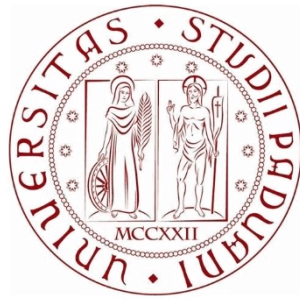




UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

Università degli Studi di Padova
Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Geografiche e dell'Antichità

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Scienze Storiche

Integration as a Social Investment: Immigrant-
Background Students in Italian Schools

Relatore:
Prof./ssa Irene Barbiera

Laureando/a:
Midya Navidi
Matricola: 2148850

Anno Accademico 2025/26

*To every child bereft of an education,
To every child without a school.*

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Irene Barbiera, for her continued support and trust in this research, whose expertise and guidance helped the successful conclusion of this thesis.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Mobility Studies program coordinator, Professor Paola Molino, who has been witness to my academic journey and supported my academic endeavours throughout this degree.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the esteemed members of the commission for their time and expertise in evaluating my thesis.

I am grateful for the wonderful teachers who participated in this study. Their insightful experiences have been informative for the thesis.

I also warmly thank my classmate-turned-friends who made Padova more of a home to me during this degree.

Abbreviations

AIR: American Institute for Research

CAT: Classical Assimilation Theory

CEO: Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej

EC: Ethnic Context

MIM: Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito

NAT: New Assimilation Theory

RC: Receiving Context

TIES: The Integration of the European Second Generation

TSA: Theory of Segmented Assimilation

Table of Contents

Abstract	6
Extended Summary	7
Introduction	8
Thesis Roadmap	11
Chapter One	12
Summary	13
Keywords	13
Research Questions	13
Definition of Keywords	13
Thesis Statement	14
Theory	14
Methodology	15
State of the Art	16
Chapter Two	20
Summary	21
Introduction	21
The Mobility Turn in the Social Sciences	22
What is Integration?	26
The Historical Relationship Between Education and Integration	34
Integration in Italian Schools	39
Conclusion	41
Chapter Three	43
Summary	44
Introduction	44
The Immigrant, the Worker, and the Citizen	45
Language and Employability	50
Integration as a Social Investment	53
Contextualising Integration as a Function of Aspirations and Capabilities	59
Conclusion	64
Chapter Four	65
Summary	66

Introduction	66
Methodology	67
Use of AI	68
Analysis	69
Comparison at the National Level	70
Comparison at the Educational Level Based on Citizenship in Italian State Schools	75
Comparison Based on EU Citizenship and Non-EU Citizenship in Italian State Schools	79
Discussion	81
Limitations: Citizenship as a Metric of Integration	83
Conclusion	84
Chapter Five	86
Summary	87
Introduction	87
Methodology	88
Data Sampling	90
Analysis	95
Discussion	103
Limitations: Access and Communication as Defining Data Collection	106
Implications of Mixed Methods	106
Conclusion	107
Conclusion	109
Implications of the Thesis	110
Limitations of the Thesis	111
Use of Digital Tools	111
Conflicts of Interest	111
Further Research	112
Appendices	113
References	114
Annexes	120

Abstract

The demographic decline in Europe and the aftermath of the 2015 Syrian Refugee Crisis have intensified debates around the topic of immigration in public discourse. Particularly, by questioning the possibilities of integration and what it means for receiving societies and immigrants to integrate. Schools are considered to be one of the main institutional entry points in the integration of immigrants into receiving societies. This is because of education's close association with future employability and economic integration. This interdisciplinary thesis uses a mixed-methods approach to analyse the topic of integration through education from a Capabilities perspective and the Aspirations-Capabilities framework in the case of Italian schools. The mixed-methods research includes analysing the demographic data of students in Italy from 2015 to 2025 and semi-structured interviews with teachers who teach in the schools of Padua, Turin, and Udine. The thesis argues that schools play a crucial role in promoting integration as institutional arrangements that transmit social norms and facilitate interpersonal relationships among different groups of students in a diverse context and from a young age, thereby shaping how integration is defined and experienced.

Extended Summary

La tesi sostiene che la ricerca sulla migrazione si basi ancora prevalentemente sui modelli push-pull e che le politiche di immigrazione siano maggiormente orientate all'arrivo degli immigrati, compreso il modo e le ragioni per cui essi possono arrivare, piuttosto che all'integrazione degli immigrati e delle società di accoglienza. Attraverso il quadro teorico delle aspirazioni e delle capacità e il modello di integrazione intergenerazionale, la tesi propone di ripensare l'integrazione degli immigrati come una forma di investimento sociale in grado di contribuire al benessere complessivo delle società di accoglienza. Sulla base della letteratura esistente e attraverso l'impiego di metodi misti per l'analisi dei dati, la tesi sostiene che l'integrazione dovrebbe assumere un ruolo più centrale nel dibattito sulla migrazione, poiché la migrazione non comporta soltanto la mobilità fisica degli individui, ma anche il loro insediamento e la loro mobilità sociale.

Al fine di valorizzare il potenziale delle scuole nell'integrazione degli immigrati, lo studio ha analizzato i cambiamenti nella presenza della popolazione non italiana nelle scuole statali italiane e ha coinvolto gli insegnanti che operano in tali istituti. L'Italia costituisce un esempio particolarmente significativo in questo ambito, caratterizzato da un declino demografico della popolazione e da una crescita esponenziale del numero di studenti con background migratorio nelle scuole. Lo studio mostra che, sebbene l'integrazione educativa degli immigrati sia, in linea teorica, pienamente possibile nelle scuole statali italiane, il modello inclusivo della scuola italiana non si traduce necessariamente allo stesso modo in ogni contesto, né produce gli stessi effetti a livello locale e scolastico. L'ipotesi dello studio è stata confermata: l'integrazione educativa è possibile ed è considerata importante nelle scuole italiane, ma non esiste un consenso sulle modalità con cui dovrebbe essere realizzata e, nella pratica, essa viene spesso lasciata alle iniziative dei singoli insegnanti e delle singole scuole.

Introduction

European societies have found themselves at a turning point after the 2015 European Migrant Crisis, in the wake of the Syrian Civil War. Germany, as the biggest immigration hub of Europe, set the tone in response to this crisis with Angela Merkel's famous words, "We can do this"¹ at the time. This marked a definitive shift not only for the refugees who fled to Europe, but also in the construct of European national identity and nation-building. With the demographic decline in most European societies, immigration has turned into a provocative topic in the political discourse and integrating immigrants is centre-stage. At a time when the mobility of humans across national borders is heavily politicised, it is more important to inquire about "how we do it" rather than if "we can do it". The European experience has been multifarious so far, with a high potential for integration and an uneven willingness to integrate immigrants in different countries. The immigrants, on the other hand, find themselves challenged by adapting to different languages, customs, and rules. This thesis is interested in the social fabric that promotes peaceful coexistence and welfare mechanisms that facilitate integration based on the immigrants' capabilities and aspirations in the context of host societies. Those who call their host societies home and become part and parcel of their communities, where they contribute to the communal well-being of society.

Italy is a prime example of one of the most demographically declining countries in Europe that, like most other countries, lacks a comprehensive integration agenda or policy paradigm. Instead, states have tried to promote the integration of immigrants as a part of welfare programs. Traditionally and most prominently through the education system, meaning that integration begins in the classrooms where immigrants are taught first and foremost, the official language of the country and the receiving country interacts with them as well. There are also programs targeting the receiving country's population as well that strive to teach reception and hospitality (Fondazione Fontana, 2026). The official language of the country plays a decisive role in the integration of immigrants since it facilitates not only social bonding but, more importantly, is closely associated with future employability as the pathway to integration. Hence, the role of education in integration discourse has been elevated as linguistic attainment fosters employability, and employment leads to integration (Kogan, 2007). The national institutions' influence on this paradigm is elucidated and emphasised (Esser, 2004) as well, but the experience of immigrants at the receiving end, in being structurally and socially

¹ "Wir schaffen das" in German.

integrated into society, remains understudied, and the premise itself is open to much debate (Schneeweis, 2009). Therefore, integration is a growing area in social research, especially when immigrant participation is shown to fall short in civic and political life (OECD/European Commission, 2023), with immigrant groups heavily politicised in the public discourse but themselves lacking a pronounced voice or agency in shaping the discourse.

On top of the cultural factors that play a palpable role in manoeuvring social cleavages, immigration introduces real-world social issues that require solution-oriented responses by receiving societies and a desire for interdisciplinary research methods that can provide a perspective on the future of co-existence in European societies based on demographic trends and policy paradigms. While the correlations between education and employment are well-established, how they actually promote integration from a relational perspective remains vague, especially if the perspective is invested more in the social dynamics of integration rather than its economics alone. There is great potential for the interdisciplinary study of social phenomena such as integration in complex and multicultural societies, which can assess the social phenomenon from multiple corresponding angles. This thesis analyses how integration unfolds in Italian schools by visualising the demographic composition of Italian schools and in discussion with teachers working in the provinces of Padua, Turin, and Udine in order to evaluate the integration of schoolkids with an immigration background in this part of Europe. Using a mixed-method approach for social research, the thesis provides an embedded answer to this question: what does integration look like for schoolkids in Italy?

According to Hartmut Esser, a new theory of intergenerational integration is required that, accordingly, integrates well-known correlations like education and employment in order to methodologically theorise a comprehensive model of investment and emergent structural effects (Esser, 2004). The integration discourse so far has been primarily invested in teaching immigrants the national language because the national language is viewed as a desirable asset in the labour market (Esser, 2006). On the one hand, language learning is shown to be insufficient on its own since integration, according to Esser's theorisation of what it means to integrate and how it is achieved, is a multilevel concept that unfolds in structural and social stages from acculturation to identification (Esser, 2004); on the other hand, educational investments yield uneven results for a variety of other social disadvantages. A viable solution to combat such disadvantages can be implemented in the form of public and social policies. Policy can play an important role in reducing disadvantages, but studies have shown that delivering the right policies that address the needs of immigrants is challenging (OECD, 2015).

The thesis lays out and analyses this logic, which can be best described as a welfare-to-work integration logic. Starting with this premise, the thesis contextualises immigrant integration through mixed methods for a political demographic analysis based on immigrants' aspirations and capabilities. It regards integration as a byproduct of the immigrant's capabilities and aspirations, and more importantly, it assesses the weight and experience of the immigrant youth on the integration ladder (May, 2021). The research's intervention is in reimagining integration as an interpersonal cooperation between immigrants and host societies. It makes the case for integration of immigrants as a social investment that can be promoted via institutional arrangements like the school. The school and broader educational system of Italy are taken into consideration as a case study, and the classroom is considered the place where integration begins. The classroom is considered not only a place for learning, but also a place for coalescence and coexistence in terms of the diversity of its student body, as well as the mechanisms that are implemented in order to integrate them.

Thesis Roadmap

The Thesis is divided into an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. The chapters are organised based on the following logic: Chapter One serves as a research layout and overview of the major topics of the thesis. Chapter Two is an extended literature review that tracks the theoretical basis of the concept of integration. Chapter Three is the theoretical background and point of view of the study. Chapters Four and Five serve together as the methodological wings of the mixed methods of the thesis, with Chapter Four analysing quantitative data and Chapter Five analysing qualitative data. Both chapters lay out their specific methodology suited to their data analysis at the beginning of the chapter. Each chapter starts with a summary and an introduction. The summary is a snapshot of what to expect in the chapter and acts as a helper for a quick review. The introduction is an overall but brief summary of what will be discussed further. Both the summary and introduction parts serve as an overview of the chapter and don't include references to other literature; they only introduce the main points of each chapter. Following the introduction, each chapter includes an extended discussion and ends with a conclusion. The conclusion of the thesis ends the thesis by discussing its implications and limitations, as well as suggestions for further research.

