional reflections. This section is concerned with the main themes that I could extract from interviews. The themes regard both the dimension of the mentor and of the refugee's resettlement and help understanding which measures might be taken to improve mentoring programs and which are the dynamics of refugee displacement that might affect their resettlement journey.

Because of the differences between types of mentors, I wondered if a common experience in the background is needed for a successful mentoring service. The literature underlines several times that it has different benefits; in Chapter 1 I also reported the testimony of Castellani, who participated in a project held in Venice with children from Bangladesh: one of those children, A. started mentoring other friends from Bangladesh who arrived later introducing them to the new system in a successful

way. This short expedient, may seem to confirm that having similar backgrounds could create deeper connections and could lead to more positive outcomes.

In the literature it was not clear whether mentoring or tutoring programs for university students already attempted this kind of approach. The stakeholders were asked their opinions in this regard. The results confirmed that all the voices agreed on the benefits deriving from a deep understanding of refugee experience and other common experiences. As mentioned above, people who now work as tutors in Italian university contexts, are Italian students that usually apply to tutoring or buddies programs.

However I.3, professor of L2 Italian and who worked with refugee students often flanked by mentors, suggested collaboration between two people: the Italian tutor has the advantage of knowing how the system works; a refugee student is fundamental for the type of sensibility on this subject he/she has: She gave the example of a refugee student she met arrived in Italy at school age; he attended high school and is now enrolled on a university course. In her opinion, he could be perfect for this role as he knows many things and also has a great capability of reasoning. She reported me his words when, reflecting on his own background, he said that he had been lucky because he had the chance to meet people that guided him but that he saw many refugee students becoming lost on this path that is full of obstacles and barriers for them. As reported in Chapter 2 these barriers can be multiple and have different natures, as described by Ferede, Martin and Stulgaitis. Among those barriers they include: the nature of displacement and lack of preparation; interrupted education and gaps in learning; host country restrictions and context; informational barriers; financial barriers: prohibitive costs of higher education and pressure to earn; restrictive language proficiency; lack of documentation, qualification and credentials; psychosocial and newcomers' challenges (Ferede, K., 2018; Martin, M. and Stulgaitis, M., 2022). These difficulties could be contained if there had been somebody that could understand and guide them.

Another proposal is that of A.S., who says:

> Again I think these things could be looked into by a community. Because if you have far too many people that are qualified and have a refugee experience, why not using them? But if you don't have so many of them and if they are coming from a

region that has not so much that have another region of the world, why not including in the pool people that have also other experiences, and, you now, facilitate sometimes different types of support. But I do think that having a migration experience in you background helps." And he adds "of course every experience is different and non necessarily all experiences expose you to certain risks and problems (A.S)

Also in the experience of D.V., 'mentoring' meant strengthening relationships on the basis of a common experience in their background. They worked with women, accompanied them along the pregnancy and assisted them with mentors and they observed that mentoring programs were successful when the mentor has experienced a pregnancy in the hosting country as well.

Another issue that could be questioned when analysing the different types of mentors was: "Should mentoring be on a voluntary base or should mentors be paid for the contribution they give to the community?".As in the other cases, on one hand we have 'community mentors'[22] that was described by E.S. as a "path of consciousness-raising [...] we invite women, if we think about it as female-driving, that has already made some paths [...] and they relive the phases ... they try to acquire instruments, understand how to use them to serve the others, without being overpowering, and without the presumption of being a role model for everyone" (E.S. my translation). She also explained that they think of it as volunteering because for them is more a lifestyle: when a person understands that he/she has acquired a number of competences that have a great value, she/he offers aid to the community in the most balanced way.

The other insight is that, on the contrary, all those working in the university context agreed that mentors should be paid and that in some universities like the German University of Leipzig, there already exist contracts for peers and student advisors.

When asked the question: "Is mentoring a profession or a service on a voluntarily base?" two of the respondents agreed that mentors' efforts needed to be financially recognised. A.S. said "It can be both, I think [...] And maybe we should encourage, professionally, not something extra, that expertise and knowledge to be shared and to be

---

[22] I will refer to community mentor as the type of mentoring that was experienced in the projects of region on a voluntarily base and with people who had a past of migration.

nurtured, acknowledging that that type of profession also should have a more reflective dimension, also money and salaries in relation to what you do in the class." (A.S). F.H. concluded: "I think they need to be supported financially, they can't trust on volunteering. It needs to be recognised" (F.H.).

In this section other points of reflection will complete the first part of the analysis on the mentor. Different issues influence the choice and pairing mentor- mentee and can determine the success of mentoring programmes. Indeed I decided to include this theme in this analysis because it was interesting to observe that, in some cases, a great effort is made to pair the mentee with mentors that can better match them and that can lead to positive outcomes. It might be considered preferable then to adopt some strategies of this kind also in the academic contexts and maybe to insist on the importance of the mentor choice. First, there is the gender component: in the experimentation of mentoring in the language courses held by the region, it was observed that the learning was more proficient and rapid when to a refugee woman was paired a woman mentor rather than a male mentor; this could be due to the sense of trust and protection they could feel but also because an innate preference. As seen in Chapter 1, even if resettlement represents a challenge for everyone, women tend to experience an additional number of challenges and they usually live in a permanent condition of vulnerability. As a consequence they usually experience a totally different type of resettlement (Kamabu, 2018: 2) and gender factors shape the experience and effects of a forced migration (Watkins et al., 2015: 127) that is determined by the numerous violence episodes women suffer. In the light of this, it would seem understandable that a woman mentor that has experienced the same violent journey, might better understand what the woman mentee is going through and how to make her feel safer or comfortable.

Second, we have the peer-to-peer approach: many of the stakeholders confirmed this approach to be strategic and successful. Among them D.V. affirmed that many universities have experimented peer- to- peer approach as a chance to strengthen the experience of who is new in that context, but also of who already followed that kind of path, adding value to their previous experience. Also in Chapter 1, in the section dedicated to types of mentoring, there was a specific section focusing on peer-to-peer

mentoring. Defined by Gower et al (2022) the work of "individuals who share some common characteristics, attributes or circumstances such as age, ability, and interests; and who have more experience along with additional training in how to assist another in acquiring skills, knowledge and attitudes to be more successful." (2022: 3), it could promote a sense of belonging, improve health and well-being. Gower also claimed that "Sharing personal migratory narratives helps to build intimacy and connection within the group, promotes perceived social support among participants, and facilitates communal learning in a safe and relaxed environment"(Gower et al, 2022: 3). If we wonder how mentor and mentee should be paired, E.S. gave an interesting point of reflection. She usually works in the context of regional projects with migrants and together with Her collaborators they could integrate in those projects some mentors that were voluntarily offering their help. According to E.S., theoretically the matching between the mentor and the mentee should be spontaneous and based on the chemistry and feeling that could create among the two of them. To this purpose She said: "the choice should be based on the chemistry between two people, it should be a choice of two people that decide to meet" (E.S. my translation). However, for practical reasons , it is not always possible to recreate such spontaneous choice (not all the mentees and mentors could perfectly fit together, sometimes mentees take their time to open up and the duration of those programmes is limited etc.). However, the coordinators and people who work in those projects always pay attention in the choice of matches: they focus on the experiences of each mentor trying to match mentees with mentors that have the most similar background. For example, in October, The Venetian region created a program for refugee mothers that had the common experience of having a child with disability; the mentor that was chosen for them had the same kind of lived experience and the outcome was positive.

In conclusion, one possible approach for mentoring in higher education could be as follows: in these institutions it is hard to maintain the spontaneous dimension of pairing between mentor and mentee, but we should put effort into considering several social, cultural, economic and personal aspects at the time of the choice. Analysing the specific cases of each university courses and recruiting people with a similar background is a hard task but it could be effective and positive both for mentor and mentee.

A theme that spontaneously emerged during the interviews was that of the importance of the language learning for Refugees. Indeed I did not prepared a question for that, but talking with I.3., responsible of the Italian courses in the University contexts, she underlined a general importance of knowing the language of the hosting country, for accessing universities, to find a work and in general to socially integrate in their new home. It was already mentioned in Chapter 2 that language is one of the barriers and challenges for a refugee student and there is constant evidence of the importance that is given to linguistic knowledge as one of the main skills providing integration. During those courses were assisted by mentors or tutors and could create a strong and deep relationship both with them and with the teachers. She noticed several difficulties regarding the learning method and passed traumas. She affirmed that she found very promising students, and very skilled in language learning who were not so accustomed to structured tests.

This constitutes a huge obstacle especially with the tests of A2 for long-term residence permit or B1 for citizenship recognition. These are tests that are prepared for European learners who are trained for similar tests. However, she witnessed the case of African students, from Mali and Cameroon, that had higher competences in the spoken language with respect to what resulted from citizenships tests.

M.F. remarked on the importance of learning a language for everybody and pushed us to reflecting another time. She said that the motivation that can lead a man or a woman to learn a language is a complex and never taken for granted phenomena. It strictly depends on 'the migration plan of a human being': if a person comes here with the intention to stay, learning Italian (in this case) is urgent.

D.V. added that reasoning on this topic was truly interesting: she has worked with women who arrived in Italy for family reunification and only after 10 years of staying, they begun to approach to Italian language courses "How do you live without knowing a language in a country that is not yours?" She wondered (D.V.), however recognizing all the difficulties of a woman that has sadly left her homeland and is experiencing a lack of motivation of integrating herself in the new community.

Unlike from women who arrived in Italy thanks to family reunification, refugee women who had arrived here alone, needed to get autonomous. Learning the language for them was synonym of social redemption as they had the need of finding a job as soon as they arrived here and of starting a new autonomous life.

A last contribution was given by S.K. who represented in this research the German University system. She said they hold preparation courses at their universities: these courses are financed by the government so the students can focus on learning German that is what they need in that moment. During the last years the number of Refugees taking part to those courses varied from 80 to 120 students.

Together with the stakeholders we observed that usually mental health is never addressed when talking of Refugees students inclusion: "We are never talking about socio- economical and psychological problems" (S.K.). However this aspect is important because mental health has a great impact on their journey: they are often traumatised and have faced a number of difficulties that challenged their mental health. Some of the stakeholders claimed that psychological issues has a great influence on their career, especially because it can influence their motivation or some traumas can resurface, preventing them the possibility of finishing their academic path:

> while are you studying, maybe your traumas come back and for that reason you cannot finish your studies in the proper way. And somebody needs to be there to help and this is something that is still missing, a lot, a lot. We need much more work on that (S.K)

However in the University of Padua and many other institutes, there is the psychological service for students; what preclude them from asking for it, is both the lack of information and the cultural dimension. In some culture, asking for help is a dishonour and this was confirmed by the refugee student I interview: for his religion it was not possible asking for psychological support.

One of the stakeholders claimed:

> But you also need to convince the people, I mean they come from cultural backgrounds where is not so common to have psychological or social support. And

they need a person that they can trust and who will get them, will help them to get in contact with certain kind of workers, or this kind of work with psychological support or all those things (S.K).

A last difficulty, I intend to mention is still connected with the cultural dimension and the chance they had to buy a house: often they cannot buy a house because for their religion they cannot have a mortgage, this would be sin of usury.

They still can rent a house, but in this case, some landlord usually reject their requests as soon as they understand they come from different nations.

At the end of this analysis on the role of mentor in the inclusion of refugees in higher education, I obtained a clearer vision of the present situation in the Italian and European universities and a number of suggestions for the future of inclusion. A last consideration needs to be done on the role of mentor we desire to shed lights on and propose as a new role for inclusion. The suggestions for the future, contained in 3.2.2., explained in which direction we should move: creating a more cohesive panorama at European and national level, so that coordination could be more effective and could provide equal measures for everyone.

Raising more awareness both for the staff and refugees. The staff should be aware of refugees' challenges, cultural issues and cultural diversity; refugees, on the counterpart, should be informed more about their rights and the services that are prepared for them.

Then a foundation year should be a good strategy for refugees inclusion into a good network of friends and operators that can address them in an appropriate way and along the University career. In this pool of actors, mentors should be included in order to pair refugee students or students at risk and have a better comprehension of their past and future experiences.

After this analysis it is finally possible to attempt to resolve the doubts that were presented during the interviews and to put forward the meaning that we are giving to the word 'mentoring' in this context: the suggestion is to experiment the type of mentoring that was used in regional projects, a mentor that has a refugee background and has lived a similar experience to those of their mentee, a person that can create a bound with the

refugee student and be available to mentor him when needed. However I would suggest to keep the structure of paid tutoring: students willing to become mentors will have to possibility to apply for this position and will be 'selected' according their personal knowledge, motivation, emotional sensibility and psychological aspects, and they will be paid for their aid. Furthermore they will be supported by the whole system of which they become part.

However this is just a proposal inspired by the reflections I made during the interviews, the work of tutors are undertaking is already a promising step forward and it might be combined with that of mentors.

Conclusion

The main aim of the present study was to analyse the figure of the mentor. The main goal was to understand if including mentors in the universities to support to refugees students could represent for them a step ahead towards the possibility of participating in tertiary education, especially considering that in the literature what emerged was the importance of education especially for refugees (Chapter 2). The main research questions were investigated through a qualitative analysis centred on the interviews I had the opportunity to conduct together with experts in the field and a refugee student, all relevant voices for this dissertation.

At the end of the analysis the main results seemed to suggest the need to raise more awareness on the refugees' challenges for their inclusion in higher education and to create more cohesion at a European level finding new solutions and adopting measures internationally. In this more conscious and united panorama, the respondents suggested that integrating mentors in a pool of actors that work together at refugee integration could be a good strategy.

 However one of the main results to me was understanding which type of mentor could be the most suitable for working with refugees in the universities. Indeed the first type of mentor that was described to me was 'community mentor', a term that I have decided to use to identify those mentors that are welcomed in the regional projects of inclusion of migrants, that are volunteers and share the same migration background. However, the literature mentioned many different types of mentoring and I understood that community mentoring had never been used for academic purposes before. Since the interviewees belonged to different areas of expertise I could propose this new figure to the teachers that represented the academic field, and I could discuss the possibility of introducing community mentoring to the coordinators of the projects of region of Veneto who first introduced me to it. I talked about this possibility especially with the refugee student and he found this very interesting, confirming that many issues arise mainly because of wrong information that might change your destiny, so a mentor that has already experienced the same difficult path could properly guide them.

As a result of the reflections on this topic, what could be confirmed is the importance of a mentor that share the same baggage of information as the mentee he/she is helping. The suggestion is not to replace the existing forms of tutoring or mentoring that are important and useful for everybody in the academic context, but rather to integrate them with a new type of tailor made mentoring for refugees, considering that they often encounter several barriers like the reduced access to information because of linguistic and technical barriers. For this type of mentor, having a migration background could help and the respondents also suggested a possible collaboration between two different figures, one tutor from the host country, who has the advantage of knowing how the system works. and another with a refugee background for the type of sensibility on this subject he/she has.

Talking about the economic aspect of this role, unlike from what happens in the regional projects of inclusion, the stakeholders agreed on the fact that mentors should be paid. Mentors' help and efforts should be financially recognized and encouraged because the work they can do is meaningful and worthy. Furthermore in the choice of mentors to include in higher education courses or programs of inclusion it is important to consider several social, cultural, economic and personal aspects. Analysing the specific cases of each university system and recruiting people with a similar background is a hard task but it could be effective and positive both for mentor and mentee. Mentors should receive trainings and be prepared on the level of responsibility their role implies. They should establish a relationship with the mentee based on respect and on dialogue: indeed they should be able to speak up when a situation is too demanding, without disrespecting the mentee's feelings making him/her feeling like a burden. However, it would be important to raise awareness on the refugee experience: it would be important that everybody should be conscious of cultural issues, cultural diversity and barriers.

During the interviews we opened up a reflection on mental health: in the inclusion of refugees in higher education, it would be imperative to take care of refugees mental health and to understand that sometimes cultural aspects prevent refugees from asking for help.

Reflecting together on these issues and teaming up with other professionals is important in order to coordinate at a more general level. Indeed, a last conclusion regarded the

whole system of inclusion. The stakeholders suggested creating a pool of actors that have different competencies, in which the mentor can be included, and developing a cohesive structure among all the universities at a national and European level in order to create a strong and permanent structure, an European approach.

For the future, the hope is to finally create a community of practice, where the good purposes of active citizenship are translated into actions: the hope is that the struggle for refugee inclusion in higher education, will become a prioritized mission for institutions.

Acknowledgements

REFERENCES

Bibliography

Abou-Khalil, V.,Helou, S., Flanagan, B., Pinkwart, N.,& Oagata, H. (2019). Language Learning Tool for Refugees: Identifying the Language Learning Needs of Syrian Refugees Through Participatory Design. *Languages,* 4 (3), 71.

Ali, M. (2008). Loss of parenting self-efficacy among immigrant parents. Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood,* 9 (2), 148-160.

Anderson, P., & Boylan, P. (2017). From stereotyping to becoming interculturally competent. In M.L. Ennis& C.E. Riley (eds.), *Practices in Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 62-88.

Avery, H., & Said, S. (2017). Higher education for refugees: the case of Syria. *Policy & Practice*, 104-125.

Bagnoli, L., &Estache, A. (2019). *Mentoring Labour Market Integration of Migrants: Policy Insights from a Survey of Mentoring Theory and Practice.* Bruxelle: Université libre de Bruxelle.

Bajwa, J. K., Couto, S., Kidd, S.,Markoulakis, R.,Abai, M., & McKenzie, K. (2017). Refugees, Higher Education, and Informational Barriers. *Canada's Journal on Refugees Centre for Refugee Studies*, 33 (2), 56-65.

Barrett, M., Byram, M.,Lázár, I.,Mompoint-Gaillard, P.,&Philippou, S. (2013). *Developing Intercultural Competence through Education. Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Bart-Plange, E.L.B. (2015). *The Effects of Acculturative Stress on Mental Health Outcomes of African Immigrant and Refugee Youth: Coping as a Moderator.* Chicago: Loyola University.

Beiser, M. & Hou, F. (2000). Gender differences in language acquisition and economic consequences among South Asian refugees in Canada. *Canadian Public Policy,* 26 (3), 311-330.

Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R. M. Paige (ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience.* Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 21-71.

Bennett, M. J. (2013). *Basic concepts of intercultural communication: Paradigms, principles, & practices.* Boston: Intercultural Press.

Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L. & Vedder, P. (2010). Immigrant youth. Acculturation, identity and adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 55 (3), 303-332.

Bertino, V. (2017). *Interpreting and Mediation, a compatible experience of the figure of mediator interpreter in cases of gender-based violence, a field trial.* Genova: Università degli Studi di Genova.

Block, D. (2007/2014). *Second language identities.* New York: Continuum.

Bokore, N. (2015). Suffering in silence: A Canadian-Somali Case Study. *Journal of Social Work,* 27 (1), 95-113.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence.* Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M., Nicholas, A. & Stevens, D. (2001). *Developing intercultural competence in practice.* Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2009). Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language: The intercultural Speaker and The Pedagogy of Foreign Language Education. In Deardoff Darla K., *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence*. Thousand Oaks, SAGE publications, Inc., 321-332.

British Council (2018). *Language for resilience. The role of language in enhancing the resilience of Syrian refugees and host communities.* British Council.

Claeys-Kulik, A., Jørgensen, T. & Stöber H. (2019). *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions: results from the INVITED project.* European University Association.

Clayton, K. (2022). *How do co-curricular mentorship programs meet the socialemotional needs of immigrant and refugee youth? A case study from Harrisonburg.* [Bachelor thesis, Madison University] .Virginia: Senior Honors Projects.

Commissione Nazionale per il diritto d'Asilo (2020). *Guida Pratica per richiedenti protezione internazionale in Italia.* Ministero dell'Interno.