Chapter One

Summary

The First Chapter is an introduction to the theoretical and methodological basis of the thesis. It defines the key terminology of the thesis and its statements. The Chapter also introduces the key questions and interests of the study. Furthermore, it establishes the state of the art by providing a brief literature review on the topic of immigrant integration.

Keywords

Aspirations-Capabilities, Assimilation, Integration, Mobility Studies, Political Demography

Research Questions

1. How do Italian schools prepare students to integrate into Italian society?
2. How do education and integration correlate with each other from a relational and operational point of view?
3. What are the longitudinal demographic features of the student body in Italian schools?
4. How does educational integration occur in Italian schools?

Definition of Keywords

1. Aspirations-Capabilities: ‘Aspirations are a function of people’s general life aspirations and perceived geographical opportunity structures. Capabilities are contingent on positive (‘freedom to’) and negative (‘freedom from’) liberties. (Haas, 2021)
2. Assimilation: According to Classical Assimilation Theory (CAT), assimilation emerges from a cosmic process that refers to the typical processes of contact, conflict, and accommodation as a mutual adjustment to the new situation and the eventual traceless absorption into the host society via the assimilation of ethnic groups into the host society’s core segments over the course of generations. (Esser, 2010)
3. Integration: The model of intergenerational integration is a combination of the processes of the social integration of immigrants with migration processes in a dual manner, including both changes in group size via the processes of replenishment and changes in ethnic boundary making via changes in the composition of the characteristics of the immigrant population. (Esser, 2010)

4. **Mobility Studies:** The concept of mobilities encompasses both the large-scale movements of people, objects, capital, and information across the world, as well as the more local processes of daily transportation, movement through public space and the travel of material things within everyday life. Issues of movement, of too little movement or too much or of the wrong sort or at the wrong time, are central to many lives, organisations, and governments. (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006)
5. **Political Demography:** Political demography often begins by asking what the relationship is between the population of a society and its natural resource base and what the relevant trends are in the ratio of total population to overall resources. [...] It goes on to study what changes in the distribution of resources and political power are likely to arise from changes in the absolute and relative sizes of various population subgroups: urban or rural populations; groups bearing various religious, regional, or ethnic identities; various elite groups or political factions; and different age groups. (Goldstone, Kaufmann, & Toft, 2012)

Thesis Statement

The thesis argues that when societies face demographic decline, the integration of immigrants into those societies becomes essential. It analyses public policy measures and the individual measures by teachers that prepare immigrants to join the labour market as the main pathway to integration into the host society. The thesis unravels a historical relationship between schools and societies, and explores how schools prepare students to integrate into society. It proposes that this process can be best described as a welfare-to-work integration logic and analyses the features and efficacies of that logic based on the capabilities and aspirations of the students. The research's intervention is in analysing integration as an interpersonal cooperation between immigrants and host societies, and a byproduct of their capabilities and aspirations. For this purpose, the study takes Italian schools into consideration as a case study and examines the classroom as one of the first spaces where, beyond learning, coexistence and coalescence are practised collectively by the students.

Theory

The thesis builds on Hein de Haas's aspirations-capabilities framework (Haas, 2021), and argues that the field of mobility studies must study integration as an integral part of immigration. In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of human mobility and migration patterns, the thesis considers them as part and parcel of broader processes of social

change, such as demographic decline and institutional mechanisms of integration. This way, the thesis will study the process of integration without reducing it only to a model and a set of assumptions, despite the success of such models in explaining real-world processes of migration. Instead, it turns to the multicultural lives and experiences of migrants despite the spatially clustered pathways that they often move along, as well as how they might successfully integrate into society, and how they improve their livelihoods in a communal sense throughout this process. Haas's concept of aspirations suggests that migration aspirations are affected by culture, education, personal disposition, identification, information and exposure. Therefore, the concept of aspirations expands the notion of agency into the subjective realm, and the concept of capabilities surpasses a mere understanding of being capable of moving. Capability is rather the ability to decide, for example, where to live, where to study, what to study, and how long to remain in school. Thereby, the thesis interprets empirical facts regarding these institutional arrangements to understand the diversity in migration experiences. The theoretical intervention of the thesis is in including integration prospects as key to migration aspirations and as being managed by the capabilities of immigrants who reside in a given receiving society to begin with, which states and government policies directly influence via institutional arrangements².

Methodology

The thesis implements a mixed-method approach to analyse the topic of integration through education in the schools of Italy. Integration is defined and approached from an aspirations-capabilities perspective. In order to operationalise both aspects of the aspirations-capabilities framework for analysis, the thesis utilises both quantitative and qualitative data. Firstly, the study visualises open-source datasets of the Italian Ministry of Education and Merit for demographic analysis of the student body in Italian schools. The thesis critically visualises and analyses the 'Students' dataset of the Italian Ministry of Education and Merit (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, 2016), including: state schools' data, year, and student citizenship. The purpose of this analysis is to represent the empirical facts about population trends of students in Italian schools and understand their capabilities with regard to diversity and integration. These datasets are freely and openly provided by the Italian Ministry of Education and Merit³. Secondly, the thesis conducts semi-structured interviews with teachers who work in the provinces of Padua, Turin, and Udine. Teachers in this framework act as the arbiters of

² See Chapter Three.

³ See Chapter Four.

diversity in the classroom who observe the potentials and challenges for the integration of students within the space of a classroom, and as a bridge between schools and students. The thesis will present teachers with questions regarding teaching activities that are specifically mandated as an integration or diversity measure, informal measures that they themselves may implement based on their experiences working in diverse contexts, and, most importantly, about the students' interactions with each other. Through their experiences, the thesis will develop an understanding of the path to educational integration in Italian schools. For this purpose, appropriate consent forms are devised following the ethical guidelines of the university⁴. The mixed-methods approach enables the thesis to provide a fact-based, comprehensive outlook on the intersection of schools and societies that, at the same time, contextualises the experiences of the teachers and students in multicultural and diverse environments.

State of the Art

Mobility has turned into a new paradigm for the study of social sciences. One of the main contributions of mobilities as a paradigm for social sciences is challenging the methodological nationalism in the traditional study of the social sciences that often leads to an analytical bifurcation of social phenomena. Such a dichotomous approach can result in the repression of the immigrant's agency, which is debunked in the framework of the immigrant's aspirations and capabilities. Institutional arrangements are formative in shaping the capabilities and aspirations of immigrants, and schools serve as one of the main institutional arrangements that provide not only education but a shared understanding of nationhood itself. Therefore, the cross-section of migration and education needs analysis from a broad, transnational, and intersectional perspective, and integration theory needs to methodologically theorise a model of investment and structural effects that can comprehensively address the issue of how the immigrant population navigates the institutional arrangements of the host society. From a public policy point of view, institutional arrangements can serve as a social investment paradigm that would make up for the development and democratisation of society. The institutional context of integration, like basic education and schooling of immigrants, is paramount in the intergenerational approach to the integration of immigrants. Furthermore, schools have a historical relationship to society and bear certain socio-historical functions in the making of their societies. The multicultural turn and the recent exponential presence of

⁴ See Chapter Five.

students from an immigrant background in Italian schools make a compelling case for the study of immigrant integration through education in Italy, which so far remains internationally under-recognised⁵.

In his 2013 article, Thomas Faist proposed the question of mobility as a new paradigm for the social sciences (Faist, 2013). Faist argued that the mobility turn has reached migration studies as a new paradigmatic turn, and the study of socio-spatial mobilities must go beyond mere descriptions of mobility and rather account for the underlying mechanisms that produce social inequalities. The mobility turn in the humanities and the social sciences is not a new theoretical framework per se, after more than twenty years since its introduction, but the possibilities that it presents for social inquiry remain relevant, especially at a time when human movement across national borders is politicised more than before. This has manifested in other scholars expanding on the idea of mobility as a social asset beyond the human capital that is on the move. Concepts like ‘Motility’, for example, reimagine the empirical study of socio-spatial mobility, and can serve as an alternative approach compared to the dichotomous theorisation of social phenomena with the classical structuralist accounts on the one hand and postmodern accounts on the other hand (Kaufmann, Bergman, & Joye, 2004). Julian Go has tackled the issue of binary thinking, especially in classical social theory, as the ‘law of division’ or ‘analytic bifurcation’. According to him, this is an artificial bifurcation of social relations in social theory that can manifest as the repression of minorities and marginalised groups’ agency (Go, 2016).

Hein de Haas has debunked this repression of agency, particularly in migration studies, through his Aspirations-Capabilities framework. According to Haas, Historical-Structural theories argue that structures have a tendency to reproduce inequalities both vertically between social groups and horizontally across space. According to Haas, the problem with these theories is that they lack any regard for human agency, and the main conceptual problem of conventional theories of migration has been their inability to conceptualise the migrant’s exercise of agency within broader structures (Haas, 2021). Andreas Wimmer and Nina Schiller have identified parallels between nationalist thinking and the conceptualisation of migration in the social sciences as a ‘methodological nationalism’ that assumes the nation, state, or society to be the natural socio-political form of the modern world (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). The transnational nature of international human mobility and its increasing volume questions the

⁵ See Chapter Two.

efficacy of solely nationalist approaches in the field of migration and mobility for social science research. Instead, theory must be capable of conceptualising the multicultural lives and experiences of migrants, and methodology must be enabled to evaluate them as they are. The mobility framework must be able to properly address how structures can affect the agency of immigrants and how they may promote or curtail the freedom to exercise their agency.

Integration theorists like Hartmut Esser have long proposed that new theories of immigration, and especially the intergenerational integration of immigrants, are indeed required. A theory that, accordingly, incorporates well-known correlations such as education and methodologically theorises a model of investment alongside emergent structural effects with respect to central initial conditions like group size, social and cultural distances, and the availability of social capital (Esser, 2004). Furthermore, scholarly work in the field of integration, such as that of Crul and Schneider, has proposed a ‘comparative integration context theory’. Based on the comparative context theory, participation in social organisations and belonging to local communities are dependent on the integration contexts, including institutional arrangements in education, the labour market, housing, religion, and the legislator (Schneider & Crul, 2010). Therefore, the intersection of institutional arrangements and the integration context is important in a definitive way.

Development theorists like Amartya Sen have established a capabilities-based framework of development for societies. Sen argues that what people can positively achieve is influenced by institutional arrangements, what he terms ‘social opportunities’, such as social powers, political liberties, and basic education. Institutional arrangements themselves are influenced by the exercise of people’s freedoms, such as the liberty to participate in social choice. Such participation requires knowledge and basic educational skills; thereby, a two-way relationship exists between capabilities and public policy (Sen, 2000). Anton Hemerijck argues that in social investment paradigms, publicly financed social investments like education lead to higher employment and long-term productivity gains in all of the economic sectors at relatively low social costs (Hemerijck, 2018). Sociological research regarding such investment paradigms in social mobility, development, and democratisation of complex societies is needed in order to understand the process of integration. The role of research in the sociological study of education has been noted as marginal with respect to advances in the study of social mobility and points to a weakness in mainstream mobility studies in utilising quantitative methods as well as engaging with broader debates around intergenerational mobility (Brown, Reay, & Vincent, 2013).

This approach becomes more compelling when the historical functions of schools in society are put into perspective. As Leo Lucassen has elaborated, access to education is important to the settlement process of immigrants, minorities, and their offspring since schools are one of the institutions that determine the possibilities to participate in society, wherein nation-states have in the past often embraced ideals of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity. Although the multicultural turn has partially changed the process of intergenerational integration, according to Lucassen, immigration and education should be taken with a broad, cross-cultural, and intersectional view (Lucassen, 2024). According to the scholarly work at the intersection of education and integration so far, despite Italy's potential as an interesting case study, sociological studies on the school integration of students with an immigrant background in Italy are yet to be recognised at an international level. Italy provides a compelling case study due to the exponential growth of immigrant students and the contradictions that emerge from translating an inclusive educational model to actual integration practices (Santagati, 2015).

Chapter Two

Summary

The second chapter is an extended literature review that establishes the state of the art in integration studies. The chapter provides a holistic and comparative approach to the concept of integration through education in different countries, and especially in the Italian context. The chapter engages with the mobility turn in the humanities and social sciences through the concept of motility to explore the relevance of social and spatial mobility in the study of immigrant integration. Furthermore, it explores the context-based and varied definitions of integration in the social sciences because integration presents phenomenological challenges based on the locality where it happens. The second chapter adds a historical perspective to the relationship between national identity, education, and immigrant integration as well. In conclusion, it presents different case studies of the integration of immigrant-background students in schools using comparative findings between different countries as a means for understanding the barriers to integration and puts particular emphasis on the Italian case.

Introduction

Integration is a highly debatable topic that presents social researchers with a phenomenological crisis. This is because integration doesn't always happen the same way in every context. In fact, integration is a highly context-based phenomenon that requires enquiry based on where and when it occurs. The localisation of the process of integration helps outline it as it unfolds, but evades a universal formula that can be applied to every other context. Integration researchers have long debated the terminology itself, whether it be assimilation or integration; it is understood as a give-and-take process of coalescence between immigrants and receiving societies, with some definitions shifting the responsibility more or less towards the immigrants. The more recent comparative frameworks of integration, though, understand the process as a mutual act of coexistence that occurs in between the acts of giving and taking from any one group. The empirical study of integration has shown that while researchers can identify key components of integration, these components alone do not predict how integration would manifest in a given society. Among these components, education stands out because schools are one of the main places where different segments of society share a space, learn the language, and are positioned to become active citizens. Therefore, schools share a deep-rooted history with the nation-state. Not only does the school educate the children, but at the same time, it defines what it means to share a nationality in common by making its high language, its official history, and its culture accessible to children. Immigrants at schools would first and foremost

master the official language of the host country because it is the gateway to employability in the future, but would also learn what it means to be an immigrant via their interpersonal relationships with other segments of society. Schools build the trajectory of children via tracked routes of study, and the teachers have a crucial role in guiding their students towards these educational pathways. Studies have shown that, while in many countries, the shortcomings of immigrant-background students are related to that very background by the teachers, it is in fact the socio-economic, linguistic capabilities, and familiarity of the parents with the institutions of the host society that are impactful.

Prejudice towards immigrant-background students remains an unfortunate reality in the educational system, and even when these students end up pursuing higher prestige lyceums, they find themselves motivated by the urge to somehow repay the sacrifices made by their parents or by taking advantage of the opportunities that the educational system of the receiving society provides. This means that succeeding academically would require spending more time studying, taking up adult responsibilities before they are due, and hurting their chances of creating a meaningful bond with their peers. The scholarly debate about the educational integration of immigrants is emerging in Italy, because Italy now faces an exponential growth of immigrant-background students at schools comparable to countries with a longer history of the same kind. This interest presents its own potential and challenges for research, but perhaps equally important as the research itself is the methodological approach and point of view of the study. Guided by recent literature, a mobility turn in the social sciences has redefined how topics related to immigration are viewed in academic disciplinary research. In fact, the processes of education and integration themselves need to be viewed as they actually are: as processes. From this point of view, the interdisciplinary research of integration would focus on the topic of integration as highly context-based and accounts for the relevance of both social and spatial mobility in the study of integration of immigrants, because this way the ethnic distances between different ethnic groups within a given receiving society, its policies, and its sense of national identity and national aspirations can also be recognised as some of the key components when integrating immigrants alongside established indicators like housing, education, and most importantly, employment.

The Mobility Turn in the Social Sciences

In his 2013 article, Thomas Faist argued that migration studies have reached many turns in the recent past, including the linguistic, the cultural, and the spatial turn. Following those

turns, migration studies have now reached a mobility turn that is an effort to diagnostically describe modern society (Faist, 2013). Faist's contribution, beyond identifying the existence of such a new paradigmatic turn based on mobility, was in identifying the need for a critical reflection on the nexus between spatial and social mobilities. According to Faist, the analysis of this nexus between spatial and social mobilities needs to surpass mere descriptions of mobility and rather account for the mechanisms underlying the production of social inequalities (1639). Furthermore, Faist points out that while the concern with mobility is not new per se, the conception of mobilities perspectives, mobilities paradigms, and a mobilities turn is new (1643). Faist points out that the literature has regarded spatial mobility as low or non-existent in traditional societies, but it increases with the so-called 'vital transition', the demographic transition from an agricultural to an industrial society and economic growth in general (1638). Transitional approaches, according to Faist, conceptualise a concern with 'social space', as space is socially constituted, involves and reflects asymmetries in social fields (1639). Faist argues that the mobility turn has implications for social mobility and social inequalities and holds spatial mobility as an important precondition for the successful navigation of social life. According to prominent models of mobility like Zelinsky's Model of Mobility Transition, society's migration patterns predictably change as that society goes through economic development and the different stages of the demographic transition model (Zelinsky, 1971). Therefore, integration research needs to look beyond people's nationality or citizenship and distinguish their economic utility and social adaptation as well, because they make meaningful differences to their livelihoods and through which many welfare states effectively arbitrate mechanisms of migration control and restriction in order to protect the welfare state itself and regulate the labour market.

According to Hannam, Sheller, and Urry, on the one hand, mobility implies a move from the traditional scholarly focus on fixity and analysis of social phenomena as encompassed in a spatial-temporal jar, and on the other hand, mobility itself is still poorly defined and too broad-ranging as a paradigmatic and critical approach to the systematic study of modern societies, and more so if the approach interests highly developed and/or highly complex multicultural societies. Therefore, mobility-centred research requires, first and foremost, the identification of a certain type of mobility and laying out the significance of the mobility turn and, more importantly, how the topic is approached from this perspective. The openness of the mobilities concept has been accounted for in the literature and the work of Hannam, Sheller, and Urry (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006) in particular. According to them, the concept of

mobility is twofold and includes both the large-scale movements of people, objects, capital, and information across the world as well as the local processes of movement within everyday life (1). This includes issues of too little or too much movement, the sort and time of the movement that are central to people's lives, organisations, and governments. Accordingly, one of the areas where mobilities are centrally involved is the social and educational life of young people (2). The role of the welfare state in managing and maintaining this social and educational context is paramount because mobilities cannot be adequately understood in the absence of the necessary spatial, infrastructural, and institutional habitus that configure mobilities and enable them (3). The social sciences so far have been diagnosed with the failure to fully recognise how the spatialities of social life involve conflicts over both the actual and imagined movement of people, and the emerging mobilities paradigm challenges this by changing both its object of inquiry and its research methods (4, 5). Accordingly, spaces should be, therefore, understood through their dynamics, proximities, and the co-presence of people who happen to occupy those spaces together and at the same time (13).

The shortcomings of current social science research in the systematic study of migration and mobility have been related to a nationalistic point of reference and a methodologically nationalist framework (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). Methodological nationalism underlies the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural socio-political form of the modern world (301). The epistemic structures of mainstream social science are shaped by the formation of modern nation-states, when the task of building a national culture was seen as equivalent to the other tasks of modernisation, nation-building, and state formation, which went hand in hand when theorising modernity (303, 304). Wimmer and Schiller argue that the process of tokenizing the national state as a basic unit of analysis is itself strongly influenced by nationalist thinking and more importantly, by the institutions of the nation-state that organize and disseminate social science thinking in universities, the nation being a people with shared origins, history, and culture and the state as the sovereign system of government within the confines of a particular territory (306). According to Wimmer and Schiller, modern nationalism mixes four different notions of peoplehood that developed separately in early-modern Europe, including people as a sovereign entity, people as citizens, people as a group of obligatory solidarity, and people as an ethnic community who are united by a common destiny and shared culture yet distinct by way of honour and prestige (308). This explains the nation-state's interest in the supervision, limitation, and control of immigrant populations because immigrants fundamentally distort the isomorphism between the people and the nation. They remind social

scientists that ethnic minorities are ‘absorbed’ into the national body via the politics of assimilation and integration that, by doing so, renew the challenges to the nation-building project (309, 310). Accordingly, immigrants cannot be excluded from emerging welfare states as the pinnacle of the nationalist project, because they have historically been recruited for the labour purposes of the welfare state, yet their membership remains a privilege, and states administer the limitations in accessing that privilege (310, 318). Hollifield explains that now more than ever before, international security and stability depend on the capacity of nation-states to manage migration either unilaterally or bilaterally, and both in Europe and North America, rights are key to regulating migration because while socio-economic forces are necessary for migration to occur, the sufficient conditions for it are legal and political (Hollifield, 2004).

One of the main ways in which nation-states administer the access of immigrants to privileges is via actively maintaining and managing the socio-spatial movement of immigrants in society. This has been explored through the topic of Motility by Kaufmann, Bergman, and Joye (Kaufmann, Bergman, & Joye, 2004). Motility includes spatial mobility, that is, geographic displacement that influences not only the mobile entities but also the points of departure, traversal and destination. Social mobility is the transformation in the distribution of resources and social position in a given social structure. It often refers to intergenerational mobility and social change by presupposing the existence of social stratification and unequal distribution of resources and status (743, 747). Motility is a concept that reinforces social fluidity as a fundamental issue for the social sciences and analyses the relationship between space, social phenomena, and social structures (749). Therefore, motility is the capacity of entities to move in social and geographic space or the ways in which they appropriate their capacity for mobility according to their circumstances (750). Social science research can radically implement such mobilities as a metric for the immigrant’s aptitude in a given national context. It encompasses interdependent factors that relate to access, competence, and appropriation. Accordingly, access is constrained by options and conditions, and competence is skill-set and abilities like physical ability, acquired skills, and organisational skills that may directly or indirectly relate to both access and appropriation because appropriation relates to strategies, motives, values, and habits or how agents appropriate a particular choice (750).

The theorisation around human capital, although it might seem untenable and prove to be a difficult subject, especially in comparison to theorising financial capital, can be achieved by analysing not only immigrants’ mobilities, but their motilities as well. For example, social

science research can add new perspectives to the empirical study of socio-spatial mobility because it presents a viable alternative to binary theorisations of complex social phenomena in multicultural societies. Such as those of immigration and integration, maintaining equal opportunities and place-making for equitable societies where policy and welfare can promote peaceful co-existence in diverse settings instead of tearing into the social fabric of society. According to Kaufman, Bergman, and Joye, this is because the concept of Motility provides a holistic vantage point that implies different levels of abstraction from micro and individual levels to macro and global scales (754).

What is Integration?