Council of Europe (2011). *Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against woman and domestic violence.*

Council of Europe (2017).*Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region.* UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Crea, T. M. & Sparnon, N. (2017). Democratizing education at the margins: Faculty and practitioner perspectives on delivering online tertiary education for refugees. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 14 (43), 1-19.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. *Stanford law review*. 43 (6), 1241-1299.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education.* 10 (3), 241-266.

Deriu, M. (2017/2018). *Piano d'Ateneo per i Rifugiati.* Parma: Università di Parma.

Détourbe, M. A. & Goastellec, G. (2018). Revisiting the Issues of Access to Higher Education and Social Stratification through the Case of Refugees: A Comparative Study of Spaces of Opportunity for Refugee Students in Germany and England. *MDPI Social Sciences.*7 (10), 1-20.

Dohrenwend, A. (2018). Defining Empathy to Better Teach, Measure, and Understand Its Impact. *Academic Medicine*. 93 (12), 1754-1756.

Dryden-Peterson, S. & Giles, W. (2010). Introduction: Higher Education for Refugees. *Canada's journal on refugees*. 27 (2), 3-9.

Dryden-Peterson, S. (2011). *Refugee Education. A global review* . Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. University of Toronto.

Dumenden, I.E. (2011). Agency as the Acquisition of Capital: the role of one-on-one tutoring and mentoring in changing a refugee student's educational trajectory. Australia: *European Educational Research SAGE Journal*. 10 (4), 472- 483.

Eurdyce Report (2019). *Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures.* Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, European Union.

Elby, L.T., Rhodes, J. E. & Allen T. D. (2007). Definition and evolution of mentoring. In *The Blackwell handbook of mentoring: A multiple perspectives approach.* The Blackwell publisher Ltd. 7-21.

Eunson, M. (2012). "Non-Verbal Communication". In Eunson, M., (2021) *Communicating in the 21th Century*, 254-281.

European Commission (2019). *Violenza di genere nei confronti di donne rifugiate e richiedenti asilo.* Solwodi Deutscheland.

European Commission, Eacea & Eurydice (2019). *Integrating Asylum Seekers and Refugees into Higher Education in Europe: National Policies and Measures.* Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Faqir, F. (2001). Intrafamily femicide in defence of honour: the case of Jordan. *Third World Quarterly,* 22 (1), 65-82.

Ferede, K. (2018). *Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls. Higher Education for Refugees.* UNESCO.

Figley, C. R. (1995). *Compassion Fatigue: Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorders from Treating the Traumatized.* New York: Brunner/ Mazel.

Freedman, J. (2016). Sexual and gender-based violence against refugee women: a hidden aspect of the refugee "crisis". *Reproductive Health Matters,* 2 (47), 18-26.

Fulu E. & Midema S. (2015). Violence Against Women: Globalizing the Integrated Ecological Model. *SAGE journals*, 21 (12), 1431-1455.

GEM (2018). *Migration, Displacement and Education: Building Bridges, not Walls. Background paper prepared for the 2019.* Paris: Global Education Monitoring Report. UNESCO.

Gill, L. (2006*).* Patriarchal Violence in the Name of 'Honour'. London: *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences,* 1 (1), 1-12.

Gower, S., Jeemi, Z., Forbes, D., Kebble, P. & Dantas, J. (2022). Peer Mentoring Programs for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Refugee and Migrant Women: An Integrative Review. *Journal of Environmental and Public Health,* 19 (19), 1-18.

Graeme, H. (2005). *Migrants in society: diversity and cohesion. A paper prepared for the Policy Analysis and Research Programme of the Global Commission on International Migration.* National Centre for Social Applications of GIS.

Hashim, M. J. (2022) The aim of Higher Education. *Pakistan Journal of Medical and Health Sciences,* 16 (8), 3-5.

Hawkins, M. M., Schmitt, M. E., Adebayo, C. T., Weitzel, J., Olukotun, O., Christensen, A. M., Ruiz, A. M., Gilman, K., Quigley, K., Dressel, A. & Mkandawire-Valhmu, L. (2021). Promoting the health of refugee women: a scoping literature review incorporating the social ecological model. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 20 (45), 1-10.

Helm, F. (2018). *Emerging identities in virtual exchange*. Voillans: Research publishing net.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences. Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations.* London: SAGE.

IOM (2021). *Paths to inclusion. Training for community mentors: communication, intercultural and social skills.* Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union.

Kalisch, B. (1973). What Is Empathy? *The American Journal of Nursing*, 73 (9), 1548-52.

Kamabu, J. (2018). *Resettlement challenges among African refugee women living in Winnipeg.* [Thesis of graduate studies, University of Manitoba].

Kury, H. & Redo, S. (2018). *Refugees and Migrants in Law and Policy Challenges and Opportunities for Global Civic Education.* Springer.

Lambert, R. D. (1994). *Educational exchange and global competence.* New York: Council on International Educational Exchange.

Lambrechts, A. (2020). The superdisadvantaged in higher education: barriers to access for refugee background students in England. *Higher Education,* 80, 803-822.

Larose, S. & Tarabusly, G. M. (2014). Academically at-risk students. Quebéc: *Attachment and Human Development*, 14, 621-643.

Li, X. (2019). *Cultivation of cultural empathy in intercultural communication under the background of One Belt and One Road.* 5th International Conference on Education Technology, Management and Humanities Science.

Ma, J., Pender, M. & Welch, M. (2016). *Education Pays 2016. The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society.* New York: The College Board.

Maroni, M. V. (2009). *Riflessi. Dietro lo specchio, adolescenti stranieri.* Milano, Franco Angeli Edizioni.

Martin, M. & Stulgaitis, M. (2022). *Refugees' Access to Higher Education in their Host Countries: Overcoming the 'super-disadvantage.* UNHCR.

McMichael, C. (2003). *Memory and resettlement: Somali women in Melbourne and emotional wellbeing.* [PhD thesis, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, The University of Melbourne].

Meetoo, V. & Mirza, H. S. (2010). "There is nothing 'honourable' about honour killings". In *gender, violence and the limits of multiculturalism.* Women's Studies International Forum, 187-200.

Mena, F. J., Padilla, A. M. & Maldonado, M. (1987). Acculturative stress and specific coping strategies among immigrant and later generation college students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioural Sciences,* 9 (2), 207-225.

Montuori, A. & Fahim, U. (2004). Cross-Cultural Encounter as an Opportunity for Personal Growth. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 44 (2), 243- 265.

Nordby, L. (2018). *Gender-based violence in the refugee camps in Cox Bazar -A case study of Rohingya women's and girls' exposure to gender-based violence.* [Independent Master thesis, Uppsala University].

Oberoi, A. (2016). *Mentoring for first-generation immigrant and refugee youth: National Mentoring Resource Centre Population Review.* Miami: University of Miami.

Ozturk, L., Serin, Z. V. & Altinoz, H. (2019). Challenges and Obstacles for Syrian Refugee Women in the Turkish Labor Market. *Societies*, 9 (3), 1-10.

Paltridge, B. & Pakiti, A. (2015). *Research methods in applied linguistics. A practical resource, edited by Brian Paltridge and Aek Pakiti.* London: Bloomsbury.

Platzer, M. (2018). "Refugee Access to Tertiary Education". In *Refugee Access to tertiary education.* Springer. 191-205.

Rhodes, J. E. (2005). *A model of youth mentoring*. Handbook of youth mentoring. SAGE Publications.

Schein, E. (1984). Coming to a new awareness of organizational culture. *Sloan Management Review,* 25 (12), 3-16.

Šipka, D. (2019). *Layers of Identity: words, meaning and culture in the Slavic languages*. Cambridge University Press.

Soberón, M.A., Reuter, L & Chibuzor, A. (2017). *Accessing Higher Education in Europe: Challenges for Refugee Students & Strategies to Overcome Them.* [Thesis, University of Cologne].

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012). *What is culture? A compilation of quotations*. GlobalPAD Core Concepts.

Tastasoglou, E., Abdi, C., Bingham, E. & Lange, E. (2014). Gendering vulnerability: Immigrant service providers' perception of needs, policies, and practices related to gender and women refugee claimants in Atlantic Canada. Canada's Journal on Refugees, 30 (2), 67-78.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2016). *Newcomer Tool Kit.* Washington, DC.

Ugangst, L. & Crea, T. (2020). Higher Education for Refugees: A Need for Intersectional Research. *Comparative education review,* 64, 228-248.

UNESCO (2017). *Protecting the right to education for refugees.* UNESCO.

UNHCR (2017). *Handbook for Interpreters in Asylum Procedures.* UNHCR Austria.

Valero Garcés, C. (2012). *A sociological perspective on TIPS. Explorations into the translator's/interpreter's (in)visibility in Translation and Interpreting in Public Services. The interpreter's newsletter*, 17, 13-37.

Valero Garcés, C. (2019). Training public service interpreters and translators: facing challenges. *Journal of Language and Law*. 71, 88-105.

Valero Garcés, C. & Mancho, G. (2002). Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos: Nuevas necesidades para nuevas realidades. In Valero Garcés, C., Mancho Barés, G. (eds.). *Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos: Nuevas necesidades para nuevas realidades. Community Interpreting and Translating; New Needs for New Realities.* Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá, 15-25.

Vickers, M. & Zammit, K. (2017). Peer mentoring and intercultural understanding: Support for refugee-background and immigrant students beginning university studies. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 60, 198-209.

Wachter, K., Heffron, C., Snyder, S., Nsonwu, B. & Busch-Armendariz (2016). Unsettled immigration; Pre- and post-immigration factors in Congolese refugee women's resettlement experiences in the United States. *SAGE journals (International Social Work),* 59 (6), 875-889.

Watkins, P., Razee, H. & Richters, J. (2015). "I'm telling you…the language barrier is the most, the biggest challenge." Barriers education among Karen refugee women in Australia. *Australian Journal of Education,* 56 (2), 126-141.

Weiler, L., Haddock, S., Zimmerman, T., Krafchick, J., Henry, K. & Rudisill, S. (2013). Benefits derived by college students from mentoring at-risk youth in a service-learning course. *American Journal of Community Pyschology,* 52 (3-4), 236-248.

Wessels, J. (2022). *Challenge topic #4: access to education for refugees. Mun refugee challenge.* UNHCR.

Sitography

Caulfield, J (2019). How to do thematic analysis:
https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/.

Citizens UK (2023) About us:
https://www.citizensuk.org/about-us/.

ER.GO (2022) Chi siamo:
https://www.er-go.it/index.php?id=5899.

FEDER manager, Corridoi universitari per studenti rifugiati: il progetto uni-co-re prosegue:
https://bologna.federmanager.it/corridoi-universitari-per-studenti-rifugiati-il-progetto-uni-co-re-prosegue/

inHERE (2018): Recommendations of the project. Enhancing the access of refugees to higher education in Europe and their integration:
 https://www.inhereproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/inHERE-RECOMMENDATIONS-EN.pdf.

King's college (2020). King's is proud to be the first 'Refugees welcome university':
https://www.kcl.ac.uk/kings-is-proud-to-be-the-first-refugees-welcome-university.

Melting pot (2015), Il permesso di soggiorno per asilo politico:
https://www.meltingpot.org/2021/01/il-permesso-di-soggiorno-per-asilo-politico/.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionaries (2022). Definition of mentoring noun from the Oxford advanced learner's dictionary:
https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/mentoring.

SCHOLARS AT RISK NETWORK (2022).About:
https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/about/.

STAR (1994) Students action for Refugees:
https://star-network.org.uk/.

The World Bank (2021). Higher Education:
https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/tertiaryeducation#:~:text=Tertiary%20education%20refers%20to%20all,poverty%2C%20and%20boosting%20shared%20prosperity.

THE WORLD DATABANK (2022). "The gross enrolment ratio":
Glossary | DataBank (worldbank.org).

UN (1989).Convention on the Rights of the Child:
https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text#.

UN (2023). Refugee education in crisis:
https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/refugee-education-crisis-more-half-worlds-school-age-refugee-children-do-not-get

UN Women (2013). The ecological framework:
https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1509-the-ecological-framework.html.

UNHCR (1951).Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees:
https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.

UNHCR (2016).Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis:

https://www.unhcr.org/publications/education/57d9d01d0/missing-refugee-education-crisis.html.

UNHCR (2017). It's time to turn the tide:

https://www.unhcr.org/turnthetide/

UNHCR (2018). Global trends: Forced displacement in 2017. Geneva:

https://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf.

UNHCR (2019). What is a Refugee?:

https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html#:~:text=The%201951%20Refugee%20Convention%20is,group%2C%20or%20political%20opinion.%E2%80%9D.

UNHCR (2020). Tertiary Education:

https://www.unhcr.org/tertiary-education.html.

UNHCR (2022). On gender-based violence recollected on the site of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency:

https://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html.

UNHCR (2022).Tertiary Education:

https://www.unhcr.org/tertiary-education.html.

UNHCR (2023). Cos'è il re insediamento dei rifugiati:

https://www.unhcr.org/it/domande-frequenti/

UNHCR (2023). Gender-based Violence:

https://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html

University of Trento (2022).Asylum Seekers to University Project:

https://www.unitn.it/en/ateneo/60469/asylum-seekers-to-university-project.

WHO (2002). World Report on Violence and Health:

https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/.

Winfield, A. H. (2016).About Those 79 Cents:

https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/10/79-cents/504386/

Wikipedia, (2022) Tertiary Education:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertiary_education.

APPENDIX

Interview n.1

Interview n.1, Associate professor in the Department of FISPPA of the University of Padua

Giulia: Thank you for your time, I am writing mi dissertation on the role of mentor, it is a new figure for me. I wanted to ask you some questions because I still have a limited knowledge about that, so maybe you can tell me more. So the first thing I wanted to talk about is the percentage of refugees in the Italian and European Higher Education because in my experience, during my university career in Genoa and Padua, I've never had the chance to have refugee class mates so I wanted to ask you if you have some idea of the percentage of refugee students in Italian and European Higher Education.

I: Well I have two answers, the first is that for many years, really many, because I has been involved in many issues, I have been asking my University, to establish a proper census of refugee students at university and for one reason or another it was never possible, so the short answer is no, I don't have an idea. Then I think that there is at least one place, which is the UNHCR you know the UN refugee agency and today they have been trying to promote some kind of coordination and the manifesto in Italy, so I know that they have been gathering data and I would address to them for this question.

Giulia: Ok, yes indeed as I need to write my second chapter I was looking at different documents and I noticed that it is very hard for quite everybody to find some data on that topic and that they address UNHCR. I wanted to talk about the process of mentoring, mentoring programs in the University context. Why do you think this could be useful and are there some projects of this kind at your University?

I: Well, my university is the University of Padua and in fact. I think that the person is most qualified to answer is a Fiona Dalziel or Benedetta Zatti. I have been in different programs in the past, in different initiatives.

Giulia: I am a student of Professor Dalziel, and I know she is involved in a lot of projects.

I: But if you want, more than one year ago, I took the initiative to interview the two persons that are responsible for refugees, for welcome and other programs concerning refugees in the University of Bologna and Parma. I recorded those two interviews, and I have share them with Fiona and other people that are concerned with this. So more than a year ago I offered them some solutions, and some other actions that are already being implemented in Bologna and in Parma and I think they can be complementary with each other and I think Padua is a little in between. And this is also in relation to the fact that, maybe you know, that there are university corridors for refugees, UNICORE, right?! That involves over 30 Italian universities and maybe this year about 70 refugee students so there is a framework and examples to look at.

Giulia: Yes, because I guess that it is a bit fragmented so ...

I: In Padua, but in other Universities, Trento, Parma and Bologna, they are steps ahead and we have the knowledge and I have recorded the knowledge for the University of Padua.

Giulia: Okay thank you, it is important for me to understand to which universities I should look at as positive examples.

I: But you can already access these two interviews if you want. And I think you should. Because what they are going to tell you is: "we have already told University of Padua a number of things." So you better be aware of those things before you contact them again.

Giulia: Thank you very much! Should I ask Professor Dalziel?

I: I will see if I still have those recordings. Definitely I made it available to Benedetta and Fiona but since I think I am going to share with you this recording, I will have a look if I can find back also those recordings.

Giulia: I need to write to Benedetta Zatti...

I: Yeah and into ARQUS, you know they did a number of papers and reports on this topic so maybe she can share that with you. It is just finalising the reporting and reporting documents of the ARQUS first phase, that's a coordination of universities. ARQUS is a network of universities collaborating with each other and creating a framework whereby are different University courses, let's say more compatible with each others. So we are also discussing common approaches to some issues. And welcoming refugees is one of them. She's been sharing with us also reports about that. ARQUS also involves a mobility dimension for sure.

Giulia: I understand, I had to participate to a mobility project in Granada promoted by ARQUS too and I appreciated a lot that ARQUS allows everybody who wants to have a mobility experience, to have a scholarship to study abroad. They offer the possibility for everybody to submit to this program. However, I was also working on the skills of mentor, I read the literature, in which they listed the skills a mentor should have, and this was interesting. I wanted to ask you, in your opinion, what are the most important skills a mentor should have when he/she works in inclusion of refugees. If you have experience of mentoring.

I: Well I think it is different to talk about one mentor or mentoring, and in my experience, the most important thing is to look at this as 'mentoring'. A dimension that involves not just one actor. I am saying this, for example, because the direct feedback I had from some refugees was, that it was really important for them to have somebody to not only speak their mother tongue but also have some kind of understanding of their school system. Not just University system, but also the previous school systems. And for example, in the experience of some people who was not necessarily only a person from that country. But for example in that case the Arabic language played a role. So for example, somebody from Morocco, was mentoring in a positive way, was helpful to somebody from Syria because somehow it was easy for him to guess attitudes, and some bureaucracy and some issues in the Syrian system, even if he had never been to Syria. But he had some knowledge and he had the type of sensibility that could help the two of them to find what was the actual background of Syrian refugees and what could facilitate them within the Padua system. It is not you know, general skills people should have but sometimes, in different phases, what is specific issues they have to be

addressed? And I think there are different solutions to that; so it is good that people have, let's, say one person they can refer to and that is thinking of them. But sometimes a pool of these people and ability to discuss issues can provide a most readymade solution because they can tap from different language, knowledge, family knowledge, expertise. I would stress that dimension because very often when we try to standardise this, then we also get people into training programs and preparation, that of course it's useful but still remains a bit general and also sometimes induces certain behaviours. And here you also need some kind of personal sensibility, and also personal spirit of initiative. So I think that whatever mentoring system we have, there is also a sort of mediation in between the refugee student and university but also between the refugee and the city, the municipality and sometimes other institutions. So probably, to think about it in terms of a general function of the university, involving also the municipality and involving also some kind of pool. I am not saying over-coordinating. I am not saying that talking to each other is always the solution, but if you have people that on a voluntarily bases or on some kind of basis within the university of Padua have a status of students and then want to become tutors, or if you have staff that wants to become tutors I think that some mechanism of information sharing, mutual support, also highlighting the issues that people are facing. So more an idea of building a community and within the community being in the end a community of practice, identifying some facilitator that can enhance some issues and elicit knowledge, support, and previous practices that might help, might prevent especially problems. You know, when you arrive and they offer you scholarship, you always take that and only later you realize you are not able to fulfil all the exam credits scheme that are compulsory with those schemes for example. So then it is important especially someone who had your experience. Until now, we always thought of foreign students or students that have that type of sensibility as tutors, but as time goes by we have students that already made their career at the University of Padua having begun as refugee students so some of them might be particularly suitable to help other refugee students.

Things are changing exactly in the past three four years.

Giulia: The first time I talked with D.V, she is the coordinator of the European and regional projects, in the Regione Veneto she introduced me to the figure of mentor they introduced in regional projects and the first thing she said to me was that a

mentor should have a migration background and he needed to come here as a refugee. It was difficult for me to understand if a person who didn't have a background of immigration could be a mentor, or is this background of migration a fundamental requirement for becoming a mentor?

I: Yeah, again I think these things could be looked into by a community. Because if you have far too many people that are qualified and have a refugee experience, why not using them? But if you don't have so many of them and if they are coming from a region that has not so much why not including in the pool people that have also other experiences, and, you know, facilitate sometimes different types of support. But I do think that having a migration experience in you background helps. I mean I have that and I can see that I tap from that, even if of course every experience is different and non necessarily all experiences expose you to certain risks and problems.

Giulia: I guess it give you that sensibility to understand the other part.

I: Yeah, also from an affective perspective, not everything is technical. You also understand people going through phases, frustration and cultural shock and this sort of things. And then they have obligation sometimes to their families, that they conceal things for very genuine reasons, so it is also important that people don't try just troubleshoot or just jump to conclusions too quickly. I mean you have to establish a relationship as well.

Giulia: Yeah, this was another thing that impressed me the most, also because as a translator and interpreter, in my background of studies we were always taught to keep a distance, what is not always possible but these are the instructions they give you. The things that impressed me the most was the need of this kind of mentoring to create an emotional tie an emotional relationship of trust, it is the thing that impressed me the most about the mentor. Another question was regarding this. Which kind of benefits can derive from this relationship of trust?

I: Yeah, for me trust is a bigger word maybe, it is important as an area you want to develop but I wouldn't immediately put it as objective, something that you achieve, it is a bit like empathy. Actually you can trust people on certain things, you can make yourself accountable and reliable. I don't think we necessarily need intimacy and super

personal relations to be tutors, and mentors to other people but we really need to listen and decentralise ourselves a little bit. And see how to explore a situation which is not immediately straightforward or clear to us. These are also issues so things that sometimes we just borrow from the non violent communication, or other effective communication schools, keywords. But I would be very careful because especially the refugee condition is a particular condition to, you know, to achieve; sometimes you really have to lie or to put up things that you know is the only way that makes you acceptable. Why should we talk about trust, in conditions where we know that institutions itself is not pushing for truth, or officially demanding some kind of truth. But in reality you know that ability to reach refugee status is far more important and legitimate than tell absolutely all facts and truths that people can misunderstand or relate to situations or to bureaucratic scheme that have little to do sometimes even with common sense.

Giulia: Okay so should a mentor keep a sort of small distance or ...?

I: I am not talking about distance, I am talking about the difference between trying to listen and to address problems and sometimes also keep a focus on what we are working at. Not necessarily, you know, making it dependent, or some kind of broader, deeper trust ship, or relation of trust. Which I don't think is an objective in itself.

Giulia: What about the strategies to safeguard him/herself, for a mentor? Because I have read on training guideline about the necessity of adopting some strategies to "protect" themselves. What do you think about that?

I: You mean the mentor protecting him or herself from the refugee student?

Giulia: Yes, I mean, for not being absorbed by the mentoring itself.

I: I don't know. I don't like this protection wording, I think that in human relationships there is always a level of boundary crossing and there is a level of respect and establishing together what are some boundaries and limits. So for me is basically to cultivate a dialogue which is meaningful and also respectful of both sides. And I don't think is a matter of listing a number of things right from the beginning but definitely to be able to speak up when you feel that something is too demanding or threatening you

or eating too much of your whatever it is, family life, professional objectives, you know I think it is also different from people to people. For some of us mentoring another people, family can be a resource, for some of us family or family sides can be a limitation. And sometimes you have the opportunity and, let's say the situation, where you can share some of your concern and limits with somebody else. Sometimes you don't want or you esteem that this is not the case and you don't want to burden people with additional things. But there should be the ability to dialogue and to express where for you see a limit approaching and you and there should be a level of respect and caution in approaching those limits. For me the core issue is the dialogue, you are helping but you are also able to signal that something is overstretching, your ability ... it is not just about the comfort zone. It is not stretching sometimes not too much your professional or personal life, that's also disabling you from repeating the experience or support to other people.

Giulia: Thank you, I was also reflecting about that in refugee experience, many axis mix, for example class poverty and gender. I was thinking about the word intersectionality, and I was reflecting about how can we make intersectional projects and how much is important to put an intersectional perspective in this kind of projects of mentoring.

I: Yes, I guess by supporting open reflection about it, I wouldn't create so many projects. In fact we have too many projects, every new category gets a new project and I don't see that strategy being very effective, I hope that one day we will have effectively the same rights for everybody so we find a general approach that you know, enhancing everybody's possibilities and abilities; without every time being inclusive to some different profile. Maybe when you are so exclusive, the root cause is general policy, it is not fine. So I see more, intersectionality as a type of culture a type of sensibility that we need, to sort of support and also trigger, everywhere not just within a specific program definitely when we see the lack of that type of sensibility. I think it is important to raise awareness and to create situations where we can share knowledge and practices about it. We are lead by examples, not so much by theoretical reflection.

Giulia: Yeah in fact I had the same feeling reading articles and papers on mentoring in HE. I was wondering, which will be the future of mentoring. Which are the paths that we can follow in order to create a cohesive panorama of mentoring. Do you have any suggestions in this way?

I: Well for me it must be deeds more than words, and I think the core of it is to pay attention to the language barriers – by language I also intend the degree of awareness of cultural issues that go together with language. We already have very serious staff at the CLA, the centre for languages at the University of Padua and there have been in the past some attempts to increase awareness and initiatives, not just concerning language learning, but also concerning intercultural issues, cultural diversity, management and there ... I think rather than over-coordinating we need to allow also these stuffs to have more time to provide feedback and reflections to and with each other. So this specifically can also mean that you pay people not just to teach but also to reflect sometimes and this is not something that goes into specific projects but into your profile.

Associate professor, it is normal that they teach from one side but they also need to do research and also what we call third mission and some other staff maybe at CLA they don't have much time beyond the actual class hours but I do think that they have a terrific expertise and knowledge.

And maybe we should encourage, professionally, not something extra, that expertise and knowledge to be shared and to be nurtured, acknowledging that that type of profession also should have a more reflective dimension; also money and salaries in relation to what you do in the class with the pupils.

Giulia: Okay is the mentor a profession or on a voluntarily base?

I: It can be both, I think when I look at Europe usually it is part of an existing profession. So if I say mentor and I am meaning University environment, in many other European countries they understand that you have professor that devote one part of their time to mentoring students basically but they are mainly professors that sometimes invests in mentoring area.

Giulia: Okay, thank you! I have asked you everything I was interested into! Your help was really precious!

I: Best wishes! Take care, bye!

Giulia: Thank you, bye

Interview n. 2

Interview n.2, Assistant professor of English language and translation at the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies, University of Padua.

Giulia: I'm Giulia Casati and I am writing my thesis on Refugees in Higher Education and Mentoring, professor Dalziel told me about you, so I thought about asking you some information. So first of all I wanted to ask you if you could introduce yourself.

I: Okay so I teach English and I am a researcher of the Department of Political science P.G.

Giulia: Perfect, I am interviewing professors coming from different areas because everybody can be useful for this research. The first topic that I wanted to deal with it is the number of Refugees in Higher Education, as I found very difficult to understand how many Refugees are present in Higher Education

I: In Italy, in Europe or in the world?

Giulia: In Italian and European University, do you have an idea of the percentage of Refugees in the University?

I: I don't know, I know UNHCR has the ambition to reach a certain number and now I think it's up to 1 or not even 1%, so if I were you I would look at UNHCR and ask them. I know at Padua University they worked even ... there is no way of knowing if there are Refugees or not. So I presume it is the same in the other Universities. So unless there is a way of understanding where students themselves identifies as Refugees. But I don't think there is many.

I mean now we should have an idea because I think they put it on the form that they can chose if they are Refugees. But I've met a couple of refugee students who didn't know that even Padua had a census for refugees.

Giulia: Yes and there is also the problem regarding documents that complicates things for them. I was also wondering if there are some projects in the university of Padua dedicated to refugee inclusion or for example mentoring programs in the University of Padua. Do you know something about that?

I: There is the project UNICORE which is a UNHCR project of which University of Padua is part of which is for students who are refugee students in Ethiopia so coming from other African countries and they have a selection process and there's a professor (I forgot his name but you should talk to him – Delegato Rettore for Africa something like that). And then there is this project with Afghanistan, Afghani students and Ukrainian, they are not refugees yet but it is possible that some of them will become.

Giulia: Are these mentoring programs?

I: I think they are because I have a student of mine that I think she is a student tutor. What do you mean by mentoring?

Giulia: In general the different types of mentoring. But specifically, I am investigating a figure that has been implemented in the projects of the Venetian region for inclusion of refugees. D.V, the coordinator of European and Regional projects in the Regione Veneto, firstly introduced me to this figure, who is basically a person with a background of immigration – one of the requirements – who tries to establish an emotional connection with a refugee and introduces/accompanies her/him during the whole path of inclusion. Do you know if something similar has been implemented in academic field too?

I: I think it is another context, I mean it has been important in other contexts, in Italy not.

Giulia: Do you have some experience on mentoring?

I: Maybe a little bit with 'Scholars at risk project', that is hosting academics about to leave their countries, in this sense there is mentoring for them. Just supporting and integrating in the academic environment and in the local city environment; so there are several mentoring projects in relations to that in America where it started all. They do academic mentoring for academics, and also for students. I am sure there are lots of projects where they have students kind of mentoring, peer to peer mentoring.

Giulia: Which are the benefits that can derive from peer-to-peer mentoring in your opinion?

I: Well the understanding of how the system works, also perhaps mentor is maybe doing a lot with disadvantage youth in the UK. However the mentor is usually somebody that is much older than them who has, you know, become successful in their career and is somebody to inspire to. I think in refugee mentoring is something different. Maybe is a long similar line, somebody who can help and most of all inspire meanwhile.

Giulia: We also talked a lot about 'intersectionality', for example in projects with refugees, creating intersectional projects for the inclusion of refugees because in their experience lot of axis mix, such gender, class, poverty; do you think is important to adopt intersectional perspective? In which way?

I: Well I think is important to get away from the idea that those of 'refugee' is the only identity of the person, purposing only in that is obviously problematic I think. Yes projects can look at multiple dimensions of people's identity but also the challenges they might face. Intersectionality comes from the idea that people are discriminated against multiple factors. So addressing systemically not to the state of refugees.

Giulia: I agree, which direction should we follow to integrate refugees in Higher Education?

I: I think the problem is within Higher Education itself that isn't inclusive, I think... the problems are systemic. We need think about the additional challenges that refugees face but I think, looking at the problems of higher education and 'why students, even Italian students, drop out' 'what are the key challenges that can improve Higher Education for everybody'. So I think to develop a project I think it should be done with students and

refugees, it can be 'calato dall'alto (top-down). It needs to be developed with the collaboration and kind of co-created project, listening to issues that refugees have. But I think that critically looking at their own structure. And I think that students actually are very well-placed to do that because you know a lot of them have experience of the university, maybe have held to a degree some of the factors. I have talked to students and went to the 'Magna Carta' observatory, the magna carta is a statement made by universities and which a lot of universities have signed to. And last month I went there and we did a world café so, you know, a round table with discussions of different groups: there were students from Magna Carta, students coming from several different countries. It was really interesting because we were talking about the problems facing students and academics coming from complex countries. First of all, all of the students had none of the university staff mentioned mental health issues which is a major issue for students, Italian and refugees alike, which is never addressed.

Giulia: It is now an great issue especially for refugees

I: Yes, and they are very critical of the University doing these projects and not thinking about all the other aspects and supporting the refugee students once they arrive. Yeah so, co-constructing a project and also preparing mentors. I mean if you have students mentors who aren't prepared for this, I think, they need to. In the case of your example, there are students with refugee background to then become mentors; if that is the case you know I think they need to be supported they need to be given the possibility to make change instead of patching up the system. They also risk carrying the burden of other students. I know some students' tutors who have had to or who have felt so responsible for the other students for they had to look for the accommodations for them, they find the accommodation and so they are patching up what the institution isn't doing. And particularly in the case of Refugees students and particularly if there are also mentors. I think they need to be supported financially, they can't trust on volunteering. It needs to be recognised ...

Giulia: Thank you, I was reflecting and wondering a lot on these aspects, like economic aspects and the aspect of the background. I also wanted to talk about the risks that might occur during mentoring. I Should them maybe take some measures to prevent it?

I: Are you doing this in the context of the University of Padua, (are you mentoring or are you wanting to)?

Giulia: No, I was doing this from a wider perspective, on a worldwide scale but I am also interested in what happens in Padua because I am a student of Padua and in my experience I have never met refugee students, never had the chance to talk with them, so it is something we are interested in. I don't know if you agree on this peer-to-peer collaboration.

I: Yeah, I think peer-to-peer is important, I think that all the students need to be supported and that all the burden doesn't need to fall on them, you know. The university has now a big students tutoring project but I think they have a little training and support systems. So, I think the quality of tutoring projects and also, the protection of the students themselves, and how much supervision and support there is for the student mentor. But yes I think is really good to have students in this projects; I've just shared with you this link on 'Star' in the UK. I don't think is specifically for mentoring but is a program existing for long time about students protecting and advocating for refugees for making University accessible. I think is more related to the peers.

Giulia: I will write to them because I am sure they can tell me more about this topic.

I: We did 'scholars at risk', student seminar and we had students working on a program for 'at risk' students which includes also refugee students. They looked at programs in other countries, so for example in Norway I think they have kind of developed and now even in Italy, with the ESU (the European Students Union), they have developed like guidelines or a program for students at risk (so I can send you some of these information). With students at risk, they wanted to support at European level scholars at risk and the ESU, the European Students Union, that is advocating a scholarship program for students at risk but this program is not just about making the university accessible but also about the support and I think it might be included mentoring in that.

Giulia: Okay thank you. What about documents? Can a person without documents access Higher Education without documents or any documentation?

I: What do you mean? In Italy or other countries?

Giulia: In Italy.

I: Ehm, no in most of the Universities if they don't have the status of 'Rifugiato' they can only do 'corsi singoli'. There are couple of Universities that give access to full enrolment, but not many. And again mentors have a responsibility in the sense they need to know a lot of things. And you know other risks including the choice of University on the course to do. Yeah, there are a lot of things.

Giulia: Also from the emotional point of view...

I: Exactly...

Giulia: Are there other aspects of the system that can be modified?

I: Providing information, they don't even have a guide, they don't even have information sheets for refugee students, they don't even have for international students. So there is no offices, there isn't University help centre. Just finding the information isn't easily accessible. There isn't one reference person within the institutions that everybody can go to. So of course nobody will ever find any information cause there isn't any 'punto di riferimento' (point of reference). In Bologna they have – and I think is the only University in Italy – a delegato I think is for refugees. At least they have a person that is the reference, you know, perhaps – I don't know if the manages to do it. But I know other Universities in other countries they have, it is not specifically for refugees but they have students information offices and unions which are equipped with a knowledge and resources to be able to support students and that has never been the case in Italy. It is beginning to implode with the arrival of these international students who if they are lucky they will find peers who help them. But I think there isn't enough support at the instructive level.

Giulia: I will check on the university sites; I know that also Parma is doing something but I don't know if there is a delegato. However thank you very much. The interview has ended and your help has been precious!

Interview n.3

Interview 3: Teacher of L2 Italian

Giulia: Buongiorno. La mia ricerca si basa sull'inclusione delle persone rifugiate nell'istruzione superiore, università ed altri corsi. La mia tesi è incentrata sul mentoring. La professoressa Dalziel mi ha detto che lei nello specifico si occupa di insegnamento. Volevo chiederle se può spiegarmi in breve cosa fa e se ci sono altri progetti nell'università di Padova che hanno a che fare con persone rifugiate.

I: mmmm….si. Al momento pochi. Io insegno italiano L2 al CLA da 20 anni. Diciamo che mi sono accostata a questo lavoro prima perché insegnavo ai migranti ad "Unica Terra", un'associazione e ho avuto sempre molto interesse per queste tematiche. Poi, come saprà, abbiamo avuto il progetto "Cultura e Accoglienza" all'università di Padova per due anni con il Professor Allievi quindi abbiamo integrato una trentina di rifugiati all''università per un anno e loro potevano provare a migliorare le loro competenze linguistiche e a fare un corso singolo per cercare di capire se erano adatti.

Il primo anno come succede spesso all'inizio il progetto non ha avuto esiti felicissimi perché la selezione dei candidati non era stata fatta molto bene. Era stata affidata a due studentesse che non avevano grandi competenze linguistiche. Era stato mandato alle cooperative l'avviso per indicare, selezionare dei richiedenti asilo e rifugiati particolarmente dotati ma loro avevano mandato persone un po' di tutti i tipi quindi, non essendo stata fatta poi una scrematura, diciamo, hanno selezionato male le persone. Queste persone dovevano venire al CLA e fare dei corsi di lingua assieme ai nostri studenti e proprio ci era stato richiesto questo. I nostri studenti sono altamente scolarizzati perché sono Erasmus o anche dottorandi, visiting professor, quindi persone molto abituate ad apprendere le lingue, diciamo, come facciamo noi, con i nostri metodi per cui l'inserimento non è stato facilissimo soprattutto nei livelli più bassi anche perché c'erano delle persone fortemente traumatizzate. Per esempio mi ricordo una ragazza nigeriana che capiva, faceva fatica e quando non capiva qualcosa batteva la testa contro il muro. Cose che noi non siamo abituati a vedere e neanche gli altri studenti per cui l'integrazione è stata molto difficile. Nei livelli alti, dove insegno io, invece andava meglio.

Comunque il secondo anno, memori di questo, abbiamo chiesto di poter fare noi la selezione e quindi tra le tante domande abbiamo cercato di selezionare quelli che sembravano più promettenti come scolarizzazione e che veramente avrebbero potuto fare l'università perché appunto l'idea era che fosse un percorso propedeutico. Chiaramente se uno ha sei anni di scolarità non può fare l'università. È andata molto meglio e…noi avevamo fatto scrivere una lettera in italiano o anche in inglese da cui cercavamo anche di capire un po' la personalità.

Per me è stata un'esperienza entusiasmante, direi, perché mi sono molto affezionata a tal punto che ancora adesso questi ragazzi mi scrivono. Quando succede qualcosa mi raccontano. O se si sposano, se hanno figli… adesso recentemente uno mi ha contattato perché ha avuto il ricongiungimento familiare e voleva presentarmi la moglie, trovare per lei delle modalità per apprendere l'italiano…insomma si è creato un ottimo rapporto. Devo dire che ha molto favorito la cosa il fatto che accanto a questi studenti erano stati messi dei tutor, dei ragazzi dell'università però anche questi abbastanza ben selezionati, la seconda volta. Erano quasi tutti ragazzi molto motivati, altri che non si aspettavano di dover fare esattamente questo lavoro sono rimasti anche un po' scioccati. Per esempio mi ricordo una studentessa che conoscevo perché frequentava anche dei miei corsi, che faccio a linguistica, che si aspettava di fare la buddydegli Erasmus. Quello che chiedevano i ragazzi invece era molto di più perché diventavano un po' il loro punto di riferimento, non solo all'università ma delle volte anche nella vita. Delle volte chiedevano molto di più del dovuto…non so…scrivevano messaggi alla notte o chiedevano un rapporto paritario. Però diciamo che i casi in cui la cosa è andata male sono stati pochi mentre la maggior parte degli studenti che io ho visto erano fortemente motivati e hanno creato dei bellissimi rapporti e sono stati veramente di aiuto e di supporto. Quindi per questo io credo molto all'importanza del "Mentor" e di figure di questo tipo. Dopo questa esperienza sono entrata nel progetto "Arqus" che conoscerà.

Giulia: Mi sembra un progetto molto completo e nelle varie ricerche e nelle interviste che ho fatto, entrambi gli intervistati suggerivano più un percorso unico e una collaborazione tra studenti rifugiati e studenti non rifugiati. Mi ha colpito molto l'aspetto di puntare tutto sull'apprendimento della lingua. In che modo la lingua può aiutare nel loro percorso di inserimento?