Integration is a key yet multifaceted concept that presents the integration researcher with the difficulty of coming up with a representative definition of what it means to integrate into a society as an immigrant. This is partially due to the fact that complex multicultural societies define integration based on their own national context. With the impacts of the demographic decline in most developed and especially European countries, the debate around the presence and integration of immigrants into society is in full swing. But in order to understand what integration actually means and why it has gained traction, the term needs to be understood in the context in which it is being used. In the case of immigrants, for example, it is important to ask about where integration is taking place and how it is taking place. Or, what institutional and individual mechanisms are involved in promoting or hindering the integration process? Based on targeted questions, many of which the literature around Assimilation, Segmented Assimilation, Multiculturalism, and Integration has already addressed, integration research needs to be tailored to the domain or the place where the research takes place, because the process is bound to a specific society. Therefore, any research about integration needs to be context-specific and done with respect to both the institutional arrangements of the receiving society as well as the individual aspirations and capabilities of the individuals involved within.

One of the earliest examples of an integration theory dates back to Park's Race Relations Cycle theory. He is seen as one of the founding fathers of what is often regarded as assimilation theory (Lindo, 2005). As the theory's name itself suggests, it conceives development as a process of contact, competition, accommodation, and assimilation that clearly focuses on the relations between immigrants and indigenous peoples that inhabit a shared space. Assimilation in this context is regarded as a one-way process wherein, by sharing

history and experiences, one group would be incorporated into a long-term communal life, via acculturation that is the mastery of the language and the adoption of core behaviours, values, and goals that are enough for achieving cultural solidarity and sustaining a national existence (8). From an Esserian point of view, however, cultururation(s) is not the acceptance of practices that get the immigrant ahead, but rather the mutual borrowing of behavioural and ideational codes that are creatively reworked and produce a consistency with traditional patterns that becomes something different from either the borrowing or lending of culture (Esser, 2010). According to Esser, identification with a receiving society refers to the development of interdependencies in social environments as a two-way process of self and other ascription that comprises acts and feelings of belonging and has individual as well as collective aspects as a negotiation of identities (17).

According to Alba, Sloan, and Sperling, in the immigration literature, integration takes on a different meaning than it does in the racial context of the United States because in Europe, for example, integration often substitutes for assimilation with the precise relationship between the two being open to debate but in the United States' context, assimilation is employed as the antonym of segregation (Alba, Sloan, & Sperling, 2011). An informative study is Waters and Jiménez's study on immigrant assimilation in the United States (Waters & Jiménez, 2005). Waters and Jiménez's study points out the development of theories of immigrant assimilation in the twentieth century that culminated in Gordon's 1964 *Assimilation in American Life* that views generational change as the yardstick to measure change within immigrant groups (106). This adheres to the straightforward line of explaining and understanding integration, and this rather controversial assimilation terminology has been rehabilitated at some points within the discourse. According to Waters and Jiménez's study, the standard measures of immigrant assimilation employed by social scientists include: socioeconomic status (SES), spatial concentration or rather the dissimilarity in spatial distribution, language assimilation in terms of English ability and loss of the mother tongue, and finally intermarriage (107, 108). A spatial assimilation model in the United States has posited that increasing socio-economic attainment, longer residence, and higher generational status lead to decreasing residential concentration for a particular ethnic group (109). Accordingly, most theories of assimilation have previously been structured around the principle that the more generations removed an individual is from the immigrant generation, the more integrated into society the individual would be (120), holding on to the argument that generation on its own is a flawed temporal gauge, but which sociology can implement alongside its historical fluctuations and constraints (121).

Furthermore, the study suggests a comparative approach to assimilation and that comparing the new gateways to more established gateways of migration will be insightful for theories of immigrant assimilation (118).

Hence, the development of later straight-line assimilation theories is criticised by theorists who argue against the assumption of a positive relationship between acculturation and social mobility, and they are rather in favour of a bumpy-line theory, positing that socio-economic decline for the second-generation is also possible (Lindo, 2005). This has given way to the more recent and influential notion of segmented assimilation, the idea that immigrants are incorporated into different strata of the host society (9). In the European context, assimilation discourse has experienced a comeback as an intergenerational process that takes place in the meantime while immigrants are planning other things and the debate is mainly triggered by events that indicate the growing fear that, without strong policy interventions, immigrants and their descendants won't integrate and will pose a danger to the cohesion of European societies (10). In classical sociology, however, integration derives its meaning from evolutionary theory, meaning it assumes a progressive change from a less coherent to a more coherent form with an emphasis on the functionality of its parts from a structural point of view, therefore, an integrating social environment focuses on: identity formation and interpersonal interactions at the micro level, the processes that create collectives and mobilise groups at the median level, and state policies and ideas of the national/global discourses at the macro level (11, 12).

Concepts like assimilation and integration, according to Lindo, cover different dimensions of behaviour and experience pertaining to different social fields; therefore, behaviours and experiences can be identified regarding socio-economic position and status, interaction, and identification using indicators like education, housing, spatial mobility, and health that play a definitive role in the process. Another dimension is that of the placement of immigrants, referring to the process of occupying positions in society and gaining, maintaining, losing or defending resources that are relevant to that position, especially in education, income, housing, mobility and health (16). Another dimension is relational interactions in different ways, whether it be individual or collective, such as the emotive content, institutional context, social environment, formal or informal communication, etc. Therefore, interaction has many sides, and it is important to investigate to what degree social closure occurs at localities and the forms that it takes. Lindo has argued for integration with a straightforward meaning that situates housing, education, and health above all in a mutual process, but cautiously reminds

that, regarding the outcomes, no one convergence can be taken as an indicator of integration nor any form of ethnic stratification as a sign that a given society is disintegrating. That is why the focus of integration research should be on the interdependence between individuals and their development over time (19, 20).

This is in line with a host of comparative integration paradigms and context-based theories. In their comparative integration context theory, Schneider and Crul argue that participation in social organisations and belonging to local communities in European cities heavily depend on the integration context (Schneider & Crul, 2010). Differences in integration contexts occur in the institutional arrangements of the recurrently discussed indicators so far, including education, the labour market, and housing. The importance of a social approach is apparent in this theory as it argues that differences in the social and political context are especially important for the social and cultural participation and belonging of immigrants. The Comparative Context theory further suggests that Europe can be considered a natural laboratory for integration processes and an opportunity to compare outcomes in the second generation across different national contexts, which led to the TIES Survey (The integration of the Second Generation) in fifteen European cities; the results pointed to the palpable impact of the differences in institutional arrangements and the specifics of the national integration context (Schneider & Crul, 2010, p. 1). The TIES Survey shows that a growing number of immigrants does not automatically translate to more presence or control over the indicated institutional arrangements (7), although a highly educated second generation, through their study and work, most often engage with people outside of their own group and especially with middle-class friends of native parentage who themselves are also highly educated. They are also often found in jobs in the city administration, educational, and social work sector that give them the possibility to influence city policies to an extent (8). While the theory lays out the position of the second generation from the perspective of them as active agents of change in their cities but a more influential factor would be the disparities between different cities and how the integration context may help or hinder taking up certain positions within the city system where young people of all ethnic groups including the majority ethnic group need to integrate into the diverse city youth population (9, 10). Looking at participation in key institutions of European cities requires two different perspectives: first, from the societal perspective that looks at the national and local institutional arrangements that may help or hinder participation and access, and reproduce or reduce inequalities. Second, from the perspective of the agency of individuals and groups and their actively developing options, making choices, and challenging given

opportunities and structural configurations (12, 13). The theory implies that integration practices are shaped and pre-structured by institutional contexts as well as the rules and the habitus when establishing and taking care of social relations or interactions in a given society (13, 14). Belonging plays a crucial role in the comparative integration context theory, with the theory arguing for both an individual and institutional level of belonging. From the individual perspective, it poses the challenge of finding an unquestioned position and place in the sense of a functional identity that is capable of developing social relations, but from the institutional perspective, the second generation will face the boundaries of that belonging that may result in a sense of hybridity and ambiguity (14, 15). The TIES Survey cities have shown that for the second generation, local belonging is more self-ascribed than national belonging, which in itself is dependent on the institutional arrangements and macro -structures of each city and country (16). This is because, according to their context, implicitly formulated ideals of integration differ greatly across countries (19). Multiculturalist approaches to integration have also been concerned with the issues that arise with identity and personhood in the process of integration. Multiculturalism in this sense has derived from a political ethics of citizenship that includes but goes beyond rights, representation, and the rule of law, and vie for integration to be analysed in terms of how liberty, equality, and solidarity are being interpreted because multiculturalism is concerned with the right to a sub-group identity and that sub-group identity being treated in an equal citizenship way (Modood, 2023).

Clearly, integration theorists have debated the origins and evolution of the terminology that addresses the process of integration extensively, but what makes the biggest phenomenological divide is who has to integrate? And how does it need to happen? In a 2010 essay, Hartmut Esser reviewed Assimilation, Ethnic Stratification, and Selective Acculturation in developing his prominent Model of Intergenerational Integration (Esser 2010). The Model of Intergenerational Integration dates back to a 2004 article, wherein Esser presented the integration discourse with a critical question about whether the ‘new’ immigration requires a new theory of intergenerational integration (Esser, 2004). Central to his argument are three initial conditions of the model: group size, social and cultural distances, and the availability of social capital, with his model specifying the mutual relations between these three constructs (1126). According to Esser, migrations and the subsequent social processes of integration are mostly the indirect consequences of reactions to a given societal condition by the actors involved (1127). When approached empirically, however, there are always exceptions and deviations that necessitate the paradigmatic shift towards a completely new theory and the

alteration of the sociological method itself. This is because generalised inductive observations of covariations between key variables of integration are an explanandum that needs explaining by deductive theoretical arguments (1129). According to Esser, every theory about the intergenerational integration of immigrants refers to three interdependent aspects including: the social integration of immigrants into a social system as individual actors and most prominently their inclusion in the labor market, the emergence of social structures most importantly those regarding patterns of social inequality and differentiation, and the integration of the whole society with regards to its particularly structural cleavages and conflicts (1130). In its most basic form, Esser's model consists of three logics: the logic of situation, the logic of selection, and the logic of aggregation (1133). The starting point of the model is the conception of social production functions of individuals that serve to secure their physical well-being and social approval by investing in cultural goals with institutional means, both of which are socially defined (1139). This is because picking up assimilative traits like command of the spoken language, knowledge of local norms and rules, availability of information, and interethnic friendships are initially a matter of existing opportunities and generalized forms of capital like a universally usable language, social relations untied to ethnic limits, human capital in the form of technical and administrative knowledge are the constitutional core of social investments (1144, 1154).

The chronology, or rather a history of ideas as presented in Esser's formerly mentioned essay, helps better understand the development of integration as a social investment. The pivotal hypothesis according to Esser is that there is no longer only one outcome of the immigration process but three including: assimilation that comprises the upward mobility to the middle classes of the host society, permanent displacement to marginal areas or 'downward assimilation', and permanent establishment of independent ethnic communities that result from the utilization of ethnic resources for upward mobility without giving up the ethnic identity or 'selective acculturation', the problem with these theories, however, lies in the generalizations of certain empirical patterns (Esser, 2010, p. 4). First, the classical assimilation theory (CAT) comprises the typical processes of contact, conflict, accommodation, and the eventual traceless absorption of ethnic groups into the host society's core segments over the course of generations, CAT Esser argues, might have been viable in times of the 'old immigration' but not applicable to 'new immigration' because it forgoes of the wholesale development of interethnic and transnational relations across generations (3, 4). Second, the theory of segmented assimilation (TSA) has been developed particularly in relation to the second generation of 'new

immigration' with three stable outcomes across time and generations, including: growing acculturation, parallel integration into the middle class, permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass, or rapid economic advances and deliberately preserving the immigrant community's values and solidarity (4). Third, the new assimilation theory (NAT), which was developed as a response to TSA's notion of a 'new immigration', holds that an entirely new theory of assimilation is required by withdrawing from the proposition of the invariable cultural mainstream determined by only one segment of the host society as the basis for assimilation (4). Meanwhile, Esser's intergenerational integration model considers the options for immigrants who are present within a receiving context to be central, including their receiving context options (rc-option) and ethnic context options (ec-options) and in terms of integration of immigrants, the researcher can consider either option as a special case of an investment.