I: Può aiutare tantissimo perché come sa per trovare un lavoro minimamente decente è importante parlare un buon italiano. Io ho avuto ragazzi in B1, B2 e addirittura C1. Loro mi raccontavano che i corsi di italiano nelle cooperative sono sempre di livello molto basso, naturalmente perché la stragrande maggioranza degli ospiti è ai primi livelli dell'italiano e anche poco scolarizzata. L'indice di scolarità medio di migranti che arrivano adesso mi pare che sia di sei anni, sei-sette anni (deve vedere un po' gli studi di allievi, per esempio) e quindi naturalmente fanno molta più fatica. Poi ci sono cooperative che si distinguono per la competenza di chi organizza ma mi raccontavano di situazioni assurde in cui si rimaneva sempre all' A1 e ogni volta che arrivava qualcuno di nuovo si ripartiva da zero. Quindi hanno fatto solo il presente, al massimo il passato prossimo e quando in B2 abbiamo fatto il congiuntivo erano entusiasti perché finalmente imparavano qualcosa di diverso.

Giulia: Una cosa nuova…

I: E appunto ho trovato anche ragazzi veramente dotati per l'apprendimento delle lingue anche perché loro spesso conoscono moltissime lingue e quelli più scolarizzati si rendono conto del valore di queste competenze. Per esempio mi ricordo un ragazzo del Mali che era già laureato in Mali e studiava qua, che in un'intervista mi aveva raccontato come è importante in Mali che ci siano dei corsi universitari sul "Baramba" la lingua che loro parlano, proprio perché sappiamo che avere delle competenze alte nellaL1 significa anche poterle trasferire nelle altre lingue e lui ha fatto subito il B2 e il C1. Poi bisogna dire che come apprendenti sono un po' diversi da quelli Europei. Non possiamo nascondercelo. Hanno degli stili di apprendimento un po' diversi e sono meno abituati alle prove strutturate. Una cosa che mi ha molto stupito e che poi ho anche cercato di studiare, dopo è perché, per esempio, un ragazzo del Camerun, molto in gamba che parlava inglese, francese, parlava tante lingue e parlava l'Italiano così bene da usare tranquillamente il congiuntivo con periodi ipotetici, il tutto molto correttamente, poi di fronte a un "Cloze" non riusciva a usare quelle stesse forme, un cloze che chiedeva di usare il congiuntivo. Lui nel test finale l'ha lasciato quasi in bianco.

Giulia: È interessante vedere anche quale ruolo gioca la diversità in questo. Per esempio studenti molto molto dotati che però hanno difficoltà che risiedono nel loro metodo di apprendimento.

I: Si, noi siamo un po' europeocentrici quando insegniamo. È anche un grosso problema con i test dell'A2 per il lungo soggiorno e B1 per la cittadinanza che sono testi fatti per l'apprendente europeo che è abituato a fare un certo tipo di test. Per esempio una cosa che mi colpisce tanto è che mentre questi studenti (sto parlando di studenti africanim in particolare di Camerun Mali e paesi di questo tipo) a livello di parlato hanno delle competenze molto più alte di quello che poi risulta nel test, studenti per esempio cinesi, al contrario parlano molto poco però sono molto abituati, sono cresciuti facendo continuamente test, quindi raggiungono dei punteggi molto più alti di quello che meriterebbero.

Giulia: Quanti degli studenti che ha seguito hanno poi seguito dei corsi dell'università?

I: mmm…Si questo è il dato triste degli studenti che hanno partecipato al progetto che erano trenta il primo e trenta il secondo anno, due si sono iscritti. Uno forse è riuscito a finire o sta finendo adesso Ingegneria Quindi è riuscito a finire la triennale, si è laureato e sono andata alla laurea. Con la magistrale ha avuto un po' più difficoltà, poi l'ho perso di vista. Lui aveva un problema con la borsa di studio e questo è il grosso problema secondo me. Allora che Padova non fa delle borse di studio specifiche per loro. Riescono a prendere la borsa regionale ma poi devono fare un tot di crediti ogni anno e loro fanno fatica. Ho fatto un sacco di interviste su questo tema, sempre per il progetto Arqus. Uno degli elementi di difficoltà maggiore è dovuto agli OFA, forse ne ha già sentito parlare di questo fatto…

Giulia: Potrebbe dirmi di più?

I: Allora sa che gli studenti che fanno un test, in certi corsi di laurea, possono entrare ma hanno un debito che può essere un grosso problema perché in alcuni corsi di studio viene, come dire, un po' "abbuonato" per cui si dice: va bene, è rifugiato, fa più fatica degli altri, ok! Ma in altri no.

Mi ricordo uno studente che mi era molto caro e, secondo me, era il più bravo di tutti che si è iscritto a Ingegneria, ha fatto il primo anno. Con qualche aiutino è riuscito a superare gli esami di ingegneria del primo anno ma non ha superato il test e ha dovuto restituire tutta la borsa di studio. Quindi lui, invece di fare il secondo anno ha lavorato in una fabbrica, ha guadagnato i soldi, ha restituito la borsa e poi si è riscritto. In questa seconda volta mi hanno detto che si è perso, ha lasciato l'università e non ha più risposto ai nostri messaggi, penso perché si vergogna un po'…

Giulia: Sicuramente oltre a tutte le difficoltà che affronta una persona rifugiata, questa è un'altra difficoltà che si aggiunge…dover restituire tutta la borsa. Quali sono le altre difficoltà che incontrano gli studenti rifugiati quando arrivano nel paese che li ospita?

I: Quindi lei non dice solo in università. Dice in generale?

Giulia: Nello specifico in Università, in realtà

I: Nell'università questo fatto di non conoscere bene il sistema e quindi si perdono facilmente. Spesso non sanno neanche di avere dei vantaggi. Per esempio ho conosciuto, non era di questo gruppo, ma ho conosciuto uno studente rifugiato iraniano, solo perché una mia collega lo aveva avuto in un corso e me l'ha indicato e questo ragazzo sta facendo senza neanche sapere che poteva chiedere la borsa di studio, poteva chiedere un supporto psicologico perché era un ragazzo che aveva subito anche torture eccetera. Noi abbiamo un buon servizio psicologico, anche in inglese ma lui non lo sapeva. Quindi se ci fosse un "Mentore", una figura che li segue da vicino e gli fa il panorama di tutte le offerte

Giulia: Infatti per questo volevo "insistere" così tanto sulla figura del Mentore perché addirittura la persona che mi ha introdotto a questa figura mi spiegava che sarebbe utile che il Mentore avesse già un background di migrazione e di "ristabilimento" all'interno della città che lo ospita e magari di un percorso universitario cosicché sia proprio formato e la persona più indicata per indirizzare gli studenti a tutte le cose che devono sapere…

I: Ma questo Mentore voi pensate a un italiano o a uno straniero che ha fatto questo percorso?

Giulia: A me hanno inizialmente introdotto ad una persona straniera. Visto che si tratta di una figura utilizzata principalmente nei progetti della regione, in ambito accademico probabilmente non è mai stata implementata. Nella letteratura che sono riuscita a recuperare è prevista la possibilità che si identifichi anche con una persona italiana che segue un training e poi si forma. Uno dei miei più grandi interrogativi è proprio su questo punto: se sia meglio, per ricoprire questo ruolo, una persona italiana od una persona con un passato da rifugiato

I: Potrebbero essere anche due, magari uno e uno perché una persona italiana avrebbe il vantaggio di conoscere meglio il sistema. Comunque proprio un'ora fa ho parlato con uno studente che mi ha colpito tantissimo, che mi ha mandato un'amica che è fuori dall'università, perché lui deve fare la Laurea triennale in mediazione e non sapeva chi scegliere come relatore…

Giulia: Come si chiama?

I: A., mi pare … mi ha molto colpito. È venuto qua in età scolare come minore non accompagnato, quindi ha fatto il triennio nelle scuole di Vicenza e lui, secondo me, sarebbe adattissimo a fare una cosa del genere perché anche fa già il mediatore culturale e sa tantissime cose e anche sa riflettere molto…Magari potrebbe un giorno incontrarlo e intervistare anche lui perché appunto mi diceva che il problema è che lui è stato molto fortunato nell'incontrare coloro che lo hanno indirizzato, come ad esempio la sua professoressa delle superiori, perché vede tanti ragazzi perdersi perché è un percorso pieno di ostacoli quello che ha un rifugiato…ma veramente ostacoli assurdi per ottenere lo status e tutto.

Giulia: Già basti pensare ai documenti, perché senza non si può avere accesso a nessun tipo di formazione senza documenti

I: No…Ne conosco un altro che non era di Cultura Accoglienza. Da solo si è iscritto all'università a lingue ma anche lui si è iscritto e l'ha fatta per anni senza sapere se l'avrebbe potuta continuare. E allora ci sono tra di loro ragazzi con potenzialità

particolarmente alte come entrambi quelli di cui sto parlando che sarebbero una grandissima risorsa. Che si sono formati nella nostra università e che conoscono bene tutti i problemi connessi al percorso del rifugiato.

Giulia: Io sono molto d'accordo su questa cosa...Quindi il rapporto tra studenti, tra pari ha dei vantaggi?

I: Dei vantaggi enormi perché è un rapporto totalmente diverso e non è facilissimo da gestire soprattutto è perché come succede spesso con i migranti, non tutti si integrano così facilmente.

Giulia: Concordo moltissimo e dispiace perché mi rendo conto che la cerchia di persone che ti stanno intorno, amici e persone del posto possono aiutare veramente tanto ad inserirti.

I: Eh si! Si qualcuno è fortunato e si inserisce da solo. Ne ho trovati alcuni che avevano più relazioni di me, quasi. Io vivo da sempre a Padova ma mi ricordo di un ragazzo gambiano con cui sono andata a una conferenza. Lui salutava, conosceva tutti ecc. Altri invece sono chiusi all'interno della loro struttura e hanno pochissimi contatti con gli italiani. Quindi non gli sembra vero di trovare uno studente alla pari, gentile che li tratti bene. Quindi secondo me, nella formazione di chi fa il Tutor e il Mentor ci vuole anche un po' di formazione psicologica. Anzi, ce ne vorrebbe tanta. Bisognerebbe organizzarla bene.

Giulia: Volevo solo discutere in realtà su quale può essere il futuro per l'inclusione. Se ha delle idee su come si potrebbe agire per rendere questo possibile.

I: Ciò che dispiace a tutti noi che ci siamo spesi in questo tempo è che si parla, si parla, si parla e poi di concreto l'università non ha ancora fatto niente. Quindi cosa bisognerebbe fare. Per esempio come si fa a Trento. A Trento, se va a vedere, c'è un buon progetto di accoglienza. Bisogna non essere buonisti però dare le possibilità a chi le merita. E allora una cosa molto importante sarebbe quella che certi chiamano Foundation Year, un anno propedeutico che potrebbe essere anche di sei mesi in cui veramente si conoscono le persone e le si prepara. Di tutti i 60 si sono iscritti due ma avevano la possibilità di farcela forse cinque secondo me. Magari tre di questi hanno

preferito lavorare, farsi una famiglia. Quindi bisogna dare più soldi e in modo più intelligente perché spesso si danno un po' così, a pioggia… Quindi secondo me, per una vera integrazione all'università bisognerebbe fare un periodo propedeutico per sondare effettivamente le motivazioni e le capacità dei ragazzi perché bisogna essere onesti e per esempio in Africa la scuola non è come la scuola europea. Partono con un gap notevole. Per esempio lo studente di cui parlavo prima, per fare pochi esami ci ha messo tre anni perché gli mancava tutto un retroterra che invece noi abbiamo.

Quindi dare meglio le borse, fare almeno sei mesi propedeutici, sostenerli sia con dei tutor, sia con dei tutor universitari della loro materia che li possano aiutare, avere un po' più di pazienza che con gli altri cioè non togliergli la borsa se hanno fatto un esame in meno e avere una rete di persone del territorio compatta ma con una figura centrale che sa tutto e media.

Giulia: Ok. E dal punto di vista psicologico?

I: Un supporto psicologico serve quasi a tutti perché hanno vissuto quasi tutti delle situazioni terribili. Però c'è questo servizio. All'università c'è. Il problema è che spesso loro non lo riconoscono perché nelle loro culture non è normale averlo. Quindi bisogna tener conto anche di questo.

Giulia: Grazie mille è stata molto d'aiuto

I: Niente…Se le servono altre cose. Ad esempio il contatto con questi due studenti se li vuole intervistare

Giulia: A me farebbe moltissimo piacere. Se è una cosa che può far piacere anche a loro

I: No no… io glielo chiedo così potete avere degli scambi, delle collaborazioni

Giulia: Grazie mille!

Interview n.4

Interview 4: Head of the International Centre of the University of Leipzig

[talking about the ARQUS project]

Giulia: I know something about the project, not about the refugee part. I had to take part to the project, I had to go to Granada, in Erasmus, but I know mobility is another part of the ARQUS project. What about the work you did on refugee inclusion?

I: The ARQUS project in general ... we are specifically in the action line 2 which is about diversity and inclusion. One topic out of those twelve topics was refugees integration into Higher Education system within Europe. So at the beginning we talked a lot about how do things actually work in Italy... versus Germany ... versus Spain ... versus Austria so we discussed a lot, we just realize that although it's the 'European Union', which has a kind of refugee politics or ... no, maybe we can say they have broader policy when it comes to people migrating into the European union looking for asylum but they do not have The one European asylum or refugee policy when it comes to integration into the state, into the higher education or whatsoever.

So it is up to every state and it is very different, it differs from north to south, from west to east within the European Union. That's what we realised, so we talked a lot: "how do you do things? How do we ... what can we learn from another country? How many refugees are there in Germany compared to Lithuania?" for example, which do used to have just a few of refugees and completely changed this year due to the Ukrainian crisis. When people coming from Ukraine are much more stopping also in Lithuania and in Villnius, and travelling to the east of Germany where it is totally different I think in Spain and in Portugal right now.

 So it is a very dynamic situation, it is a very vital situation, is changing a lot. And also for the integration in the higher education it's very different from the Universities and that's where we started off. And then we tried to organize two webinars where we talked about a European approach that's what we actually wanted to find: the European ARQUS approach to a higher education for refugee students. And we started to tackle on that and now we have to transfer it to the second project phase which started actually now, in October and runs until 25-26th.

So actually everything we found out at the beginning you could see it in the webinars on the Youtube because there was some recordings I think, so you could watch it maybe

so we tried to used that information, all the theorethical part and all the exchange information to actually build something more new, more forward in the future for the next years in the European context which is very difficult actually.

Giulia: Yes, I can imagine, also because this fragmentation, I was trying to understand more or less how every country works

I: That's difficult

Giulia: Also because data are difficult to be found and also on the percentage of refugees.How many refugees are enrolling in German higher education? if you have an idea.

I: It is not really a number that I can give you because, I don't know if you read the article or the text from the UNHCR about the approach to more than 1% should be integrate into higher education. Things changed, to 3 or 5% I am not quite sure. But it is still less than 1% and in Germany, we have some numbers when the Syrian crisis started, we tried to take some numbers from students who are interested in studying and now again we are trying to take numbers from students who come from Ukraine and are about to flee the country. Not only Ukrainians but also from people all over the World, especially from Africa but also from India and Pakistan who used to study in Ukraine and don't know where to go and they also travel to Europe, travel to Germany. And we try to get those numbers, but for those who actually enrol in the study program we do not have numbers available as it is something that has to do with data protection and the University do not count based on their residence permit or based on their refugee status. So I internally know a little bit of how much we enrol every semester but in general we don't have an official number that ... I can't really tell you.

I mean what I know is that we have about 11 to 12 percent of international students studying in the Leipzig University, and of course within Germany it differs a lot, because cities have more people, more international people, especially Berlin, they have a high percentage of international people studying there. Almost in all Universities we have 400 and somethingin higher institutions in Germany, a lot a lot of them have preparation programs for refugees now. Started in 2015-2016 with the Syrian crisis and then went on at least for our University we had it every year until now. And now again

we have to get more supporting, more funding because due to the Ukrainian crisis there are lot more people coming in and we also have eastern German university, which means people entry in the country from the eastern side so they first stop at our big cities. We are one of the first ... Dresden and Leipzig, which are one of the biggest cities if you cross the border.

So you stop here and you try to get your education back. We have a lot of applicant for former preparation courses, since 2016 we have continuously preparation courses for German; at the moment we have about 80 students learning in those courses. It varies from semester to semester but it is higher now, it was a little bit less last year, and the peak was about 100-120 a year in 2017-18. And that's actually a number that we can count, because it works a little bit differently compared to people we enrol. Because these are not people that we enrol, they use support structure from the government, they get money from the government, for their living expenses, for the housing and all those stuff. So we do not have to take care about this as well. Which is a great help. They actually can concentrating on learning German because that's what they need in order to enrol in German study program. But they are financed by the government so ... a good relief for them and for us as well because otherwise that wouldn't be an option.

Giulia: I talked a lot with other professors but also I had the chance to talk with a refugee student of the University of Padua and it was important for me because we don't usually have this type of contact with refugee students. We were talking about one problem: usually when refugees arrive here they don't even think about the possibility of continuing their studies. Just finding a work as fast as they can, and sending money back to their home countries.

I: That's also a big issue I guess, I have been to Padua several times now, I talked a lot to Benedetta and to Lucia and then I also met with Fiona and we had a lot of exchanges which were very very interesting, and I think we have a very close connection out of the Universities. Working together I realize, especially in the area of 'refugee students' it is very different how the universities and how the countries work.

Because, I mean, germany was known for taking in a lot of refugees I think in the past and we have a very structured system, how to get them into although is also very

difficult because they have a lot of obstacles to reach into a program. And what's interesting from you in Italy is you have much more migrants and refugees and asylum seekers coming into your country that seek for asylum. Then the country is in the middle of Europe so has no boarder to the sea or anything like that. So you have much more volume of people. Much more amount of people but then again, integrating them in the universities is much more difficult, create a challenge for you because it seems you are more left alone. So it's up to the universities how they do it and it's more individual cases rather than for us. We have government money put into that but still the obstacles are very high and we work for a students learning German until finishing the degree.

Giulia: It is good that at least you have a good structure to support them. Could you tell me more?

I: I am also very thankful for that, the way it works. Also seems to me that especially Austria and Germany they have a similar approach to that. And I am also thankful that we have a lot of opportunities and we get some moneys from the state of Germany. We can apply for that money, it is called the DAAD, I don't know if you heard about that, it's the biggest exchange service for international students. You can apply for scholarships there, you can use international programs and they created programs with German state money to finance German courses as well as refugee initiatives. You have to apply for that kind of money and then you can organize German courses within the university structure; so we get money from there and at the same time we apply for funding from the state government of Saxony which is a region that we have in the east of Germany and they also have certain money available for us, for German courses.

The rules for both funding organisations are very different, so we always have to keep in mind that we have to do this and this and that for the DAAD and then we have other rules that comes for the Ministry of education of Saxony. Which sometimes is challenging to work it out, we actually aim creating structures that works for everyone. Because here for us we found that is very important that we do not make differences between refugees. So somebody who comes from Syria or from any African country or from even Russia or Bangladesh has the same rights of someone who comes from

Ukraine. So we don't want to make a difference there, and I think that is a very important message this year.

Giulia: Yes, I guess this was one of the main issues that we discussed with other stakeholders. I appreciate that in Germany you insist a lot in not making differences, because in other cases they were more focused on creating single projects for them. Do you have mentoring programs in your universities?

I: Ehm, what do you mean by mentoring programs, we do have mentoring programs for international students like buddies and so on, but maybe if you are more specific about that, what do you especially mean?

Giulia: The figure that was presented to me is the mentor, in the sense of a person with the background of immigration as asylum seeker, fully integrated in the new host country, that establish a contact with the refugee and helps them approaching institutions, is helping them integrating. Because, the mentor usually has already lived what a refugee is now living. It's a figure used in the regional project, so not in the academic field. But I thought that this figure could be included in university, because also talking with the refugee studenthe had the need of feeling understood and of somebody who really could understand their challenges. But analysing different projects, I observed that this figure is still missing in the university and is more common to have tutors or something like that. I just wanted to ask and understand if somewhere else this figure is existing.

I: Yeah maybe our structure is a little different, you could calling mentoring I guess because we have student advisors, like myself and we also have two other colleagues, who are especially advisors for students of a refugee background or of a flight background. So we know that we also have colleagues of 'Studentenwerk' (unione studentesca) who help with social and financial issues because, there are certain kind of questions ... they're also students advisors in this specific area, because financing is a big issue. But this are all people who are enrolled, they have a rocking contract at the university so we have a lot of working hours for them. And also we have a program, again financed by the DAAD, which is called "Welcome", and it is especially designed for students initiatives, and we have one student initiative for help integrating, to help

integrating refugees students. And we have one initiative for also work on guides into the university who gives Germanlessons as well on different level than the German courses and they help with a lot of questions, everyday life questions, German questions, enrolment questions, other things as well.

So these are more informal mentoring persons I guess, but they are also paid via this program, that they and we applied for.

So sometimes I ask ... the question that I have in mind is when we are talking about mentoring programs, is "Is it more meant for Universities who have no funding?" and students do this or working staff does this voluntarily for a certain kind of group to help individuals, because this is something that it is different here because we have all those funding, programs that help institutionalise this structure. So we might not need this kind of voluntary mentoring because we have people who are actually paid for this. It is very very helpful.

Yeah, although often is not very long term, so we have to fight every year for funding of the next year, and so on so there is a lot of work. But at least we have the option to do it that is a good thing.

Giulia: It's nice. I know this figure of mentor exists in other projects in the Venetian region: they created a lot of projects for women, like "how to assist women with a mentor" that could follow them like in a long term; this was just a proposal that I could do in my thesis, because this figure maybe could be interesting in the university context too. But it would be voluntarily I guess; I also noticed and appreciated a lot how peer-to-peer work could be beneficial for refugees. It could be a mix of aspects.

I: I think both is needed, supporting or mentoring people who are more like peer-to-peer, on your level, other students, ask some questions. You need also institutionalised persons, people who are non academic workers who guide you through all the different steps, I mean. In Germany is not easy to get into a study program especially for international students. You have to have like a certain, a lot of obstacles: language wise, visa wise, are there places available?, because they are restricted programs so it's a lot you have to go through. So you need help.

Giulia: What about the ARQUS project? Which will be the next step you will take?

I: To be honest, I am not sure yet. But I think next week we are going to do that, and we will for sure focus on the Ukrainian issue and how this affects also in general the European approach to refugees for higher education. One of my goals will be to have a look on the European level, to go from the state level, the state exchange or the state interchange, onto the European approach which ... I am not even sure if it's possible because we found so many challenges but I think that we have some ideas in mind and also some. Like I said we have the approach of not making differences between refugees. So we have some ideas in mind and something to say on an European level, that we all think the same. Although the systems works maybe differently on the ground.

There are some topics that we can think together, and we have to find the solution, maybe a European solution.

Giulia: What about the other countries that are into the ARQUS project, do they have a structure as Germany with its system for refugee inclusion?

I: I just remember one thing that is maybe important for this question, we talks a lot about refugees students but we kind of change that into the term "students or scholars at risk" because many of those people, there are a lot of crises in the world at the moment. And that's not gonna stop, I have more the feeling that it will explode even more in different regions. So suddenly, let's think about Iran, a lot of people already applied for asylum from Iran in Germany, but now is getting even more difficult in Iran, so that maybe there will have a lot of people asking to come into Germany. The same happened last year with Belarus, and also, like I said, it was very different from north to south what people did for refugee students, how much is still institutionalised in the universities. So I think in Norway, they are very progressive in the way they work with refugee students and the state, as well as the University. I know in Austria they have a big program, especially in the Syrian crises; they told me that last year they didn't have as much refugees anymore, coming to their country. For us is more or less the same

over the years, we have continuously refugees coming to ours university. And let's say that in Vilnius, Lithuania, they said people were just passing by, they won't stop there because they wanted to go to Germany or France, France also had some kind of structures as well as Spain, more or less. But now the situation, with all the crises going on is so fast changing that for example in Vilnius, suddenly the discomfort with Belarus came up in August 2021 I think, where a lot of people from Iraq but also from Syria wanted to pass the border from Belarus and to Poland into Lithuania, and they were not prepared for that. And the other issue in Belarus was that the students that were striking they had issues and they needed to flee the country and go to the neighbour countries. They didn't flee as refugees, in the political sense, but they were like students at risk. That's why suddenly who had two refugees a year, suddenly the situation changed completely and they had to offer some programs for the Belarusians students coming; but they didn't have the same residence permit or the same title as somebody from Syria so it was different and the term "students at risk" made more sense for us. We wanted to elaborate it more in the second ARQUS phase, reflect on that issue: how to label this kind of students where do we make a difference, do we make a difference, how do we see them together and how do we see them differently, I think that would be one of the first topic to discuss and also what kind of program we can act for the next years.

Giulia: Yeah, I was also saying that terminology is important, being identified as a refugee could make them feel as if this was their unique identity while being identified as students even if students at risk, still bring the connotation of student so I guess it is important.

I: Yeah, Belarus is a really good example as well as Russia at the moment, because what we experience in Germany and in Leipzig also, because we traditionally have a kind of history of Russia, but now, due to the oppression, a lot of people apply to Germany universities also especially in eastern Germany, buy they do not come here as refugee students, but of course they are under stress and they are at risk in their country. Because they are not allowed to study, they are oppressed, they cannot freely say their mind or give their opinion. So this kind of students, they are not allowed to study in their countries so they want to go somewhere else where they can freely follow their

education. In a political sense they are not refugees but still, somehow they also had to flee their countries so. There is a lot to discuss!

Giulia: Yes, also from the psychological point of view, especially from this point of view. I know that the University of Padua offers a service of psychologists, but is it the same in Germany? Do you have a service like that?

I: I think we have the department of psychology, on the scientific side, they work on certain programs, the last time I read something about it was "programs for Ukrainian children"; and then from the non academic side we have the social workers, non academic staff who are here for psychological support. More for problems of students, from psychological point of view. They are not focused on refugee issues but again, this is a bigger problem. Because people who flee war, they are traumatised and somebody needs to deal with that. It is not just about learning German, getting the study place, get admission, being enrolled, and then you study and then you have your degree.

But while are you studying, maybe your traumas come back and for that reason you cannot finish your studies in the proper way. And somebody needs to be there to help and this is something that is still missing, a lot, a lot. We need much more work on that.

Giulia: Maybe somebody who convinces you also to begin a psychological path or to ask for help, because for example sometimes for their culture, they are not allowed to ask for help. [...]

I: Yeah, I think that sometimes, this is not seen from the outside in the sense that is not just having somebody who works there and who will explain how to study. And then you have another position who will, that will help in your social psychological support. But you also need to convince the people, I mean they come from cultural backgrounds where is not so common to have psychological or social support. And they need a person that they can trust and who will get them, will help them to get in contact with certain kind of workers, or this kind of work with psychological support or all those things. You need to build up a trust with the group of people. Of course there are different backgrounds but a lot of them they are not used to this kind of structure and is difficult for them to go and ask for help.

Giulia: I mean, the task of mentor is also this, like establishing a relationship of trust. I think sometimes emotional ties are also important.

I: Yes, I mean I think that we –also in our job – we don't talk about socioeconomic or psychological problems. But still we hear a lot of stories and we also need to keep a distance from that and sometimes it is not easy. So you need a lot of supervising maybe, talking to other colleagues how to deal, that is what works quite well at our university I guess, I think. But this has to do with us and the colleagues who work here because they are very opened to share, their knowledge, to talk to each other, to share problems and it is also very helpful so you have to work together. Sometimes for one person for one individual, one student you need there ... four ... five people who work there because it is all kind of linking together the problems they have, you need to exchange. The network is important. Also the university ... you have your university workers, who work on a special topic, but you also need to have a good tight with the city of Leipzig, maybe to the state government, other initiatives, work outside the university that's also important.

Giulia: Yes and also having a good network of friends. Thank you very much, I don't steal you more time, you help me very much! I would like to spend also more time talking on this topic, thank you a lot!

Interview n.5

Interview n.5: Ia, Ib, Ic. Coordinators of regional and European immigration projects in the Veneto region

Giulia: Vi presento il mio progetto, nel senso che l'idea iniziale è stata di farlo sul mentoring, parlando con la mia relatrice, lei mi ha dato uno spunto su come adattarla alla mia facoltà ossia di trattare il tema delle persone rifugiate nell'ambito dell'alta formazione universitaria, dell'università e di come i progetti di mentoring possano includere le persone rifugiate nell'università. Innanzitutto volevo parlare del mentoring e chiedervi appunto, come lo avete applicato ai vari progetti e che progetti avete portato avanti? Partirei da questo.

Ic: dunque io inizio ma poi lascio la parola ad E. che sta seguendo ancora attivamente tutta la parte relativa appunto alle mentori nel senso che sono prevalentemente donne quelle con le quali noi abbiamo contatti. Inizialmente nel 2019 credo, abbiamo iniziato con Laura Castellani, che hai conosciuto, provando a dare una formazione. All'epoca c'erano anche uomini, però poi alla fine il gruppo si è risolto essere soprattutto femminile. Perché inizialmente era proprio legato ai corsi d'italiano. Quindi ci interessava sperimentare questa figura che potesse fungere da collante tra le persone che vivono la nostra città e quella che è un po' una delle nostre *mission* di servizio, che è anche appunto quella di offrire dei corsi d'italiano per le persone che più difficilmente arrivano ai corsi standard che possono essere offerti dal territorio, quindi CPA – non so se ne hai mai sentito parlare – centro provinciale per l'istruzione degli adulti se non sbaglio. Dal punto di vista ministeriale sono gli istituti preposti per occuparsi di educazione formativa per gli adulti, in particolare almeno per quanto ci riguarda, rispetto alla lingua italiana. Poi nel nostro territorio ci sono moltissime altre associazioni che offrono corsi d'italiano, noi copriamo alcuni spazi che non sono coperti da altri. Con le mentori, abbiamo appunto iniziato a sperimentare questa figura che da un lato, secondo noi, doveva servire come una spinta, una motivazione ad apprendere l'italiano, perché non è così scontato che le persone che arrivano decidano d'intraprendere un percorso per conoscere la lingua italiana, dall'altro, sostenere le facilitatrici linguistiche nell' andare al passo con i bisogni delle corsiste. I nostri corsi sono prevalentemente rivolti a donne ma non solo, diciamo che la gran parte delle corsiste sono donne e quindi anche la figura femminile come mentore non è un caso ecco. E mi fermo qua, nel senso che questo è stato proprio l'inizio, poi da li abbiamo fatto altre piccole sperimentazioni e ultime le sta seguendo di più E, per cui lascerei la parola a lei.

Ib: Si insomma non c'è moltissimo da aggiungere nel senso che l'idea che ci sta dietro è quella di stringere delle alleanze con delle persone che sono vicine per le loro esperienza per la loro situazione, alle utenti dei corsi che noi proponiamo e che quindi avendoli appunto già fatti, in qualche modo sono alleate dell'obiettivo del corso che sempre parte dall'idea di apprendere l'italiano ma di fatto è la conoscenza del territorio, dei servizi, quindi proprio senso di appartenenza alla città, non solo con l'obiettivo di

aderire a delle proposte che vengono fatte ma di diventare anche protagoniste di proposte da elaborare a loro volta, insomma l'idea è di creare uno spazio solido di cittadinanza attiva insieme a queste persone ecco. Questa è poi l'esperienza fatta con le donne adulte come ha già accennato M, in passato era già stata fatta con gli adolescenti, un'esperienza che viene via via riproposta negli ambiti. Nel comune è stata fatta con un nostro servizio con adolescenti adulti, però come stai vedendo tu anche nell'università è una figura che si è sperimentata l'idea di utilizzare l'approccio peer come momento che, da una parte rinforza l'esperienza di chi è nuovo e dall'altra consolida l'esperienza di chi l'ha gia fatto e quindi permette di valorizzare il valore di chi quest'esperienza l'ha già fatta.

Giulia: Quali sono stati i progetti che avete fatto in ambito universitario?

Ib: io ho in mente che Ca' Foscari da tanti anni propone questa esperienza ma non ha niente a che vedere con il comune, è un'esperienza che si utilizza quella di usare i peer all'interno della propria organizzazione.

Ia: prima che voi vi collegaste (E. e M.) stavamo proprio parlando della differenza che c'è tra il mentoring, inteso come l'avete sperimentato voi, e come abbia o fatto noi nelle tre province di Venezia, Padova e Verona per quello che è stato l'accompagnamento durante la gravidanza delle donne immigrate. In questo caso specifico, a parte avere anche … ovviamente si coinvolgono donne immigrate che già hanno passato quel tipo di esperienza e quindi possono anche comprendere quali sono le difficoltà che si incontrano sia nell'accesso ai servizi che nel fatto di trovarsi magari senza una rete familiare di supporto a fare un'esperienza importante come quella della gravidanza. E quindi il senso era proprio, da una parte coinvolgere chi già c'era passato e dall'altra anche coinvolgere le comunità e le associazioni di immigrati presenti sul territorio, cosa che non succede, ovviamente, con il mentoring inteso in un altro senso, come quello universitario ad esempio.

Io non credo che all'Università abbiano mentori, abbiano già degli studenti immigrati che si sono laureati e che stanno facendo il percorso universitario e che fanno anche da mentori in questo senso.

Giulia: No no, nel senso che, appunto anch'io prima che vi collegaste stavo dicendo a Dolores che ho avuto l'occasione di poter parlare con un ragazzo rifugiato qualche giorno fa e mi spiegava appunto che principalmente, le informazioni vengono date da tutor o da persone che non hanno il loro stesso background. Quindi appunto, anche per me è stato abbastanza difficile, poi confrontare quello che mi era stato detto da lei e dalla professoressa Laura Castellani, ossia che il Mentore solitamente ha un background, un passato di immigrazione con le informazioni che poi trovavo, che parlano principalmente di mentori, ma più come tutor che non hanno non devono avere strettamente un passato di immigrazione. Ecco quindi non riuscivo molto bene a capire quale quali fossero i requisiti di un mentore. Forse perché variano da ambito d'ambito. Io sto cercando appunto di orientarmi in tutti i vari ambiti per capire meglio. Come appunto sia strutturato il mentoring. Parlando invece della lingua. Volevo chiedervi se appunto poi quelli sono i benefici di acquisire la lingua per le donne che appunto hanno sperimentato il mentoring.

Ic: Qual è il beneficio che ha la donna nell'imparare l'italiano o nell'imparare l'italiano mentre c'è la mentore corso?

Allora ti spiego perché appunto la mentore è una figura che entra nel corso di italiano, ok? E ci sono metti 15 donne che partecipano al corso c'è la facilitatrice linguistica che è la docente, come D.V. insomma la sua esperienza che insegna l'italiano. La mentore è un po' lì in mezzo che aiuta le donne a comprendere meglio magari quello che dice la docente che magari raccoglie le difficoltà che ci possono essere da parte di alcune donne all'interno dei corsi e viceversa da un supporto anche alla docente. Allora il beneficio … mi sa che c'è anche sicuramente, ci sono delle ricercatrici universitarie… che hanno fatto una piccola ricerca, ma su anche il beneficio che può dare, l'apporto che può dare un mentore all'interno di un corso di italiano ed è emerso insomma che la fiducia, che si crea, il clima che si crea grazie ad una mentore che appunto è molto vicina al background appunto di queste donne, questo è sicuramente uno degli aspetti principali, donna si sente più a casa sua, si sente più facilitata. Poi naturalmente l'italiano lo impara grazie alla facilitatrice linguistica ecco.

Però la mentore, capisce di più le difficoltà che la donna può avere nel comprendere, nel partecipare al corso e quindi … può servire anche per esempio alla facilitatrice per far capire meglio i messaggi che vuoi trasmettere. In altre parole quello che è il contenuto che vuole trasmettere. Nel senso che si fa aiutare dalla mentore a dire in altre parole quello che il contenuto che vuole trasmettere. Perché magari la mentore riesce a codificare meglio il messaggio della facilitatrice. Quindi detto così genericamente ecco il beneficio principale è quello di mettere a proprio agio, dare fiducia e quindi predisporre all'apprendimento.

Giulia: Ok per le donne rifugiare, invece imparare l'italiano è importante?

Ic: Probabilmente per tutti è importante, poi non lo so. Bisognerebbe chiedere alle dirette interessate. Io ed E., in particolare non lavoriamo molto nell'ambito dei rifugiati perché c'è un altro settore del nostro servizio che si occupa dei rifugiati, poi naturalmente non è che non ne incontriamo perché poi partecipano ai corsi non in base in base al permesso di soggiorno ma alla necessità che c'è in quel momento. Sai cosa mi viene da dire? Dopo veramente mi taccio, la motivazione ad iniziare un corso d'italiano è un processo molto complesso, non è scontato. Cioè nel senso che decidere di imparare una lingua è un processo di maturazione anche quello, non è immediato. Per una donna rifugiata, non lo so, non lo so che cosa cambi. Forse in alcuni casi può essere determinante capire qual è il progetto migratorio di una persona no, se una persona viene qui per fermarsi qui e sa che questo sia il contesto di vita dove vuole far famiglia per dire, magari la motivazione è più forte. Se questo è un progetto transitorio, se l'Italia fa parte di un percorso, forse la motivazione c'è di meno, però ci sono tanti aspetti che bisogna vedere anche le provenienze culturali delle persone, quanto è importante per una persona insomma dire "Sono autonoma con la lingua"

Ia: Se posso aggiungere una cosa a quello che diceva M. ecco io ho avuto … nemmeno io lavoro con i rifugiati nei progetti però ho avuto più di qualche donna rifugiata in questi laboratori di italiano, e trovo la tua domanda interessante per un motivo, ci sono molte donne che arrivano in Italia per ricongiungimento familiare queste donne non hanno l'immediata necessità penso neanche di seguire i corsi di italiano a volte a parte la volontà c'è tutto il carico di gestione della famiglia eccetera. Per cui in passato proprio il comune di venezia aveva fatto proprio con l'università di Ca' Foscari anche

una ricerca su queste donne che dopo 10 anni che sono in italia, ogni tanto cominciano a fare il primo corso di italiano quindi: come si vive senza conoscere una lingua in un paese che non è il tuo? Per le donne rifugiate e richiedenti asilo, c'è un componente un po' diversa che è data dalla necessità di rendersi autonome in un tempo relativamente breve perché ovviamente ad un certo punto devono trovarsi un lavoro, escono dal sistema di accoglienza e devono lavorare. Quello che ho trovato io stesso è una demotivazione, data non tanto da ... tutte le persone che ho incontrato io volevano stare in Italia, ma dopo due ... tre ... quattro anni perché magari erano già qui ma irregolari, poi sono entrate nei TASl'eternità del percorso per regolarizzarsi e ha portate ad una fatica mentale veramente importante, quindi ho visto che ogni tanto c'erano delle resistenze rispetto all'apprendimento della lingua per questo motivo, oltre al fatto che tante volte, come diceva giustamente M. dei paesi di provenienza, puoi avere anche a che fare con persone che sono analfabete nella lingua d'origine per cui non hanno nemmeno l'abitudine ... non sono mai andate a scuola e se lo hanno fatto lo hanno fatto per pochissimo tempo. Per cui possono anche trovarsi a disagio in quello che è il contesto di una classe intesa come quella di un percorso inteso come lo intendiamo noi.