Esser further points out that when immigrants enter any one receiving country, they arrive equipped with different yet disparate sorts of capital, whether it be cultural, economic, or social and the reason for it being that the capital required to manage everyday life is tied to certain contexts. In order to bridge these disparities, investment in highly usable capital that can coincide with a receiving-country option, like second language acquisition, educational aspirations in the receiving country, and establishing interethnic relationships, is important. Esser's model assumes two ancillary conditions for variation that include the group size of the immigrant population and their ethnic boundary-making (6-8). The intergenerational integration model combines the processes of the social integration of immigrants with migration processes in a dual manner, including changes in group size via replenishment and changes in ethnic boundary-making via the characteristics of the immigrant population, with the main objective being to explain the integration outcomes of immigrants as societal facts (10-11). As suggested by the model, there is a great deal of variance that can shape and determine the integration of immigrant groups into host societies. For example, if the ethnic context options of immigrant groups are less efficient for upward mobility into higher classes of the receiving society than are the corresponding investments in the receiving context, ethnicization will develop and result in lower mobility efforts even when there are high structural chances and in the absence of social distances. This is what Esser calls the 'ethnic mobility trap', which is one of the most empirically recurrent correlations that often yields the structural outcomes of an ethnic stratification (20). More importantly, it is not ethnicization that is crucial per se, but rather activities related to ethnic options that need to be efficient for upward mobility because ethnic resources indeed promote educational success, achievement,

and upward mobility in general, therefore, Esser's model draws from pure empirical generalizations but does so with great effort in dealing with the countless historically and socially determined micro-processes of integration (23-25). But it is worth asking: why is integration so difficult to theorise in general?

Of course, the ongoing debate and much theorisation in the realm of immigrant integration means that the concept of integration is never employed without a variety of different meanings. Ager and Strang point out that integration has become a key policy objective that relates to the resettlement of refugees and immigrants in general, as well as a matter of significant public discussion (Ager & Strang, 2008). Therefore, this wide and at times even arbitrary application of the concept of integration can be threatening to both. Ager and Strang propose key domains of integration related to four overarching themes: achievement and access, assumptions and practice, processes of social connection and structural barriers to such connections (166). The framework serves as a middle-range theory that provides a coherent conceptual structure, from a normative perspective, of what constitutes the key components of integration (167). Tracing back to the 1951 Geneva Convention, the set of specifications of social rights of refugees in terms of issues such as employment, social welfare, education and housing emerges. But, once again, it would be incorrect to see advancement purely in these areas as the marker of integration, and they should rather be viewed as potential means that support the achievement of the goals of integration (169). Among the key issues of employment, housing, education, and health, employment by far is the most researched area of integration because it is consistently identified as a factor that influences many relevant issues of integration and in relation to promoting economic independence, securing opportunities for culturalisation, contact with the host society and planning the future (170). This means integration has been approached so far more with regard to the economics of integration and not so much from the point of view of a sociology of integration in line with what the thesis has previously discussed as a welfare-to-work logic. Education, another key issue, is also approached in terms of the ways in which it provides skills and competencies that promote subsequent employability, which in turn would support becoming more constructive and active members of society. But an arguably even more important aspect of education, that is the schooling itself, is often overlooked. According to Ager and Strang, schools are the most important place for preliminary contact with members of local and host communities and play an important role in establishing relationships supportive of successful integration, but the existence of barriers towards integration in schools is a reality that immigrants grapple with daily (172). At its core,

the definition of integration adopted by any given nation would inevitably depend on that nation's sense of identity and how it understands its nationhood by incorporating certain values that are paramount when approaching and identifying integration (173, 174). An ethno-cultural and political exclusion, for example, would tend to be associated with assimilationist models of integration that expect immigrants, and especially refugees, to adapt, to become indistinguishable from the host community (174, 175). Based on Ager and Strang's argument, a framework for the sociological approach to integration emerges that consists of social connection, social bonds, and facilitators according to the results of their fieldwork with a mostly refugee population in the United Kingdom. The most important aspect of this framework is the focus on integration as a two-way approach that points to the importance of viewing integration as a process of mutual accommodation and considering the means for social connection between immigrants and the communities within which they settle. Firstly, social connection at its most basic would imply the absence of conflict and toleration of different groups in a given community, where there is an active mixing of people from different groups and the existence of a sense of belonging that would ultimately mark living in an integrated community (177, 178). Secondly, social bonds imply the importance and value of maintaining proximity to the family because that would enable shared cultural practices and maintaining familiar patterns of relationships. Third and finally, are the facilitators because concepts of inclusion and exclusion are closely associated with policy measures that metaphorically and literally remove, or manage, the barriers to integration (181). What is striking in this study is that both refugees and non-refugees have discussed integration in terms of people from different groups participating in a range of shared activities, from sports to college classes, religious worship, and political activity as the evidence of integration unfolding within that community (180).

The Historical Relationship Between Education and Integration

Reviewing the vast body of literature concerning the concept of integration shows that integration is a highly context-based and relative process, with only certain themes or elements that are influential but by no means determine for sure the outcomes of the process. These include education, housing, health, and a sense of belonging within the host society. Education is of particular interest here because it is an early contact point with the host society and, at the same time, it plays a formative role in the upbringing of future citizens. It is worth inquiring about the historical aspects of this relationship and how it shapes the experience of integration. In his 2024 article *Migrants & Minorities into Citizens: Education & Membership Regimes*

Since the Early Modern Period, Leo Lucassen details at length the role of the school as an institution that determines the possibilities to participate in society and the crucial role of accessing education in the settlement process of immigrants (Lucassen, 2024, p. 43). Lucassen points to the relationship between human capital building and immigration starting from the Middle Ages. Children and adults were offered different kinds of educational and training possibilities that were stipulated by churches, monasteries, and guilds, which included but were not limited to literacy. In Western Europe during the early modern period, guilds and schools did not discriminate between children of migrants and natives, although this could have varied by locality, and where there was discrimination, it would have been on the basis of religion rather than ethnicity (44). With the rise of nation-states, their assimilatory and ethnocentric nature allocated a central role for schools and education because, apart from institutions like the army and the labour market, schools became key in what they teach children, especially the national language, culture, and history that impact their identification with the nation-state (45, 46). According to Lucassen, even after World War II an assimilationist nationalism remained the core ideology that guided the education of migrant children in most parts of the world but the rapid process of decolonization after the War produced fundamental critiques of European superiority that were characterized by racism, political and economic domination on the one hand, and on the other hand, the globalization of human rights influenced ideas about the bilingual instruction of children from an immigrant background which did question the dominant practices of assimilation but at the same time, bilingual education was initially developed for the purposes of the eventual repatriation of those immigrants to their countries of origin (49, 50). From the 1990's onward, though, the discussion about immigrants in the schools of Western Europe shifted from the issues of bilingualism to the broader contexts of integration that mark a multicultural turn in the processes of intergenerational integration (51, 52). The merits and shortcomings of the multicultural turn are very much contested and open to debate from the point of view of both immigrants and host societies regarding the opportunities that this particular institutional arrangement provides and, more controversially, the values that it transmits, but the main point remains the function of schools as key socialising institutions (53, 54). This is because schools mirror prevailing membership regimes that reproduce socio-economic and social inequalities and entail the assimilationist ideology that constitutes the core idea and program of the nation-state; therefore, schools are important institutions to homogenise populations in terms of language and culture (55).

Ernest Gellner has indicated the meanings and problems of nationalism and what it means to be from the same nation in his renowned *Nations and Nationalism* (Gellner, 1983). According to Gellner, two individuals are of the same nation only when they recognise each other as belonging to the same nation and share the same culture, where culture is a system of ideas, signs, and associations as well as ways of behaving and communicating (7). Nationalism leads to the establishment of pervasive and standardised high cultures that are at odds with genuine cultural pluralism, while culturally plural societies often worked well even in the recent past (54, 55). Gellner also points out that culture in self-contained communities is often invisible, but with mobility and context-free communication introduced, the culture within which a given person is taught to communicate becomes the core of that person's identity (61). The fact that schools establish such standardised high cultures is evident, but the processes and outcomes of this standardisation in an age of mass mobility are less clear and require systematic analysis. This remains especially obscure when taking into consideration the point of view of those who are marginalised by any given standardisation, how they interact with the higher culture and how they are integrated into it.

A relevant seminal intervention in the topic of education was made by Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2005) and his definition of 'dialogue'. According to Freire dialogue exceeds the bounds of a mere conversation, it is rather an encounter between people that is mediated by the world and in order to name the world and cannot take place between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish it named or those who deny others the right to speak or those who's right to speak has been denied them (88). Human beings themselves, according to Freire, exist in a dialectical relationship between their limits and freedoms because they are conscious beings that are aware of themselves (99). Furthermore, as transforming and creative beings, humans detach their perception and actions from the world in permanent relations with reality, they produce not only material goods, but also social institutions, ideas, and histories through which they assume what Freire calls 'epochal units', with each epoch characterized by a complex of ideas, hopes and challenges in their dialectical challenges when interacting with their opposites (101). Freire attributes a dialogical character to education that makes teaching a collaborative activity for liberation rather than the mere transmission of knowledge or acquisition of a certain culture. The evolution of the Italian system is a provocative example of changes in the understanding of the mode and function of education. In their introduction to Antonio Gramsci's *On Education in Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (Gramsci, 1971), Hoare and Smith point to a turning

point to the first major reform of Italian education, since the unification of the country sixty years earlier, in 1923 under Mussolini's then minister of education Giovanni Gentile they adopted the Piedmontese educational system as laid down by the Casati Act of 1859. It entailed a critique of the existing school system, labelling it as instruction and not education, defected by being narrow, formal, and sterile, while they promoted 'educativity' and active education (2). According to Gramsci, it is important to analyse the various phases of the educational process which correspond to the age and intellectual-moral development of pupils as well as the aims that the school sets itself. These 'common schools' should empower young students into social activity after bringing them to a degree of maturity and a capacity for both intellectual and practical creativity as well as initiative and autonomy of orientation (29). This makes the function of the school public, but by doing so, schools need to expand their practical organisations, materials, and the teaching body (30). Similar to Freire, Gramsci's critique of the educational system entails a rethinking of the learning process as a spontaneous and autonomous process of the student, with the teacher only functioning as a guide, begetting a new relationship between intellectual and industrial work in social life as a whole (33). Gramsci believed that there is no automatic unity between instruction and education, but the teacher's living work acts as the nexus between the two (35).