Giulia: E da questo punto di vista proprio per quanto riguarda l'abbinamento della mentore del mentore alla persona da seguire, come viene associata una mentore alla persona da seguire? Cioè in base alla loro cultura di provenienza? Perché penso appunto ad una persona che arriva senza sapere effettivamente la lingua ...Non lo so se potete dirmi qualcosa di più in questo senso.

Ib: Allora la formatrice che questi anni ha seguito tutta la parte di formazione, ci ricorda sempre che il principio del mentoring dovrebbe essere un principio di intesa di due persone, cioè dovrebbe essere una scelta di due persone che si incontrano. Quindi il mentore e il mentee , che è quello che gode del mentoring. Di fatto nella nostra esperienza ovviamente è una rivisitazione, cioè non una rivisitazione, ma un declinazione di questo approccio, di questo dispositivo, rispetto agli strumenti che noi mettiamo a disposizione. Quindi di fatto non avviene per intesa singola, per empatia di due persone, due anime che si riconoscono, maad ogni corso viene assegnata una mentore, è un lavoro che cerchiamo di fare noi alla base. Per esempio oggi è iniziato un corso per mamme che hanno la caratteristica comune di avere dei figli con disabilità e la

mentore di questo corso è una mamma che ha un bambino con disabilità,che ha fatto tanti corsi, che però vive questa esperienza della disabilità quotidianamente in casa; ha vissuto con entusiasmo in passato l'opportunità di poter fare dei corsi di italiano, di potersi incontrare con altre mamme e ha piacere di trasmettere questo entusiasmo e di far capire di condividere con le mamme l'importanza di avere dei momenti insieme e di conoscere bene i servizi. Però l'abbiamo scelto noi a priori che sia questa mamma a dedicare del tempo a quel corso. Mentre magari per un altro tipo di corso, ne scegliamo un'altra in base a quello che noi vediamo. La connazionalità a volte è utile, ma non è detto che lo sia perché non è legato solo un aspetto di lingua. Certo vediamo che quando c'è però ha un valore aggiunto perché effettivamente è comodo per tutte poter parlare la propria lingua, poter fare dei riferimenti al proprio vissuto che siano comprensibili anche dall'altro. Ecco quindi questo è il modo che usiamo noi, ma che però appunto sempre la formatrice ci ricorda non è proprio come viene inteso. Ecco che in teoria poi non è un lavoro è una sorta di messa a disposizione, un'esperienza di cittadinanza attiva che però non ha un inizio e una fine, quindi noi poi chiediamo di essere presenti in modo costante all'interno dei corsi e quindi li quella figura ha ancora un'accezione diversa da poi quando uno è mentore nella sua vita quotidiana, ma semplicemente perché sa di conoscere il territorio e si sente di voler promuovere alcune esperienze con le persone che incontra.

Giulia: Okay, quindi il mentoring di base avviene su base volontaria, giusto?

Ib: si diciamo che è percorso di consapevolizzazione. Si invitano, se lo pensiamo al femminile delle cittadine che hanno già fatto dei percorsi, oppure abbiamo chiesto aiuto anche alle scuole e vediamo che la loro esperienza di conoscenza del territorio è un'esperienza positiva e che, attraverso un percorso di consapevolizzazione, si ripercorrono le tappe che hanno fatto. Inoltre cercano di acquisire degli strumenti su come poterli mettere a disposizione di altri, senza essere invadenti e senza volersi considerare necessariamente dei modelli per tutti perché poi è giusto che ognuno trovi la sua strada e anche senza essere risucchiati. No? Quindi anche un po' come gestire la relazione di aiuto e con la giusta distanza adeguata questo tipo di figura. Però è certo è un modo di vivere in questo senso volontario, nel senso che quando mi rendo conto che io come donna ho acquisito una serie di competenze e di conoscenze e che queste

valgono molto e che possono essere utili a qualcun altro, mi rendo disponibile a metterle a disposizione degli altri. Però non a chiamata: può essere la mia vicina di casa, la mamma che incontro a scuola, la mia amica appena arrivata, la mia amica di vecchia data. Ecco è proprio un percorso individuale, di crescita individuale, in cui però si ufficializza il fatto di volerlo mettere a disposizione, si imparano degli strumenti per metterlo a disposizione degli altri, in modo il più possibile equilibrato.

Ia: mi vengono in mente parlando delle esperienze dirette che ho vissuto, cosi per sottolineare l'importanza del fatto che le persone, i mentori abbiano vissuto l'esperienza. Ti volevo fare l'esempio di un abbinamento che non è andato invece a buon fine, nel nostro progetto che riguarda, l'accompagnamento delle donne in gravidanza e nel post gravidanza. All'epoca stavo tenendo un corso di italiano al comune, con Ca Foscari

Io avevo una donna in gravidanza a cui è stata assegnata una mentore dalla stessa nazionalità, ma che non aveva figli. La cosa si è chiusa dopo pochissimi incontri perché proprio non c'era … non riusciva a comprendere quelli che effettivamente erano i bisogni di questa persona, nonostante la stessa provenienza nonostante parlassero la stessa lingua, non si sono proprio trovate.

Giulia: Invece avete testimonianze su dei programmi di mentoring che sono andati a buon fine, cioè i risultati sono spesso positivi oppure più negativi?

Ia: Allora questo qui sulla salute delle donne è stato fatto a Verona, ti dicevo, in due realtà diverse. A Verona l'ha fatto un'associazione di mediatori che ha formato il suo interno dei mentori delle varie associazioni di immigrati. A me sembra che all'ultima relazione che avevano mandato in corso d'opera che le cose stavano andando molto bene, magari vedo di recuperarle te le faccio avere.

Giulia: Grazie, E. volevi aggiungere qualcosa?

Ia: Si, no ho il dubbio di non essere riuscita a trasmettere un po' come viene … Come viene vissuta questa esperienza qui. Nel senso che non c'è un programma di mentoring. No? Nel tempo si sono formate delle persone come bacino di persone a disposizione, che vengono invitate nei corsi e anche che svolgono la loro attività in modo

indipendente, per cui è anche un po' difficile dire quale esperienza è andata bene, quale no. Per esempio, forse si potrebbe fare sondaggio al CPA e capire quante delle persone che si sono iscritte al CPA quest'anno hanno avuto le indicazioni di iscriversi da parte delle mentori. Per esempio questo potrebbe essere un elemento oppure quanto le persone che si rivolgono al consultorio, hanno avuto il suggerimento di chiamare il consultorio da parte delle mentori. Oppure quante delle persone che … adesso mi viene in mente un'esperienza che vogliamo proporre in futuro rispetto alla fruizione dei musei, quante tra quelle persone hanno avuto il suggerimento da parte delle mentori. Questo potrebbe essere il metodo perché è proprio un trasmettere, la voglia di conoscere e partecipare ai servizi di cittadinanza, questo è l'obiettivo. Non sono delle singole iniziative, è proprio nel tessuto sociale che si vede l'azione di queste figure. Cerchiamo di aumentare questo senso di conoscenza del territorio,dei servizi di modo che loro per prime entrino sempre di più e quindi che diventino confidenti e a loro agio per esempio nei servizi dei consultori, dei centi anti-violenza nei servizi strutturali della città… perché più loro si sentiranno padrone di tutti questi ambiti, la scuola, la conoscenza della scuola, più loro si sentiranno padrone di questi ambiti, più riusciranno a trasmettere un senso di appartenenza. È importaneper non vedere questi servizi come strutture esterne e spaventose ma per comprendere che ci si può rivolgere in tranquillità.

Giulia: Ok, grazie mille. Sì, ma infatti parlando anche con gli altri professori intervistati è sempre stata, in tutte le conversazioni, una linea comune anche quella nelle Università di non creare dei progetti singoli per ragazzi rifugiati di mentoring, ma proprio di inserire questa figura all'interno della struttura dell'università stessa. Quali sono le conoscenze o comunque le competenze, tra virgolette, culturali che più servono a una mentore?

Ib: Ma senz'altro per noi che siamo un servizio del territorio, è importante che la mentore abbia un'esperienza positiva, appunto di conoscenza dei servizi e di vita in città. Nel senso che non si può chiedere a una persona che sta vivendo in modo faticoso ancora eccessivamente faticoso la sua vita qua, che ancora non è riuscita orientarsi, non è riuscita a capire, che è ancora molto timorosa. Ovviamente non gli si può chiedere di essere di aiuto e di supporto a qualcun altro. Ovviamente si cerca di trovare qualcuno che sia già solido di suo e poi la conoscenza, la competenza da acquisire è molto quella

della relazione, cioè riuscire a capire come entrare in relazione con gli altri rispetto a questo ambito, come dicevo prima, senza essere invadenti, senza pensare di obbligare gli altri a fare i percorsi identici a quelli che si sono fatti e senza neanche però pensare di dover diventare un reale supporto di quell'individuo perché anche quella sarebbe molto faticoso.

Giulia: Come gestire questo aspetto? Nel senso, magari appunto per differenze culturali una persona che arriva qua è abituata per cultura da avere contatti continui con la mentore/ il mentore. Come fa una mentore a cercare di non farsi assorbire appunto totalmente da quest'esperienza?

Ib: Con il percorso di formazione che la dottoressa Castellani che tu hai conosciuto ha fatto. Ovviamente è un piccolo percorso di formazione, nel tempo poi sono stati diversi, anche di 30-40 50 ore. Prevedono sempre anche una supervisione a un certo punto, per cui insomma c'è un momento in cui ci si può confrontare. Però si fanno delle simulazioni si parla molto di questo tenendo conto che però essendo diversi e molteplici gli ambiti in cui questa figura si può esercitare, ovviamente di volta in volta il metro è diverso. No? Perché mi viene in mente, una cosa è fare la mentore con tua cognata che viene a vivere a casa tua nelle stesse mura domestiche, e quindi tu la vedi 24 ore su 24. Una cosa è essere mentore con la mamma di un compagno di scuola di tuo figlio, che magari incontri all'entrata e all'uscita da scuola e le dai 2 o 3 indicazioni.

Non c'è un metro che valga sempre, dipende da qual è anche la relazione con questa persona con cui si viene in contatto.

Ia: A me però viene un dubbio. Perché mentoring all'università per persone rifugiate, se una persona è rifugiata normalmente, se si scrive all'università dovrebbe già aver fatto un percorso avere dei titoli di studio riconosciuti che sappiamo una cosa estremamente complicata, se arrivano dai Paesi da cui richiedono asilo, arriva all'università con una buona conoscenza della lingua italiana per forza di cose. Dando per scontato che si sta parlando di un'università che sia quella di Padova o di Venezia, allora se una persona rifugiata, ha già una buona conoscenza della lingua italiana, ha già fatto un percorso in Italia di studio? In che cosa dovrebbe consistere il mentoring?

Giulia: Forse, si intendeva un tipo diverso di mentoring. Perché ho visto che anche in università non esistono dei programmi di mentoring. Però forse appunto, da qui deriva un po' la mia confusione, forse attualmente esistono servizi di tutoraggio in cui appunto ti spiegano magari come funziona tutta la carriera e l'iscrizione eccetera, oppure sportelli a cui puoi rivolgere le tue domande e i tuoi dubbi. Però magari adottare la figura che viene utilizzata per i percorsi della regione Veneto anche in ambito accademico, potrebbe essere positivo.

Ia: nel senso che poi se pensiamo un attimo in generale, il mentoring così come è stato sperimentato, in realtà non è più una sperimentazione, il comune di venezia ci lavora da anni, a differenza di quello che abbiamo fatto noi che era strettamente legato a un progetto, aveva un inizio e una fine e è nessun beneficio, poi in prospettiva futura. Però comunque è pensato proprio partendo dalle persone che hanno vissuto delle esperienze, in prima persona è che posso in questo senso avendo sperimentato anche tutti gli ostacoli che ci possono essere difficoltà che ci possa essere sostenere altre persone che ancora non hanno gli strumenti per intraprendere in modo autonomo, il percorso di reinserimento nella società di arrivo.

Giulia: Probabilmente sì, nel senso che in ambito accademico, dando per scontato che la persona ha già fatto un programma di inserimento non ha bisogno di quel tipo di supporto, però magari semplicemente una persona che a sua volta è stata rifugiata, iscritta all'università, può essere più comprensiva di quelli che sono i suoi bisogni. Magari si può vedere in questa chiave. Anch'io stavo cercando semplicemente di capire quale tipo di mentoring poteva essere il più adatto e in che modo.

Ib: Mi viene in mente, un'esperienza che non abbiamo … cioè ci ha incuriosito, ma che non siamo riuscite poi a conoscere in modo più approfondito, dell'università di Palermo, che invece proponeva le esperienze di mentoring tra studenti universitari e minori stranieri non accompagnati neo-arrivati, con l'idea che il loro percorso di apprendimento dell'italiano potesse avvenire all'interno dell'università. Però minori stranieri, non universitari; semplicemente di mescolare le competenze, le situazioni, affinché l'Università diventasse uno strumento anche per questi ragazzi che non frequentavano l'università. Ti metto la pulce nell'orecchio perché potrebbe essere

interessante. La cosa che mi sento di dirti è che comunque è un tipo di esperienza, di relazione che credo abbia accezioni diverse a seconda di chi lo usa.

Diversi ambiti, persone, enti che usano terminologia mentoring, e diano significati diversi. Quindi è importante sviscerare questo. Adesso noi oggi ti abbiamo raccontato qual è l'esperienza del nostro servizio nel comune di Venezia e come ci siamo così organizzate, sia per la formazione che per poi il proseguimento di questa attività, di questa iniziativa.

Ovviamente, appunto, l'università avrà una sua storia e darà un significato diverso anche i ruoli, un altro abito ne darà un altro ancora perché anche all'interno del comune ci sono delle figure simili, che vengono utilizzate in altri ambiti e si farà in modo diverso. È importate che tu lo distingui sempre e che tu contestualizzi sempre, no?

Giulia: Visto che ci sono ci sono molti progetti che vengono chiamati progetti di mentoring, quindi proprio in ambito universitario, secondo me è più un cercare di appunto dare tutte le informazioni utili, esserci per lo studente rifugiato qualora avesse dei dubbi ed è una cosa che ho visto che, almeno parlando con professori italiani, manca un po' nell'università. Poi parlando con il ragazzo rifugiato, anche lui ha trovato molto interessante leggerlo in questa chiave, nel senso che nel suo percorso universitario, per quanto lui fosse già molto formato avesse buone conoscenze dell' italiano e tutto, mancava proprio una figura che andasse al di là di un tutor. Ma che si preoccupasse veramente anche a livello emotivo di quello che può vivere una persona che magari non viene avvisata, per esempio dei test d'ingresso che servono per accedere all'università italiana. Quindi magari il mentoring proposto può essere letto in quella chiave, ovvero come una sensibilità particolare di un tutor che è più di un tutor. Però appunto questo è solo il modo in cui l'ho letta io. È chiaro che secondo me è molto diverso dai programmi che offrite voi che hanno un valore ancora diverso.

Comunque grazie mille per tutte le informazioni e ora cercherò appunto di metterle tutte insieme! vi ringrazio moltissimo per aver partecipato. Grazie mille.

Ib: Va bene Giulia. Mi raccomando tieni aperta questa visione della pluralità delle esperienze possibili.

Giulia: Va bene, senz'altro mi è servita molto questa chiamata per capire come sono orientata in questa pluralità dei tipi di mentoring. Grazie mille davvero!

Interview between the Associate professor in the Department of FISPPA of the University of Padua (Ia) and the Associate professor of the University of Bologna (Ib).

Ib: Il riferimento è un po' a tutta l'azione su quelli che sono i rifugiati o anche ad un sistema di accoglienza di studenti che vengono da aree meno fortunate del mondo?

Ia: No direi che teniamo il focus sul tema dei Rifugiati ma parlaci proprio del vostro ragionamento a tutto tondo sicuramente chi si occupa di queste cose non si occupa solo di rifugiati anzi dobbiamo cercare di tenere insieme i pezzi sennò ogni volta facciamo mille fatiche …

Ib: Allora, dunque Padova ha cambiato rettore, ha una rettrice. Bologna ha cambiato rettore e ora ha un rettore; inoltre ha cambiato pro-rettrice alle relazioni internazionali ed è il terzo mandato che c'è una pro-rettrice, quindi diciamo che è una connotazione finora molto interessante. Da novembre io ho la delega del prorettore ma sotto la supervisione funzionale della pro-rettrice ai corridoi universitari per studenti rifugiati, tra le altre cose. Questo è giusto per inquadrare che Bologna, anche dal punto di vista istituzionale, ha una delega espressa a doc. Non significa che io lavori solo sui corridoi universitari per i rifugiati ma vuol dire che essenzialmente c'è attenzione, attenzione perché Bologna ha iniziato con il primo cosiddetto progetto UNICORE, cioè corridoio universitario per i rifugiati. E' stata un po' l'università che assieme alla Cattolica mi pare o all'UIS (Ufficio Informazioni Stranieri), ha avviato il primo progetto – io credo sia stato pensato anche da una collega che sia un medico. Da gennaio, vi farò sapere senz'altro, inizia un progetto Europeo, finanziato dai fondi della Commissione Europea con Caritas e altre due università, due gruppi di università straniere, per esportare il modello a livello europeo. Si può ragionare in questi termini: le caratteristiche e le

persone coinvolte. Pensando alle persone coinvolte, o agli attori politologi, diciamo che è un'azione complessa ma con vari attori.

Dal punto di vista dell'università non ci sono solo io ma, c'è la cosiddetta area di relazioni internazionali e all'interno di questo c'è il cosiddetto International Desk, che si occupa degli studenti stranieri. Quindi in questo caso sono stati decisivi per gli studenti rifugiati e per i corridoi universitari. Perché io distinguo le due cose perché gli studenti che arrivano con i corridoi universitari non arrivano formalmente come studenti rifugiati. Cioè loro arrivano da aree del mondo sfortunate, ciò che li metterebbe in condizione di ottenere la protezione internazionale, ma per semplificare le cose e permetter loro di tornare indietro volessero tornare ad aiutare nei luoghi da cui provengono, arrivano con il visto di studio; quindi è fondamentale il ruolo dell'International desk. Nei corridoi universitari le persone arrivano con il visto di studio e questo significa che è fondamentale avere l'International desk, non solo perché assolve alle pratiche o assiste loro nelle pratica per la documentazione necessaria o verifica il possesso della documentazione necessaria, ma compie anche una verifica circa il possesso dei titoli, perché questa è una cosa fondamentale. Nei corridoi universitari è tutto un po' facilitato perché le persone vengono scelte diciamo dopo dei colloqui e dopo aver manifestato il loro interesse e sono nell'ambito di un processo dove c'è all'interno anche UNHCR. Ora sono sincero questo aiuta ma non risolve alcuni problemi.

Diciamo quindi che l'International desk da un certo punto di vista per l'università è fondamentale per la verifica della posizione di queste persone e soprattutto … soprattutto per la verifica dei diplomi e titoli di studio eccetera. Dopodiché, l'International desk è in contatto con ERGO, che è l'ente regionale per lo studio. E questo vale anche per tutti gli studenti che possono essere rifugiati ma anche per quelli che vengono da situazioni sfortunate diciamo. Allora ERGO è fondamentale perché garantisce un alloggio e una borsa di studio ulteriore rispetto a quella offerta dall'Università di Bologna o offerta da UNHCR o da Caritas nell'ambito del progetto. Terzo, nell'ambito dei corridoi universitari, ma solo in quest'ambito, oltre a UNHCR c'è Caritas e questo vuol dire anche aver trovato per i rifugiati, per gli studenti all'interno di questo progetto, delle famiglie su cui loro si sono appoggiati. Cioè loro

non sono stati lasciati da soli ma vivono con famiglie in contatto con Caritas, disposte ad accoglierli per garantire un ambiente famigliare; questo perché vengono da situazioni disastrate. È una cosa che si può fare con numeri piccoli, perché per darvi un esempio, adesso che c'è un arrivo consistente di studenti afghani, non si è all'interno del progetto corridoi universitari; comunque il numero alto di studenti afghani che arrivano fa si che abbiano l'alloggio trovato da ERGO, la borsa di studio di ERGO, però diciamo che il livello di assistenza è diverso. Non diciamo migliore o peggiore, ma diverso da ERGO, dall'Università e dalla comunità Afghana che è coinvolta.