The school's phenomenological challenges are real and impactful when we touch upon the issue of immigrants' presence and integration within the school. Studies in Germany, Europe's biggest immigration hub, have shown that the education system continues to struggle to meet the needs of young people from diverse backgrounds, including unequal treatment and discrimination that impede their effective integration (Georgi, 2024). Georgi has identified the diversity in German classrooms to appear in different ways such as in language, ethnicity, religion, competencies and academic performance but the imperative is not only in identifying such differences but rather in acknowledging that these differences are not innate but which can develop or even intensify throughout the course of schooling as they are products of social processes and the degree to which students are routinely incorporated within the school (188). She categorizes these inequalities in the German school system along the lines of: segregation and tracking regarding school career recommendations, unequal distribution of resources based on the school's locality, lack of sensitivity to diversity in schools on behalf of the school administration, bullying and harassment including the newly arrived and those born to immigrant parents, and the lack of support services including German language support (188, 189). This can go as far as teachers evaluating immigrant students lower because of prejudice

or unconscious stereotypes, which can affect the student's career and future opportunities (192). The objectives of integration in Germany are also put mainly on the shoulders of the immigrant because global migration is attributed mostly to poverty; therefore, integration is to be achieved by the immigrant who has moved into another society due to economic reasons and in search of better opportunities (193).

Studies about the integration imperative of the children of low-status immigrants in the schools of wealthy societies point to the many disparities faced by these students. Generally, children of low-status immigrant families are shown to lag behind those of a native background, but for different reasons within different educational systems (Alba, Sloan, & Sperling, 2011). The challenge lies mainly in integrating immigrants in a way that can promote participation in the labour force on par with those of a native background. This challenge has arisen mainly from the demographic conjunction that links the ends of the age spectrum, defined by declining numbers of native-background and majority children, accompanied by the fundamental trends in an increase of children with minority and immigrant backgrounds (2). Immigration of course has proven to be bimodal with the foreign-born bringing in considerable socio-human capital and at the same time many immigrant-background children growing up in homes with parents who have low levels of education by the host country's standards, often holding low-wage jobs and speaking their own language with the children all of which may stigmatize them by the majority, making integration an imperative that prepares newcomers to become robust members of society (3). A notable concern is the apparent educational gap that exists between these two groups, the reasons for which are varied and differ from country to country. The gap between native and second-generation groups in the United States, for example, is bigger compared to all European countries, except for Germany, and more than the width of a PISA-based proficiency level (4). Students from disadvantaged immigrant households are generally more likely to leave school without a final secondary-school credential (5). The family unit can be a source of disadvantage in the schooling of the children, with immigrant families often lacking familiarity with the host society and its institutions, often unable to help their children with their homework, or provide them with the linguistic and cultural foundations for success in the school due to their lack of fluency in the host country's official language (7). The study also indicates the role of inequalities among schools are impactful due to residential segregation or the funds that are allocated to these schools, which can prove helpful but are not an all-in-one solution (8). Teachers and classroom sizes are influential in the process as well, with such schools still having less qualified and experienced teachers on average (15). The most

important point that this study raises is the missing systematic examination of the concentration of particular groups of students in the schools of European countries (15). The Italian case remains even more understudied, with comprehensive scholarship emerging in Italian. This is while previous studies have shown that in Italy, a migratory background continues to affect the life trajectories of migrants' descendants due to long-term inequality gaps and low inter-generational social mobility and school-to-work transitions are proposed as equality opportunities in education to counter long-standing 'soft' and 'hard' inequality gaps (Gabrielli & Impicciatore, 2022). According to other examples, studies in the American context have shown immigrants to be drawn by economic opportunities in industries where there is a high demand for low-wage labour to what is termed as the 'new gateways' of immigration, compared to the established bicoastal 'old gateways' (Waters & Jiménez, 2005, p. 114). Schools are emphasised within this context, like most integration contexts, as well as the particular challenges that schools face due to the transient nature of the immigrant population. This implies that native-born residents would have fewer constant interactions with immigrants, and the schools will strain to meet the needs of an increasingly immigrant student population that cycles in and out during a given school year whenever their parents find work elsewhere. The sheer amount of immigrant students in these cases leaves some schools in the 'new gateways' scrambling to meet the needs of the large student body, and language barriers remain challenging (116). At an individual level, the growing second generation is often caught between two experiences, that of their parents and native-born peers (117).

Integration in Italian Schools

Mariagrazia Santagati has provided one of the most comprehensive reviews of integration in multiethnic Italian schools in English. Her sociological review on educational inequalities in multiethnic Italian schools over the past fifteen years in Italy concludes that this research topic is yet to be recognised at the international level, while Italy can be considered an interesting case study due to the exponential growth of immigrant students in number and the contradictions that arise when trying to translate an inclusive educational model into actual integration practices (Santagati, 2015). Drawing from previous literature, the review considers educational integration not just a concept that is theoretically defined but rather a field to be observed empirically and highlights the mutual influences between the individual and the social system that would also improve models of analysis and research methodologies (295-296). The Italian case is emerging because the recent migratory phenomenon has led Italy to reach immigration levels similar to those of countries with an older history of immigration in the

span of a few years, but it remains, simultaneously, somewhat with a moderately low percentage of immigrant students or intergenerational integration and naturalisation (297). Firstly, the disparities between local and national dynamics of inclusion and exclusion make Italy a desirable case study, with students being largely concentrated in large metropolitan areas of northern and central Italy like Milan, Rome, and Turin. Secondly, Italy's choice of an inclusive model of educational integration, with full inclusion in schools being ensured by law for more than forty years, means that newcomers are admitted to ordinary education in the same classes as the native-background students, even in the face of improper immigration paperwork. Thirdly, the country has adopted an intercultural approach since the 1990s that emphasises the acknowledgement and openness to diversity, applied to both the curricula and the classroom relationships. The model predominantly defined at the legal and educational levels does face difficulties when transforming the pedagogical principle into everyday school practices, as Italian schools did not proceed in a coordinated and organic way in the implementation of integration according to Santagati's review (298). Issues of a similar nature will be raised and discussed through the analysis of data in Chapters Four and Five. These disparities raise serious questions regarding equal opportunities in Italian schools especially in the face of the statistics as follows: immigrant-background students are the worst performing group in Italian schools, high levels of retention rates and school delay are visible, immigrant-background students are concentrated in technical and vocational training, they exhibit a higher risk of dropout with Italy being one of the countries with the highest ethnic inequalities in terms of school performance among OECD countries (299). Santagati also categorizes the forty sociological studies into three phases: the first period 1999-2007 is the phase of sociological discovery of multiculturalism in Italian schools, the second phase 2008-2012 is the phase of increase in relevant studies on school and immigration, and the third and final phase 2013-2014 as the phase of consolidation and innovation with the introduction of more advanced methodologies that investigate new issues like racism, discrimination, and prejudice, and transition into higher education (301-302). The review also points to the studies on the role and influence of teachers in diverse contexts, with the teachers typically advising these students to make lower educational choices and directing them towards less ambitious educational pursuits because they consider immigrant-background students less adequate or prepared for prestigious lyceums (309). This is often not just out of pure prejudice but also because these students are usually entitled to less linguistic fluency and socio-economic acumen compared to their typical native-background Italian peers. The notoriously lengthy and difficult naturalisation process in Italy also adds to the general precarity of these students' situation, whose first-hand experience

of migration leads to potential biographical discontinuity, instability, and creates non-standard educational trajectories with an almost permanent foreigner status (310). Besides the socio-economic situation of these students, the classroom relations are paramount for in the inclusion and exclusion of these students from the relational point of view because school relations are the key to participation in the local community and the formation of social and informal networks after immigration in order for students to develop intergroup relations, a research interest that is lacking in the Italian educational integration research (313). One of the most interesting points raised in these reviews is the change in how socialization occurs today in Italy and elsewhere by extension, that emerges as a restricted sociality according to the children's territorial mobility that makes integration more difficult because unlike the 1960s children do not find roads and courtyards filled with peers to socialize with and rather conduct the extracurricular life mostly at home (316-317). Santagati also details the strategies of immigrant-origin students in Italian secondary schools in a recent article (Santagati, 2021). The secondary school is of academic interest because many immigrant-background students find it difficult to pursue their education up to the secondary school. An analysis of the strategies and varying narratives of those who succeed in these schools is insightful. The Italian research literature has identified two main axes of school integration: the student's academic achievement, the relational aspects and the ability to fit in the school environment (7). The research has shown that while within the educational system, the potential for failure is attributed to the immigrant background of the students, it is rather their social and economic situation and their families that play a more meaningful role in their outcomes. At the same time, these very factors often-times motivate the students to work harder towards success in school because these students feel like it is their duty to repay the sacrifices of their parents and seize the opportunities that an Italian education, or the Italian public school system rather, offers them with the downside of this attitude being the risk of living an unbalanced life that is only focused on studying and curtails their personal freedoms as young-adults who assume adult responsibilities earlier in life including the many material and non-material debts that they feel the need to repay within the family (16).

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the most influential theories of immigrant integration, particularly with respect to educational integration. It highlights the disparities that immigrant-background students face at school through a comparative analysis of different immigration destinations. Integration is shown to be a context-based phenomenon that can be established

empirically through variables like housing, health, and education, but it has immense potential from a sociological point of view at the same time. The chapter indicates Italy's potential for international recognition in integration research as well, because it is now hosting an exponential number of students with an immigration background. The Italian case study is important as a model of inclusive education that faces its own disparities and challenges upon implementation. The chapter established the relationship between education and integration, with particular emphasis on the role of institutional arrangements and the national aspirations of host societies. This relationship is consequential for the recognition of key social components of integration and paves the way for innovative interdisciplinary research that can take advantage of the established variables, like employment, to indicate the importance of the social issues that accompany immigration. Such an interdisciplinary approach is useful in demographically declining and highly complex multicultural societies where integration is now an imperative.

Chapter Three

Summary

Following the literature, Chapter Three argues that a new theory of migration is required for the study of the considerable new empirical data that migration research has collected. Building on some of the most seminal works in migration studies, the chapter argues for a new theory of migration that is inclusive of integration processes in several steps. Starting by considering the immigrant as a worker or as a citizen, the chapter draws a line between the differences between earning an income and being a citizen in a given receiving country. Then it points out the importance of second language acquisition and its relationship to employability, and how it leads to integration, elaborating this mediatory logic in the current studies of integration. It argues for the importance of interpersonal relationships and participatory freedoms in order to foster the immigrants' sense of belonging and home-making. The chapter ends by framing integration as a social investment incentive that would promote the development of the entire society, rooted in the aspirations-capabilities framework. It concludes by inserting integration into the broader process of migration and indicates areas such as the education system and the school as institutions where social investments can be most effective based on the capabilities approach.

Introduction

Migration theories so far have done an excellent job of predicting patterns of out-migration through push-pull models that are invested primarily in the economics of migration. While migration's economics are important to the mobility itself, they don't contribute to issues of integration. This is because migration has an incredibly diverse social aspect that is often overlooked in these push-pull models. That is why these models are often incapable of providing a comprehensive notion of migration. Of course, understanding how, why, and where people move is fundamental to migration studies, but the main shortcoming so far has been that it seems that migration is reduced to the act of moving and not settling in. That is why migration theories have been very susceptible to criticism, especially from the humanistic approaches. The social aspects of migration, especially intergenerational integration of immigrants, are of interest when many researchers of integration argue for the contextual nature of integration processes⁶. Of course, generalisation of highly complex social phenomena is not a virtue on its own, but understanding general patterns of immigrant integration can be a starting point for new theories of integration. These new theories need not only to predict how global

⁶ See Chapter Two for the detailed analysis of this topic.

demographic trends will shape the future of migration, but they would also address critical junctures in the future of co-existence in increasingly diverse and migrant societies. This can be achieved by paying attention to the will and agency of migrants as well as the institutional arrangements that impact their agency. The aspirations and capabilities of immigrants should be realised within the general aspirations of the receiving society as a nation with nationalistic inclinations. The idea of the nation is paramount; it affects the collective identity of the citizens and their understanding of the outside world. The core institutions of the nation-state are tasked with the dissemination of national and, at times, international values, with schools being the primary contact point of future citizens with these values. They are also the place where the different segments of society establish initial interpersonal relationships. Schools also create capabilities for the students, whether they are of a native background or an immigrant background, although to different extents. These capabilities shape the future participatory freedoms of these individuals through the knowledge they make accessible to students about what it means to be a citizen of a country, their shared values, and the rights and responsibilities that come with it. The challenging part of the equation is that national identity itself has been influenced by migration, and this has led to a crisis in meaning. For example, there can be highly capable immigrants in a given society, but they would not be able to fulfil their functions within that society to the fullest extent, not because they would lack the motivation to, but rather because institutional arrangements impact their capabilities negatively, even capabilities that institutions like the school foster themselves by investing in their students. These social investments don't just appear as the immediate skills that students acquire in the classroom, but at the same time include those interpersonal relationships that students develop in the meantime. The aspirations and capabilities not only influence migration outcomes but, at the same time, determine where an immigrant, for example, would choose to settle. The choice to live anywhere is essentially a choice about integration, even if it is about not integrating into that society. It is well-known that these choices primarily include acquiring the national language, finding employment, and obtaining legal residency in the receiving country. What remains less known is how each of these impacts integration from the social perspective, and as a component of migration.

The Immigrant, the Worker, and the Citizen

The second chapter laid out how immigration is perceived by most host societies as a product of economic uncertainty in the origin countries, and this places the responsibility to integrate more so on the shoulders of those who immigrate because they are moving in order

to obtain better opportunities in the receiving society. Another component of the immigration process in highly developed and complex multicultural societies is also labour-related; this is due to demographic decline and more workers exiting the workforce rather than entering it. What remains a fact within the process of immigration is that the concept of work itself gains relevance and has become the defining factor in the migration discourse. The literature has established this fact clearly as well when reviewing theories of international migration (Massey, et al., 1993). Neoclassical Economics theory has focused on wage differences, employment conditions, and migration costs by conceiving migration as an individual decision for income maximisation. The New Economics of Migration theory expands the limits of decision-making to the family unit and considers the conditions in different markets by viewing migration as a household decision that minimises risks to the family income. Dual Labour Market and World Systems theories, on the other hand, both focus on higher global aggregation forces instead of micro-level decision processes, with the former linking migration to the structural requirements of modern industrial economies and the latter viewing migration as a natural consequence of economic globalisation (Massey, et al., 1993). The labour market is, of course, highly important to understanding patterns of migration and predicting how future migration may unfold, but the economics of migration isn't comprehensive when predicting how immigrants may integrate into the host society. The key to understanding why the labour market is increasingly definitive for different forms of immigration is related to work being a viable option for residency, and later, if the immigrants indeed intend to remain in the receiving country and integrate into it, legal residency paves the way towards citizenship in almost every immigration hub in the world. The downside of this work-and-reside approach is that it doesn't take into consideration why most immigrants may seek residence and stability in a host country to begin with; the reasons for it, of course, being multifarious and personal for each immigrant. It also misses the points about the capabilities of the immigrant labour force as well as their aspirations in uprooting their lives and moving themselves, including the convenience of moving options for each immigrant, or considering the actual institutional arrangements of the host society that would try to manage their movement regardless of differences in the human capital of the different segments of immigrants. In other words, integration needs to be understood socially. An approach that misses out on the social aspects of integration risks downgrading human capital to mere economic capital and, by doing so, dehumanises the lives of immigrants in receiving societies. This is by virtue of economic integration alone and forgoing the social aspects of integrating immigrants into a given receiving society, such as

their sense of belonging, home-making, and agency in shaping the communities that they become integral parts of.

Frameworks of political demography have insisted that populations cannot be understood in a vacuum, and institutional arrangements are paramount to a comprehensive understanding because they determine the impact of population trends (Sciubba, 2021). For example, questions regarding the openness of the state's immigration policy and the pathways it provides to citizenship are integral because the international refugee paradigm is insufficient and precarious at the global level by virtue of creating only temporary solutions for the issues of migration, making it a reactive paradigm rather than a proactive one (9). Following Goldstone, a new political demography begins by questioning the relationship between the population of a society and its natural resource base and the trends in the ratio of total population to overall resources (Goldstone, 2012). Furthermore, it studies the changes in resource distribution and political power that are likely to arise from changes in the relative and absolute sizes of different population groups (12). Political demography especially concerns the youth who represent the future workforce and human capital of a society (May, 2021). According to May, given the growing number of immigrant youth in multicultural societies, political demography requires a mixed-methods and multidisciplinary research agenda for youth policies and investments at national and international levels, with investment in their education being perceived as a way of improving their development outcomes (157).

The issue of development has gained increasing traction in the intersection of immigration, education, and labour. Most notably, Amartya Sen's *Development as Freedom* has given way to a more comprehensive perspective on both the economic and the social aspects of development that are crucial in understanding how modern economies function and define the role of individuals within society (Sen, 2010). Societies and individuals, in Sen's capability framework, have every incentive to want more wealth, not because of its own sake but because it is the general-purpose means for having more freedom in order to lead the kind of life that one has reason to value (14). According to Hartmut Esser, immigrants share the same objectives as locals, like the economic prosperity that Sen also mentions, but the immigrants' fundamental problem is in controlling fewer or less efficient means of achieving them [or, as importantly, having access to less efficient means to achieve them] because, as human capital, their value is associated with a specific context. Based on their motivation, the opportunities, and the costs they face, their context and capital may be mismatched, which in turn affects the decision to invest in acquiring that receiving country's specific capital, for

example, its national language (Esser 2006, 10). Sen's definition of capabilities has also enabled a new approach to the study of development. His argument starts by positioning the view on substantive freedoms, including the liberty of political participation, the opportunity to receive basic education, and health care as the constituent components of development because, in the capabilities framework, what people can positively achieve is influenced by their economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and enabling the conditions of good health, basic education, and sense of initiative. People would, in turn, become capable of exercising their freedoms and influencing institutional arrangements through their exercise of freedom (5). This is because participation requires knowledge and basic educational skills; hence, denying any group of children the opportunity of education, most importantly, is contradictory to the basis of participatory freedom (32, 33). The concept of development as freedom involves the expansion of basic freedoms, including the right to political participation as a constitutive part of development (36), because freedom is the main object and primary means of development (53). These include five instrumental freedoms that are: political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security (38). The process of development, therefore, is influenced by these interconnections and requires a plurality of institutions, including democratic systems, legal mechanisms, market structures, and educational and health provisions (53) in order for it to take place. The question here, therefore, wouldn't be if immigration promotes development, but rather how institutional arrangements promote or hinder the freedoms of immigrants and the ways in which that affects the development of a receiving society in general. For this purpose, Sen focuses particularly on people's capability to choose lives that they have reason to value (63), and capability is the substantive freedom to achieve various lifestyles accordingly (75).

The mediatory relationship between education, work, and integration becomes apparent in this way. Schools are meant to formally educate students regarding their national identity, sometimes nationally and sometimes plurally, as well as what it means to be of a certain creed internationally and, ideally speaking, turn individuals into capable citizens who enjoy a certain degree of rights, protection, and influence over the institutional arrangement of their society⁷. Schools also transmit employable traits and allocate specialised roles to the students through tracking their study routes. Employment would provide work, and through work, people would ascertain a sense of self, more rights, and even luxuries, including different types of residences if these individuals are not native-born. This would, in turn, provide stability and even some

⁷ See also Chapter Two.

participatory influence within the workforce and the local community for such individuals. Integration, however, is where this mediatory logic begins facing challenges because finding employment does not automatically translate to integrating into the society (see the ‘ethnic mobility trap’, for example, that was mentioned in the previous chapters). The degree of immigrants’ participatory freedom is at times disproportionate to their actual share of participation in the daily lives of a given community. Belonging to that community is dependent on homemaking as well as earning an income, and that homemaking is not only about procuring a house but rather about being able to live within a community in harmony and giving back to that community as well. This thesis considers education to be paramount in this mediatory logic because: schools are a major first entry-point into the society where different segments of society come into contact with each other, schools hold an awesome influence over the capabilities of the students and their future employability, and finally, schools are cultural hubs where students ascertain the shared codes and references within a given society both didactically and implicitly through their informal interactions.

Gramsci has pointed out that the school has combated the traditional conception of the world by identifying objective, intractable and natural laws that humans must adapt to; retrospectively, social and state laws are produced as a result of human activity in the interests of their collective development, which helps best dominate the laws of nature to facilitate their work. Work here is the mode in which humans participate in natural life so they can transform and socialise it (34). This is because, as Gramsci lays out, work mediates the relations between the social and the natural orders and provides a basis for the development of a historical and dialectical conception of the world, starting with the primary school (35). But what is more important is that democracy isn’t just about the transition from being an unskilled worker to a skilled worker; it is rather about every citizen’s ability to govern and society providing the general conditions to achieve this ability (40). Therefore, it begs the question: if different segments of society, including those who were not born in that country, yet participate in its development and daily activities through education and employment, what defines their freedoms and status compared to a citizen? The integration discourse must take a step away from the empirically proven relationship between education and work toward questions regarding the freedoms of immigrant-background individuals compared to native-background individuals, starting with fundamental institutions like the school and how they invest in these individuals. But before initiating a framework for integration as a social investment, the

framework needs to recognise the empirical importance of the school and the kind of education that the students receive there.

Language and Employability

So much of what researchers mean by education in the case of immigrant-background students, and especially those who were not born in the receiving country, is teaching these students the national language of the country. In a research review, Hartmut Esser establishes the relationship between migration, language, and integration (Esser, 2006). According to Esser, deficits in terms of competency in the national language play a particularly important role, alongside other factors like social distances and discrimination, in the integration of immigrants. The main reason for this special consideration of the relationship between proficiency in the national language and educational success is that they are tied together both directly and indirectly because teaching itself happens in the medium of the national language, tasks are embedded in the linguistic context, and the broader cultural context itself is associated with the language (63). The national language, therefore, fulfils different functions in individual and societal integration, from the medium of everyday communication to an asset in employability. Languages and accents also act as symbols of belonging or foreignness and make way for differentiation and discrimination. Finally, the national language determines inequalities in terms of access, that is, access to education, institutions, income, contact, and societal recognition. Language acquisition, therefore, can be understood and analysed as a resource, a symbol, and a medium (11). Esser's review shows that integration, in the case of a high concentration of immigrant students in a given school, which is more prevalent in the case of those who are from more disadvantaged backgrounds, can even lead to an exclusive integration into intra-ethnic networks, and the lack of language skills only deters the chances of accessing employment opportunities. An immigrant-specific problem that often emerges, though, isn't that immigrants are not entitled to any capital to begin with, but rather that their previously acquired human capital, such as their educational and occupational experiences, cannot be translated into another linguistic context, and sometimes their qualifications are up for debate within the host society's institutional regulations and arrangements⁸ (12). The study of language acquisition itself faces certain disciplinary issues because it is done by very different and segmented social disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, education, sociology, and economics, making the debate mired in normative prejudice and often

⁸ See also Chapter Five.

politically motivated concerns, giving rise to gaps in knowledge through a single disciplinary lens (2). This is because ethnic stratification, vertical ethnic inequalities according to Esser, cannot be explained by qualifications that are of importance to the labour market but rather defined by systemic differences between ethnic groups in terms of their access to the labour market (1). Therefore, language is central to the integration of immigrants into their host societies as it forms the background of educational careers and labour-market success in two aspects: social integration and system integration, the former being inclusion in an existing social system like the school and the latter concerning the cohesion of entire social systems beyond their different elements, such as in different groups of ethnic minorities. Accordingly, Esser devises four types of individual social integration emerging with three different societal levels of influence, including the country of origin, the receiving country, and the ethnic group (10). These types of individual social integration include: marginality as inclusion in either the ethnic group or host society, segmentation as inclusion in the former and exclusion from the latter, assimilation as exclusion from the former and inclusion in the latter, and multiple inclusion as involving both social systems. It is possible to identify different dimensions of the language with respect to these types of social integration, including: linguistic marginality, limited bilingualism, monolingual segmentation, monolingual assimilation and competent bilingualism (7). This is while linguistic segmentation and marginality both decline with decreasing age at migration or earlier effective entry into the educational system of the host society (52).