I corridoi universitari invece prevedono che le persone che arrivano, siccome ragionevolmente sono sole e siccome Caritas è parte del progetto, finiscano anche in famiglia. Diciamo dunque che da un punto di vista di interazione, ci siamo noi, c'è ERGO, c'è il comune di Bologna per certe cose, c'è Caritas, perché è parte del progetto.E poi noi ci siamo posti la questione, soprattutto per i corridoi universitari, del post-laurea perché i corridoi universitari riguardano persone scelte che vengono fatte arrivare per studiare, principalmente nelle lauree magistrali e principalmente nell'ambito delle cosiddette 'hard science', quindi ingegneria, informatica ecc. Ora, la cosa interessante è che noi abbiamo trovato un accordo con Federmanager e con altri soggetti interessati e disposti ad accoglierli sapendo che, per la formazione post-laurea quindi il tirocinio professionale, questi casi sono casi un po' delicati. Per queste persone che arrivano da situazioni di disastro che arrivano da sole è fondamentale avere la famiglia, è fondamentale avere qualcuno a cui ci si possa rivolgere e parlare, perché per loro a volte è anche importante poter prendere un caffè, poter scambiare due parole. Quindi diciamo che nell'azione dei corridoi universitari, complessivamente, soprattutto per le lauree magistrali, oltre alle università intervengono altri soggetti, tra cui quelli che possono garantire tirocini professionali.

L'idea nostra, che stiamo maturando in questo ultimo mese, avendo posto per più persone e anche un diverso approccio rispetto a prima - il che vuol dire che siamo semplicemente ad uno stadio successivo - è quella di cercare di creare una cornice che non riguardi solo i rifugiati ma che riguardi gli studenti stranieri che vengono da luoghi improbabili, più deboli. Non stiamo parlano di studenti statunitensi o australiani ecco. Da un lato abbiamo la comunità degli studenti camerunensi, magari, ma sempre di più

arrivano persone come studenti da zone del mondo. Hanno difficoltà a trovare casa se vengono a seguire un master, difficoltà a trovare il tirocinio, difficoltà di questo genere oltre a non avere molte risorse economiche. Allora l'idea è quella di creare una cornice di servizi e azioni che possano servire per tutti quelli più deboli, più fragili, non solo quelli che formalmente sono all'interno del progetto dei corridoi universitari e non solo quelli che formalmente sono rifugiati.

Una cosa diversa avviene con gli afghani perché non sono dentro il progetto sui corridori universitari, perché il progetto sui corridoi universitari ripartirà per i cittadini afghani da marzo-aprile, credo perché UNHCR aveva bisogno di dispiegare le persone lì e cercare di organizzarsi. Però noi abbiamo fino a questo momento 15-20 studenti che stanno arrivando dall'Afghanistan, in questo caso c'è un'azione politica della Regione attraverso ERGO nel senso che c'è un chiaro input politico relativo al fatto di erogare borse di studio per gli studenti stranieri, diciamo ai cittadini afghani che intendono iscriversi in Università dell'Emilia Romagna. Alla domanda mia: "Vabbé ma quante risorse abbiamo?" mi hanno risposto: "illimitate". Cioè c'è la copertura politica della vicepresidente e quando avremo chiaro il numero finale, la direttrice di ERGO che si relaziona ogni settimana con la vicepresidente regionale, presenterà i dati e quindi le risorse che verranno restituite ad ERGO.

In questo caso la regia è utile perché si crea sistema tra le università dell'Emilia Romagna. Quindi Giusto per darti un'idea Bologna, Ferrara, Modena, Reggio Emilia, Parma e la Cattolica di Milano che ha sede a Piacenza. E l'azione di coordinamento è quella di cercare di assegnare a tutte le università degli studenti anche in base agli interessi degli studenti e alle offerte dell'università, questo è una cosa estremamente positiva per coinvolgere tutte le università intanto. Io questo lo trovo estremamente positivo. E poi anche tendenzialmente per motivare i ragazzi perché non è che loro scelgono … allora, come in veneto l'80% sceglierebbe Padova, verosimilmente in Emilia Romagna 80% sceglierebbe Bologna. La grandezza … l'offerta formativa di Bologna in inglese è molto più ampia dell'offerta delle altre università in inglese, però c'è la disponibilità delle altre università, e quindi questo significa che, la regia di ERGO serve a che tutte le università accolgano, gli studenti vadano dove vogliono andare, nel senso dove vorrebbero essere iscritti. C'è la motivazione di andare veramente

all''università, non è prendere una stanza e una borsa e andare a Bologna per dire. E questo aiuta, contemporaneamente a non scaricare troppo sull'università più grande. Giusto per darvi un ordine di grandezza, all'International desk di Bologna, ci sono 6 persone che ci lavorano, 6-7 persone. Però queste 6-7 persone coprono tutto ciò che riguarda gli studenti internazionali, quindi non solo i rifugiati, non solo quelli universitari, ma tutti gli studenti internazionali che vengono come studenti all'Università di Bologna, tutti visiting e anche coloro che vengono nei programmi Overseas per un periodo temporaneo, come studente. Non solo quelli che si iscrivono, ma anche quelli che vengono, che so, sfruttando lo scambio con gli Stati Uniti, con l'America Latina. Quindi, in realtà sembrano tante persone, ma non sono tante persone. E quindi queste persone hanno fatto un lavoro istruttorio sulle domande possibili, possibilmente adeguate, o possibilmente idonee a venire a Unibo; alcune le abbiamo accolte altre no. O meglio c'è un problema relativo al possesso dei documenti perché ci sono alcuni studenti che vorrebbero iscriversi a lauree triennali che dicono di aver fatto il liceo in Afghanistan. In questo caso, però non hanno prodotto neanche un certificato di inglese da cui si deduca il nome della scuola, cioè completamente senza documenti senza neanche una foto. Noi, se questi studenti ci producono una foto di un diploma con il nome riconducibile a una università per le magistrali o di un liceo per iscriverli alle triennali, la verifica viene fatta. Cioè io ho visto email di scambio con l'università di Kandahar, che dice che esiste quel liceo in quella città … Ci sono alcuni, pochi pochi, che hanno zero documenti, allora in questo caso per noi non è possibile accogliere. Non è possibile iscriverli perché i nostri regolamenti non lo permettono ed è lasciato alle facoltà, alle università, la possibilità di iscrivere o meno, non solo con possesso di titoli ma previa verifica delle conoscenze da parte di una commissione. Ora, sulla base del regolamento esistente di Unibo, non è prevista questa seconda possibilità; è prevista per singoli master, cioè i master che sono a mercato; la commissione che sceglie gli studenti verifica le conoscenze. Quindi anche uno studente di ingegneria può andare a fare studi sulla moda, voglio dire. Però gli studenti … per gli studenti, diciamo rifugiati, afghani o altri non c'è questa verifica.

Parentesi, a che corsi vengono ammessi, potenzialmente ammessi? A tutti quelli che non sono cosiddetti a mercato, cioè quelli che non hanno un numero chiuso, autonome tasse d'iscrizione, selezioni già chiuse. Perché le selezioni vengono fatte prima.

L'obiettivo qual è? Quello di avere delle persone che vengano, che studino … Adesso ieri abbiamo fatto la riunione: l'obiettivo è che queste persone arriveranno adesso, o stanno già arrivando, quindi vengono iscritti all'università; entro la fine di settembre devono aver maturato almeno 15 crediti.

Quindi diciamo che, il lavoro in questo momento nel breve periodo è mirato a comunque creare la cornice di legalità e di verifica del possesso dei titoli minimi per questi studenti per venire e per essere accolti, per ricevere l'alloggio e la borsa di Ergo. E dopodiché valuteranno loro se proseguire nello studio dove sono stati iscritti, secondo i loro desideri o cambiarli. È importante perché ad esempio c'era una persona che era stata inizialmente assegnata a Parma e poi scopriamo che è un attore e regista teatrale. Allora abbiamo deciso tutti assieme di spostarlo, quindi facciamo delle riunioni anche abbastanza complesse che per questa persona ci sarebbe un corso a Bologna e qualcuno di Bologna su relazioni internazionali sarebbe andato a Parma, dove Parma ha relazioni internazionali, perché sennò tutti verrebbero a Bologna. Però non è fattibile.

Questo è il percorso attuale, la prospettiva è … quindi diciamo: nel breve termine fissare questa cosa. Poi per i cittadini per i ragazzi afghani due cose. La prima, l'obiettivo iniziale di accoglierli a Bologna. Dunque, Unibo ha Campus in tutta la Romagna: Forlì, Cesena, Rimini e Ravenna. L'obiettivo è di accoglierli a Bologna per tenerli assieme, per non lasciarli da soli; è stata coinvolta anche tutta la comunità afghana, c'è un ristoratore che ha un ristorante che è molto attivo. Ovviamente in questo caso i ragazzi arrivano che hanno già visto di studio che è stato emesso dall'ambasciata in Iran o dall'ambasciata in Pakistan. Quindi loro arrivano con titolo di studio.

C'è una questione interessante, almeno a me interessa perché studio queste cose, ma una questione interessante su cui si dovrà ragionare secondo me anche a livello di rete di università, sullo status di queste persone. Perché lo status si collega e ha un effetto domino sui loro studi. È un problema è che sta venendo fuori sui corridoi universitari ma può venire fuori anche coi ragazzi Afghani. Cioè questi ragazzi tendenzialmente sono sia quelli dei corridoi universitari che gli afghani e sono entrati con un visto per ragioni di studio. Molti di loro, tra le altre cose, degli afghani erano pre-iscritti a Unibo, un po' come voi avete dei prescritti, no?! Quindi sono entrati per ragioni di studio e questo va bene, sono studenti. Questo li espone al termine del ciclo di studi, al rinnovo

del permesso di soggiorno. Ed è vero che il permesso di studi si può trasformare in permesso per ragioni di lavoro o per ricerca lavoro. Però è anche vero che si è molto soggetti alle discrezionalità, delle autorità competenti e quindi alcuni di loro hanno interesse prima o poi a far domanda di protezione internazionale.

Ora secondo la legge italiana, chi fa domanda di protezione internazionale non può iscriversi all'università finché non viene accettata. Diciamo che è l'unico vuoto normativo. C'è l'iscrizione alla scuola superiore, alla scuola alla primaria, alla secondaria, la secondaria superiore, formazione professionale, formazione per tirocini, ma non c'è l'alta formazione, non c'è l'università. Quindi, coloro che entrano già subito come richiedenti protezione, fino a che non hanno la risposta, non possono essere iscritti formalmente. Le università italiane hanno due opzioni, più una. Allora la più una è un'opzione che secondo me è sbagliata di alcune università che per ragioni umanitarie dicono "noi li iscriviamo lo stesso, punto e basta." Quella che abbiamo fatto e fanno altre università italiane, sono o l'iscrizione con riserva che quindi viene confermata quando arriva lo status. O l'iscrizione ai singoli corsi, che viene trasformata in iscrizione al corso di studio con ricostruzione della carriera quando viene riconosciuta la protezione internazionale.

Ora il problema … quindi è per questo, poi che nei corridoi universitari e anche i cittadini afghani, li si è fatti arrivare col visto per studio perché almeno si iscrivono subito formalmente e non ci sono problemi. Il problema che si pone è: "Ma cosa succede se uno di loro mentre sta studia fa domanda di protezione?" Perché non ci sono casi allo stato, ci sono le questure e decidono come preferiscono. Allora questa è una cosa che si sta cercando di capire. Ma che significa banalmente essere consapevoli che la scelta di essere studenti per studio e poi fare domanda di protezione potrebbe avere degli effetti sul percorso universitario, almeno temporaneo.

L''indirizzo mio, la mia idea e ci sto lavorando per agire in questa conseguenza, è che se uno è già qua per ragioni di studio e fa domani protezione internazionale, non perda il titolo di studente. Perché in realtà a livello Nazionale, il Ministero degli Interni dice per i lavoratori che non si perde il titolo di lavoratore se si fa domanda di protezione internazionale. Però è un problema che si può porre. Allora secondo me questa è una questione di cui essere consapevoli, soprattutto all'inizio, quando loro arrivano si sappia

che se queste persone si iscrivono come studenti hanno l'accesso ad alcuni benefici; se decidono di arrivare e fare domanda di protezione internazionale rischiano di perderli. Quando io parlavo con i funzionari di ERGO, mi dicevano che nessuno, nessuno verrebbe lasciato sotto un ponte, e questo è ovvio. Però è più difficile giustificare, nella loro missione, l'erogazione di fondi a uno che studia ma non ha lo status di studente perché finché non hai la protezione sei uno studente con riserva. Però questi problemi finora non si sono … cioè, noi siamo consapevoli di questi problemi, non si sono mai verificate questioni particolari. Abbiamo avuto e abbiamo qualche problema nei corridoio universitari perché i ragazzi arrivati qua grazie a UNHCR e al permesso per studio, hanno il documento che gli scade ed era un documento di viaggio rilasciato dall' Etiopia che non glielo rinnova perché non sono più in Etiopia; l'Italia, non lo rinnova perché l'ha emesso l'Etiopia. E hanno il titolo, sono regolari in Italia, saranno regolari anche l'anno prossimo perché gli viene rinnovato. Però loro sono intrappolati in Italia; se hanno una famiglia in Francia, non possono andare in Francia a trovare i loro familiari. Cioè se uno di loro ha un fratello o un cugino in Francia, non possono perché non possono uscire dall'Italia.

Quindi questo è il quadro. Ti parlo di una delle questioni importanti, perché noi vogliamo creare una serie di azioni per gli studenti più fragili, diciamo così, che vengono da determinate aree del mondo, per far fronte alle esigenze che a volte son comuni.

Cioè questi ragazzi che arrivano e hanno la borsa e l'alloggio di Ergo, magari tra un anno, magari fra 2 anni vorranno essere indipendenti, cioè non essere nello studentato. Allora si pone il problema degli alloggi.Noi abbiamo il problema degli alloggi, in alcuni corsi di studio nei Campus periferici, ma anche a Bologna, in realtà, dove ci sono molti studenti non Europei.

E non trovano casa. Cioè scrivono la mail, perché magari sanno anche parlare bene in italiano, scrivono la mail, la persona dice: "Va bene vieni a vedere la casa. Per me va bene non ci sono problemi" e poi gli dicono "ah ma non sapevo che tu fossi così.", ma proprio detto in faccia. Equesto è un problema. Cioè non è un caso. In alcune zone, in alcune situazioni succede a gruppi di studenti. E quindi la questione dell' alloggio, la questione dell'ospitalità, in realtà non riguarda solo chi arriva nei corridoi universitari o

come rifugiato o chi arriva dall'Afghanistan adesso, riguarda un po' tutti gli studenti. La questione della formazione post laurea riguarda tutti gli studenti e ce ne sono alcuni che terminato il corso di studi torneranno a casa, altri troveranno autonomamente lavoro. Però molti, soprattutto chi viene da diciamo dai corridoi universitari o diciamo cittadini afghani, tra 2 anni, non è che li si può mettere in strada, se decide il mercato. Perché loro rischiano di esser fuori dal mercato.

Però dall'altro lato l'accordo con questa associazione di categoria, diciamo in senso ampio, è una cosa che va beneficio loro, delle nostre comunità, ma anche delle associazioni di categoria perché questi cinque ragazze dei corridoi universitari, per dire: uno lavora mi pare in Banca Etica come informatico, gli altri lavorano per società dove loro possono applicare i loro studi di ingegneria, sono tutti contenti e felici che arrivino persone motivate che possano lavorare. Quindi in realtà l'azione è un'azione veramente corale. Ecco questo è il quadro più o meno sì, mi rendo conto di essere andato un po' di palo in frasca, però insomma …

Ia: Ma guarda direi utilissimo. Anche perché così abbiamo un ragionamento che fila e che purtroppo direi che in alcuni ambiti identifica sfide comuni. Volevo se era possibile, forse un'area che non abbiamo toccato è quella degli esami di ingresso disciplinari e ofa. Avete fatto qualche ragionamento, o preso qualche misura in questo ambito.

Ib: Allora in questo caso fino ad ora chi arriva non va nei corsi a numero chiuso, nel senso che comunque l'obiettivo è, al limite, di metterli in condizioni di studiare e avere una competenza linguistica per poter accedere l'anno successivo. Perché non si sa che competenza linguistica hanno, sia questa in italiano o sia questa in inglese. E poi perché entrare a metà anno in un gruppo, in un master dove c'è il numero chiuso espone anche a delle critiche, perché si fanno trattamenti diversi, anche se è brutto da dirsi. Pragmaticamente cerchiamo di capire quali sono i problemi che ci possono essere. E poi perché oggettivamente in quei corsi, soprattutto a numero chiuso, perdere il semestre, insomma crea dei problemi anche per seguire il secondo. Sulla valutazione delle conoscenze, tipo OFA per i corsi magistrali, in realtà, poi sono i corsi di studio che valutano. Quindi noi poi comunque parliamo col coordinatore dei corsi di studio.

Cioè non c'è nulla a sorpresa sulle spalle dei dipartimenti, delle scuole o dei singoli corsi di studio. Cioè, li coinvolgiamo e sappiamo che nel caso possono recuperare con le prove che verranno organizzate l'anno prossimo; cioè non gli vengono richieste prove che possono sembrare una barriera adesso. Noi non abbiamo mai avuto problemi, però i colleghi di altre università più piccole si.

Mentre diciamo che il problema si pone un po' di più per le lauree magistrali perché, per le lauree magistrali, devi avere una competenza maturata nel triennio. Ce ne sono alcuni che sono iscritti alle magistrali, perché lo dimostrano di avere studiato gli elementi base insomma, per essere ammessi alle lauree magistrali.

Ho in mente un collega, no uno studente laureato in Agraria a Kabul, che lui ha spiegato cosa aveva studiato, e forse aveva studiato anche all'estero tipo in Pakistan o in Iran, e i colleghi gli hanno detto "Ma lui possiamo iscriverlo ad una laurea magistrale". Devo dire che molti di loro … ci sono due che sono colleghi nostri, nel senso uno insegnava ingegneria a Kabul e l'altro era un rettore di inglese a Kabul. Loro sono già in Italia, hanno già la protezione internazionale; ci hanno chiesto … Han detto che vorrebbero studiare; loro erano disponibili a iniziare dalla triennale, primo anno. Siamo stati noi a dire a quello di ingegneria: "no puoi iniziare dalla magistrale", perché abbiamo visto il suo curriculum, l'abbiamo fatto vedere ai colleghi di ingegneria.

[…] A me sinceramente l'idea di dire: "Ah. Ma voi venite, fate gli studenti!" mi sembra un po' paternalistico. Ecco Cioè per delle persone che già lavoravano, hanno alcune 30-35 anni, altre ne hanno 55-60, perché i giudici in Afghanistan hanno il buco di un regime talebano.

Tu non puoi dire a persone che hanno 35 o 55: " ti dico io cosa fare" e, per esempio, il collega di ingegneria a Kabul ha detto lui che vuole studiare. Cioè, lui ha detto "io vorrei studiare, sono disposto a partire della triennale" e non gli abbiamo detto "Non c'è problema".

Però è diverso, quindi in realtà l'approccio che abbiamo, sono approcci diversi perché sono persone con l'età diversa e situazioni diverse. La cosa interessante, l'ultima cosa interessante, è che molti colleghi si sono dichiarati disponibili a interagire ad aiutare, quindi creeremo un gruppo insomma. E alcuni si sono offerti in questi termini, cioè e

noi abbiamo un gruppo che insegna come insegnare italiano agli stranieri. E quindi questi colleghi sono disponibili ad insegnare l'italiano a queste persone. Cioè vuol dire che l'Università riesce a garantire anche questo servizio. Quindi dando al comune, cioè richiedendo al comune altro: mediazione culturale, i servizi per i bambini, l'assistenza … perché a queste persone bisognerà spiegargli tutta la questione dell'assistenza sanitaria. E poi devo dire che noi abbiamo la fortuna che Caritas, essendo il cardinale di Bologna estremamente sensibile a questi temi, è uno degli attori con cui parla la nostra prorettrice il cardinale, detto chiaramente. Ma non nel senso clericale del termine, cioè è uno degli interlocutori perché loro ci hanno dato la disponibilità sin dai corridoi universitari di dire "noi ci siamo volentieri, siamo dentro il progetto con Caritas Europa e Caritas Italia e non chiedeteci risorse, economiche da dare ad altri nel senso non chiedeteci risorse per affittare una casa, però noi possiamo darvi una casa. Oppure se c'è bisogno di altro …" Cioè per dire nei corridoi universitari avevano bisogno di una famiglia, non di una casa. E noi attraverso Caritas, gli abbiamo dato 5 famiglie ora. E questo per me è estremamente importante, tra le altre cose, sempre con la discrezione necessaria.

Ecco quindi per chiudere la domanda sugli OFA sulle conoscenze, è domandato dai corsi di studio, da un punto di vista delle scadenze vengono recuperate con le scadenze successive. E poi diciamo che il primo periodo, soprattutto adesso punta più alla formazione, e al fare in modo che lo possano entrare poi successivamente.

La cosa che secondo me potrebbe essere di interesse nostro, potrebbe essere quella di essere consapevoli delle difficoltà di alcune questioni per fare massa critica in alcuni casi. Perché io credo che non sia possibile che ogni università su alcune cose decida per sé e contemporaneamente, soprattutto sulle questioni degli status, dei permessi di soggiorno, così.

Ia: Si, se poi fra l'altro dobbiamo proporre di rivedere e integrare una legge è meglio che lo chiediamo tutti insieme.

Ib: Eh capito! Cioè a me l'idea che l'unico settore della formazione escluso per i richiedenti protezione sia l'alta formazioni mi sembra incredibile!Ma questo ha una logica eh attenzione! Perché di solito i rifugiati sono donne o bambini, allora quel tipo,

oppure qualcuno che viene qua e deve lavorare a breve, quindi formazione professionale e training. Ma non ci sono solo loro..

Poi insomma quando vuoi ci sentiamo … ci vediamo!

Ia: Molto volentieri d'accordo, ti ringrazio molto.

Ib: Buona giornata!

RIASSUNTO IN ITALIANO

I Rifugiati nel sistema dell'Istruzione Superiore: il ruolo del *mentore* come promotore di inclusione e sviluppo di nuovi programmi intersezionali per rifugiati e richiedenti asilo

Contesto preliminare e scopo della tesi

Lo scopo di questa tesi è provare ad analizzare la figura del mentore proposta dalla Regione Veneto in alcuni dei progetti di inclusione di persone immigrate e cercare di capire se potrebbe essere vantaggiosa anche in ambito accademico per aiutare gli studenti rifugiati a conseguire una laurea. Infatti, la crisi migratoria è in atto e si sta espandendo più che mai: a metà del 2020, 79,5 milioni di persone ,costrette da guerre, violenze, persecuzioni e violazione dei loro diritti fondamentali, sono state obbligate a lasciare la madrepatria e cercare asilo altrove (un dato duplicato rispetto ai 41 milioni di rifugiati del 2010). La crisi migratoria però, come osservato nel Capitolo 1, porta con sé quasi sempre una crisi educativa: infatti la metà delle persone richiedenti asilo è in fase pre-scolare o scolare e, quanto riportato dall'UNHCR, stabilisce che solo la metà dei bambini e delle bambine avrà la possibilità di ricevere un'educazione. Questo dato peggiora progressivamente in ogni grado della vita educativa di uno studente, per poi registrare pochissimi studenti iscritti ad un corso universitario. Infatti, l'UNHCR ha impiegato molti sforzi nel cercare di tracciare il numero di persone rifugiate che hanno attualmente accesso all'Istruzione Superiore, siano essi corsi universitari o di formazione, e il risultato dimostra che solo il 3% di persone richiedenti asilo frequenta l'ambiente accademico oggigiorno. Di fronte a questo dato scoraggiante, l'organizzazione si è prefissata l'obiettivo di raggiungere almeno il 15% di studenti rifugiati entro il 2030. La necessità di perseguire tale missione diventa molto più chiara se si considera che molti studi confermano l'importanza della partecipazione all'istruzione superiore, soprattutto per le persone rifugiate. Infatti studiare all'Università è per loro sinonimo di resilienza e promessa di un futuro migliore: essere inclusi nel contesto accademico promuove una positiva visione di sé stessi, protegge dal circolo della violenza e migliora le relazioni sociali e il benessere personale. Inoltre,

apre le porte a posizioni più prestigiose e meglio retribuite (Ma et al., 2016). Per questo motivo le Università Italiane e Europee, che ho preso in considerazione in questo lavoro, si sono impegnate nella creazione di progetti di inclusione con lo scopo di partecipare alla missione dell'UNHCR "15% entro il 2030" e per combattere l'abbandono scolastico da parte dei rifugiati. I due progetti principali analizzati sono UNICORE e ARQUS. Quest'ultimo in particolare, sposa diverse missioni e include diverse università europee. La linea d'azione 2 per l'Inclusione e la Diversità, è dedicata al problema dell'inclusione di studenti rifugiati nell'alta formazione: lo scopo delle diverse università è infatti quello di confrontare i loro diversi sistemi universitari e d'inclusione e di cercare soluzioni a livello sovrastrutturale, creando una strategia europea.

Tuttavia i passi da fare sono ancora molti, come anticipato il numero dei rifugiati che hanno accesso alle università rimane bassissimo e, per coloro che riescono a raggiungere questo traguardo, gli ostacoli sul cammino sono moltissimi; di conseguenza la possibilità di essere esclusi dall'università rimane alta. Per quanto moltissime figure all'interno dell'università ripongano molti sforzi per stare al passo con queste esigenze, nell'analizzare i diversi progetti di inclusione, mentoring e tutoraggio, mancano ancora programmi o figure completamente pensate per persone rifugiate. Per questo motivo quando ho parlato con D.V., responsabile dei progetti d'inclusione di persone immigrate nel contesto della regione Veneto e mi ha parlato della figura del mentore che collabora con loro in tali iniziative, ho pensato che potesse essere utile anche in ambito accademico. La figura del mentore intesa da loro, infatti è una persona che condivide un passato migratorio o di altro genere, il più simile possibile a quello della persona che aiuta ed è, allo stesso tempo, una persona che ha concluso un percorso di intgrazione nel nuovo paese in cui si trova a vivere. Infatti, nel tempo, ha maturato una buona familiarità con il territorio e le istituzioni, o ha concluso un percorso di crescita personale superando varie difficoltà che si sono presentate lungo il suo commino. Per tale ragione è quindi in grado di poter dare un aiuto concreto al/alla *mentee* (persona che viene aiutata dal mentore) ed accompagnalo/a nel suo processo di inclusione. Nel contesto dei progetti della regione, i mentori sono volontari che, dopo aver acquisito determinate conoscenze, aver fatto un percorso di crescita in prima persona e aver allenato determinate competenze, si sentono pronti ad offrire il loro servizio. Inoltre, in

tali iniziative regionali, il mentoring, è spesso utilizzato ad esempio per supportare l'insegnante durante i corsi di italiano L2 oppure in supporto alle donne durante la gravidanza. In tali progetti lo scopo del mentoring è quello di creare un rapporto basato sul rispetto e la fiducia tra mentore e mentee e, per come viene inizialmente pensato il mentoring, sulla connessione "per empatia di due persone, due anime che si riconoscono" (E.S.) e si scelgono.

Tale dimensione di spontaneità è molto difficile da ricreare in quasi ogni contesto in cui a volte, per mancanza di mentori, le risorse scarseggiano; tuttavia è molto interessante l'importanza di un vissuto comune per la riuscita positiva del mentoring.

Inutile dire che questo tipo di figura va ben lontano dagli esempi di tutoraggio esistenti in ambito accademico a supporto degli studenti. Nonostante ciò, ho iniziato a domandarmi se questo tipo di mentoring (o comunque una forma ibrida) fosse adattabile e vantaggioso nel contesto accademico poiché più specifico per l'esperienza dell'asilo politico.

Ho deciso quindi di porre tale quesito al centro di questo progetto e di utilizzare il metodo della ricerca qualitativa e tematica come strumento più adatto per approfondire tale argomento. Lasciare spazio alle voci esperte è stato importante per me per chiarire tre quesiti principali, pilastri di questa tesi: in primo luogo è stato utile a far chiarezza su quale fosse il tipo di mentore più adatto da inserire nella rete di persone che si occupano di inclusione nel contesto accademico; in secondo luogo avevo bisogno di capire quale fosse il punto di vista degli intervistati sulla figura da me proposta e sulla possibilità di includerla nella rete del personale universitario; infine, ha chiarito quali fossero le strategie d'inclusione esistenti, almeno nel contesto italiano ed europeo, e mi ha permesso di raccogliere importanti proposte per il futuro.

Per completare questo obiettivo, ho avuto la fortuna di poter intervistare persone che provenivano da ambiti di specializzazione e competenza diversi tra loro: tra di loro vi erano diversi professori dell'Università di Padova, la responsabile dell'International Desk dell'Università di Lipsia e tre coordinatrici di vari progetti della regione Veneto. Inoltre, ho avuto la grande fortuna di poter parlare con una persona rifugiata, ad oggi ben inserita sul nuovo territorio e potenzialmente perfetta sia per valutare l'utilità del

tipo di mentoring da me proposto, sia per ricoprire personalmente tale ruolo. Parlare con questa persona è stato illuminante: avere il parere di chi ha vissuto l'esperienza di migrazione e inclusione sulla sua pelle, è stata la testimonianza più sincera e realistica sia di quella che è la realtà di molte persone rifugiate che intendono completare un percorso universitario, sia di quelle che sarebbero vere e proprie esigenze per loro.

Gli intervistati sono stati sottoposti quindi a 8 domande, in ordine sparso. Ho iniziato le interviste con le domande più inerenti all'ambito di competenza di ogni intervistato e lasciato che la conversazione prendesse una direzione libera, basata sulla riflessione comune e il dialogo. Ho infatti scelto la modalità dell'intervista semi-strutturata come modalità di riferimento, poiché lascia maggiore spazio alle opinioni degli intervistati sugli argomenti che più li toccano da vicino. Ho infine raccolto risposte e temi principali in un'analisi tematica.

Struttura generale della tesi

Questa tesi si sviluppa in tre capitoli, il primo e il secondo sono di natura teorica mentre il terzo contiene i risultati e l'analisi delle interviste.

Nel capitolo 1 ho analizzato il profilo del mentore, esplorando le diverse sfumature che esso assume in ogni ambito e i diversi tipi di training a cui ogni mentore dovrebbe sottoporsi. Questo discorso non poteva che portare con sé anche una riflessione sulla competenza comunicativa interculturale (CCI), sul concetto di empatia e su alcuni principi base della comunicazione, in quanto competenze primarie che il mentore deve sviluppare durante la sua preparazione. Nel paragrafo 1.3, ho anche introdotto una riflessione sui rischi che possono verificarsi durante il mentoring e sulla necessità di offrire una rete di supporto anche al mentore, ad ogni livello (psicologico, organizzativo, legale). L'ultimo paragrafo (1.4) è invece dedicato agli aspetti di genere della migrazione e del processo di integrazione: si è ritenuto opportuno, anche in questa sede, lasciare spazio alla voce femminile e sottolineare la necessità di creare programmi di mentoring specifici per le donne. Anche in questo caso, le sfide che le donne vivono durante il processo migratorio e durante l'asilo politico sono articolate in maniera diversa rispetto a quelle della controparte maschile.

Il capitolo 2, invece si concentra maggiormente sulla figura dello studente rifugiato nel contesto dell'istruzione superiore e sulla difficoltà di procedere con gli studi. Dopo aver dato una definizione dei termini principali (rifugiato, istruzione superiore e rapporto globale lordo di iscrizione), ho poi parlato della presenza di rifugiati nelle università italiane, europee e americane. Ho poi dedicato altri paragrafi alle sfide che gli studenti rifugiati devono affrontare ogni giorno per accedere all'alta formazione e di quanto è invece importante per loro la carriera universitaria come sinonimo di resilienza e promessa di un futuro migliore. Chiude il capitolo una descrizione dei progetti di Equità e Diversità esistenti e della necessità di adottare una prospettiva intersezionale quando si ha a che fare con realtà di questo tipo.

Il capitolo 3 è poi dedicato ai risultati delle interviste e all'analisi vera e propria. Si apre con una spiegazione sui dettagli delle interviste che riguardano il contesto, l'ambientazione e il profilo degli intervistati; in un altro paragrafo ho descritto il tipo di analisi condotta, l'analisi tematica, spiegando con che modalità viene realizzata. Infine ho concluso con la parte vera e propria di analisi che è stata suddivisa in tre parti distinte: risposte dirette alle domande della Tabella 1, informazioni aggiuntive che sono emerse durante le riflessioni con gli intervistati e temi principali.

Nell'appendice ho riportato la trascrizione delle interviste realizzate con i partecipanti.

Discussione finale e conclusioni

Lo scopo principale di questa ricerca è stato quello di analizzare in primo luogo la figura del mentore e capire se, includere anche nel contesto accademico il tipo di mentoring utilizzato nei progetti della regione, costituisse un passo avanti nel percorso d'inclusione degli studenti rifugiati, considerando in particolare l'importanza del ruolo che l'educazione ricopre specialmente per loro. Le principali domande di ricerca sono state investigate attraverso un'analisi di tipo qualitativo incentrata sulle testimonianze di 9 partecipanti. Ho infatti avuto l'opportunità di intervistare diversi esperti del settore appartenenti a vari campi di specializzazione e uno studente rifugiato: inutile dire che le loro voci sono state il fulcro di questa tesi di ricerca.

Giunti al termine di tale analisi, i risultati hanno dimostrato la necessità di fare maggiore chiarezza e sensibilizzare sulle sfide che ostacolano il percorso d'accesso all'istruzione

superiore, di ogni rifugiato. In particolare, secondo gli intervistati, occorrerebbe creare più coesione a livello sovrastrutturale e un'unica strategia e missione a livello Europeo. Nelle università di tale panorama più consapevole e coeso, il personale che si occupa dell'inclusione degli studenti rifugiati dovrebbe essere costituito da un gruppo di attori con profili diversi, in cui includere la figura del mentore come viene intesa in questo studio. In realtà una delle riflessioni principali e più importanti fatta con gli intervistati, riguarda esattamente il tipo di mentore che si sceglie di includere in questo contesto. Infatti il primo tipo di mentoring presentatomi da D.V. riguardava quello che in questa sede ho rinominato "mentore di comunità": una persona che condivide un passato simile a quello del mentee, cura un rapporto di rispetto e "fiducia" con la persona che aiuta ed è solitamente un/a volontario/a che riceve una sorta di "chiamata" ad aiutare e persegue questa missione. Tuttavia, la letteratura che riguarda i progetti di inclusione nell'alta formazione non menziona questo tipo di mentoring, ma piuttosto altri tipi di figure più simili a forme di tutoraggio.

Grazie alla poliedricità degli intervistati, ho quindi potuto proporre questo tipo di mentoring ai professori che rappresentavano l'ambiente universitario e chiedere un parere alle coordinatrici dei progetti della regione, che per prime mi avevano descritto questo servizio. Il ruolo rivestito dalla persona rifugiata è stato fondamentale a confermare l'utilità di questa figura: mi ha spiegato che molto spesso vengono fornite informazioni sbagliate e che spesso non tengono in considerazione la dimensione dell'asilo politico. Questo può letteralmente cambiare il destino di una persona e quindi avere un mentore, che ha dovuto affrontare le stesse sfide sulla sua pelle e che ha un buon livello di empatia nei confronti di chi guida, aiuterebbe moltissimo. Il mentore che viene inteso in questo contesto quindi disporrebbe di molte informazioni sul sistema universitario e di un ventaglio di competenze emotive e pratiche per dare un sostegno concreto agli studenti rifugiati. Sebbene durante le interviste siano sorti alcuni dubbi sulla sua utilità, presumendo che chi riesce a completare la sua istruzione fino al diploma avrebbe già compiuto un discreto lavoro su sé stesso e avrebbe già familiarizzato con il sistema, si ritiene che la figura del mentore sia comunque importante perché l'università è un percorso difficoltoso che crea ulteriori nuove sfide per tutti.

Questo tipo di mentore non dovrebbe però sostituirsi alle forme di tutoraggio già esistenti, che sono invece molto utili per tutti gli studenti; piuttosto si propone di pensare ad una figura specifica per i rifugiati che li aiuterebbe a superare le barriere che si interpongono tra loro e la possibilità di raggiungere il traguardo della laurea (barriere linguistiche, informative, psicologiche ecc). Si propone quindi una possibile collaborazione tra due figure diverse, un tutor del paese ospitante che ha il vantaggio di conoscere il sistema e un mentore con un passato di migrazione alle spalle e un livello alto di sensibilità per capire al meglio il mentee. Dal punto di vista economico, diversamente da quanto accade nei progetti della regione, gli intervistati hanno suggerito di pagare i mentori: i loro sforzi andrebbero incoraggiati e premiati perché il lavoro che possono fare è significativo e meritevole. Per quanto riguarda invece l'abbinamento tra mentori e mentee, purtroppo il principio alla base del mentoring di comunità, suggerito dalle collaboratrici della regione, che prevede una scelta spontanea e basata sull'empatia di due anime che si riconoscono, è difficile da ricreare in contesti universitari. Tuttavia andrebbe prestata molta attenzione a diversi aspetti sociali, culturali, economici e personali al momento della scelta: basare la scelta sulla compatibilità tra i diversi background potrebbe apparire faticoso ma anche molto positivo.

I mentori e le mentori dovrebbero inoltre ricevere una formazione ed essere consapevoli soprattutto delle responsabilità e dei rischi che possono correre. Dovrebbero cercare di creare un rapporto basato sul rispetto e sul dialogo: essere capaci di far presente e segnalare quando una richiesta è troppo esigente, ma parlando in modo assertivo e rispettoso dei sentimenti altrui.

Durante le interviste, è emerso anche il problema della salute mentale, su cui abbiamo riflettuto a lungo. Abbiamo concluso che bisogna prestare molta attenzione alla cura della salute psicologia sia degli studenti e delle studentesse rifugiate, sia del mentore stesso. Bisogna essere il più informati possibile sulle diverse culture: in alcuni casi, le persone di una determinata cultura non possono chiedere aiuto di ogni tipo, poiché visto come un disonore. È importante quindi saper riconoscere tali situazioni e prestarvi molta attenzione.

Infine, come ultimi spunti di riflessione, gli intervistati hanno suggerito di unirsi e fare massa critica con gli altri professionisti del settore, per coordinare l'azione di inclusione ad un livello superiore e più generale.

Per il futuro, ci si augura che sia possibile creare una comunità di pratica, dove onorevoli obiettivi e volontà di cittadinanza attiva sono tradotti in azioni concrete: la speranza, infine, è di dare sempre più la priorità alla missione di includere studenti e studentesse rifugiati/e nel contesto accademico e di poter garantire loro un futuro più luminoso.