Esser's review identifies four main associations with linguistic skills that affect the productivity of human capital. These denominate the degree of cultural fit of the relevant language with the labor sector of interest including: the general communication value of the given language, the relevance of linguistic communication in the context of that occupational activity, and the form of the language, as in its oral or written form for example because the written form of a languages generally correlates with more productivity compared to only speaking or understanding the language (80). Furthermore, the language presents different dimensions in terms of its content, which, according to Esser, include structural, social, and emotional dimensions ranging from placement in the labour market to initiating contact and identifying with the host society. The language here becomes formative in both ethnic inequalities within the systemic distribution of activities in the labour market, on the one hand, and ethnic diversity itself, on the other hand, considering the social aspects of integration like cultural habits and religious beliefs that make a difference compared to mere educational and

professional prestige (8). Hence, the intersection of language, education, and the labour market is important for the social integration of immigrants in the dissolution of ethnic fragmentation, avoiding ethnic stratification, and promoting the system integration of host societies (9), especially newer immigration destinations like Italy. Esser's model of social and system integration introduces four parameters for language acquisition, including: motivation, opportunities for learning, capability [not as in what Sen has defined as capability] in the form of intelligence that is a prerequisite for certain kinds of learning, like language acquisition, and that can be reinforced via previous knowledge or decline with aging or the cost of learning (16). Effective early education is highly crucial to better language acquisition and improvements in the social and system integration of the students because the foundations of early educational success are laid early on in life (23). This, of course, does not mean that substantial language skills cannot be achieved in the more advanced stages of life, but in order to achieve comparable results, an increasingly higher level of motivation and access is required (58). Chapters Four and Five of the thesis explore these conditions in Italian schools and inquire about the parameters of diversity in Italian schools and how the school manages diversity.

An important aspect of the school environment is that, unlike mother tongue skills that are enhanced or even only possible when individuals stay in inner ethnic environments, acquiring the language of the receiving country is linked to interethnic relationships (Esser 2008, p. 2), and the school is the primary contact point for the students who spend most of their time during the day concentrated on school activities. More importantly, schools are key because, according to empirical research, language acquisition always occurs in concrete social situations (7), and the earlier these social situations begin to form, the higher the proficiency outcomes of the students would be, because after an age at immigration of 15 or higher, it is difficult to spot any correlations anymore (9). Furthermore, acculturation in everyday processes of life significantly improves second language acquisition, emphasising the importance of access to the society and what Esser enumerates as part of a 'syndrome' of access to and orientation towards the cultural demands of the receiving society, with the two promoting each other (17). All in all, immigrants should not get into the second language learning environment too late because this will negatively impact their language acquisition, even if exposure to the second language is perfect after they miss the 'critical period' at an age of about 14 (24). Schools can also function as fields of 'practical intervention' because interethnic encounters and maintaining them are rather rare in the everyday lives of most immigrant families (25). Some have even argued that intervention through multilingual learning should begin not just

from receiving countries but also from the countries of origin and as early as possible so that international pedagogies would avoid costly shifts between countries of departure and countries of arrival (Filion, 2013).

Integration as Social Investment

The role of the government and the welfare state of most highly developed immigration destinations in optimising integration has been of great academic interest as well, and the integration research should also put the topic of socially investing in human capital in the spotlight, as scholars like Hollifield have argued previously (Hollifield, 2004). Nicole Schneeweis has elaborated that educational integration is related to the institutional characteristics of the schooling system and positively related to external student assessment policies (Schneeweis, 2009). According to Schneeweis, test score gaps between immigrant-background students and native-background students cannot be entirely explained by differences in their productivity and educational institutions are found to be correlated with the integration of migrants⁹ (1305). Her study concludes that the design of the education system is important for students of an immigrant background and predicts that the demographic trends will pose significant challenges in the topic of integration (1306). Since then, integration has turned into a major challenge indeed, but it begs the question: how have the institutional arrangements and policy paradigms responded? Anton Hemerijck's overview of social investment as a policy paradigm in a 2018 article points to the role of governments and policies in promoting the objectives of integration, as well as how to define social investment as a policy paradigm (Hemerijck, 2018). The European Union has championed a new welfare edifice since 2013 through the *Social Investment Package for Growth and Social Cohesion* that urges members to advance post-crisis welfare reforms that would help prepare them to respond to new social risks by investing in human capabilities from early childhood rather than merely repairing them (811). This means welfare would need to be more proactive in the area of advancing capabilities from early childhood, rather than functioning only as a temporary reactive mechanism. Hemerijck's social investment perspective as a distinctive policy paradigm is in part anchored in expedient policy instruments that mitigate social vulnerability in the knowledge economy under conditions of adverse demography and functions partly by easing the flow of contemporary labour market transitions (812). This has been researched in the Italian context with particular focus on easing transitions from school to work as well

⁹ This topic is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

(Gabrielli & Impicciatore, 2022)¹⁰. The political objective of the social investment theory as a welfare paradigm is human development to sustain the popular welfare state under adverse demographic conditions in the knowledge economy, and its problem is the intergenerational reproduction of social disadvantages (824). Esser's intergenerational integration theory also addressed the need for a new intergenerational integration theory, one that could address ethnic mobility traps, social distances, and the impacts of segmented assimilation. Hemerijk's paradigm is important for what the thesis title itself suggests: that is, integration should be counted as a social investment, which, in line with Sen's capabilities framework, is an investment in promoting not just the education of immigrants and second language acquisition but their schooling experience too as a relatively low-cost yet effective tool for integration of immigrants and, more importantly, their social as well as their economic integration. The crucial question here would be: how to achieve this?

Martha C. Nussbaum's seminal 2011 book *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* outlines the framework and conditions for creating such capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011). The capabilities approach, according to Nussbaum, is an approach to comparative assessments of quality of life and theorising about social justice, holding on to the principal questions of what each person can be and what each person can do. Not just about the total averages of societies but the opportunities that are available to each individual when comparing different societies and assessing them for basic decency and justice (18). Therefore, the approach would be focused on choice or freedom, pluralist about value, concerned with social justice and inequality that is entrenched, and ascribes an urgent task to government and public policy (19). This is in line with the theoretical argument for a social investment approach to integration because Nussbaum's approach is not limited to only the abilities that reside inside a person [or a more popular term would be innate talents] but also the freedoms that are created in a combination of personal abilities in a given political, social, and economic environment (20). Promoting these essential capabilities would mean support for the development of internal capabilities through a system of education, resources that enhance physical and emotional well-being, and promote family care and love (21). Nussbaum's human development approach is concentrated on human dignity and what one would value about the lives they live with ten central capabilities that are required for a life worthy of human dignity, these capabilities are: life as the ability to live the normal length of a human life, bodily health as the ability to have

¹⁰ See also a detailed description of how this is practically achieved in Chapter Five and the Annexes, in conversation with D309W.

good health and access to reproductive rights, bodily integrity as the ability to move within space freely and securely, senses, imagination, and thought as the ability to imagine and reason, emotions as the ability to foster attachments to people and things and not having one's emotional development thwarted, practical reason as the ability to form a conception about the world and critically reflecting on it, affiliation as the ability to socially interact with and develop compassion towards others, other species as the ability to live in relation to the world of nature, play as the ability to enjoy [and participate] in recreational activities, environmental control as the ability to participate effectively in politics and having a right to materiality on equal basis with others such as in employment, material ownership, and freedom from unwarranted search and seizure (33, 34). In terms of integrating immigrants and promoting their capabilities, the most important capabilities that are at risk can be summarised as: bodily integrity, senses, imagination, thought, emotions, affiliation, play, and environmental control. This is because Immigrants' bodily integrity and environmental control are highly susceptible to the legal conditions within which they are given leave to operate, as well as the duration of their stay in a given country or the borders that they can freely cross in the meantime. Visa regimes and bureaucratic procedures impose the parameters of where an individual can be an immigrant inside of as well as an expiration date on the immigrants' available time and mode of travel, causing instability and anxiety around their livelihoods. Even when immigrants access forms of permanent residency through the appropriate documents, their legal status can be terminated against their own will even if they are entirely integrated into the society and in fact haven't come to know any other society to begin with because they were a child-immigrant at the time of migration, and at the end of the day be subject to deportation to another locality that they may not even know of. While most immigrants may participate in the society's development through work, cooperation, and paying taxes, oftentimes, they either can't participate in the political process or gain this capability after a long time has passed. This diminishes their influence compared to their native-born counterparts and puts them in a disadvantageous situation with respect to their environmental influence. From the integration point of view, how integrated can a group of people become if they cannot effectuate changes that they deem fit for their shared environment in a democratic context? This would negatively impact their sense of belonging at a practical and legal level. For most immigrants, how they perceive their world and their world-making through their senses, imagination, and thoughts can also be challenging. Most immigrants and receiving societies would complain about 'culture shocks' that they come across when in contact with each other because they see and experience the world differently. This doesn't make any one culture superior to the other per se, but the

immigrant is often compelled to either change their worldview entirely so they can assimilate, or hold on to their own cultural practices and, at the most extreme, both groups ending up avoiding each other, which will lead to all sorts of segmentation within the society. In order for integration to happen, these imaginations need to coalesce on the basis of equality, understanding, and respect; otherwise, ideas like multiculturalism would be blamed for the implicit or explicit consequences of diversity instead. With regard to emotions, affiliations, and play, all of the previously mentioned anxieties and instabilities negatively impact emotional bonding with the receiving society and belonging to it because, emotionally, immigrants would have their existence predominantly described as and live as immigrants. This would have them essentially othered by different groups of people in the receiving society, with the caveat being that both physically and emotionally different groups of immigrants have different capabilities in a given society. Some groups may share more cultural or physical attributes that would make them somehow more ‘integrate-able’, but otherwise these different attributes often build up for immigrants of a more disadvantaged background, given the context of the receiving society. Being constantly othered to any degree, though, would negatively impact any one group’s integration into the receiving society and cause all sorts of segmentations and ethnic traps as well, even within the different ethnicities of immigrants or social hierarchies and classes within the receiving society. The relationship between Nussbaum’s capabilities and integration is not in that immigrants are not capable individuals in society, or even how societies can promote the integration of immigrants by investing in their capabilities, it is well-known how education and employment lead to improved capabilities and living more prosperous lives, but rather it is in need of a discussion about how even in the most welcoming of societies or developed economies with fairer institutional arrangements, even the most accomplished of immigrants may find it difficult to develop a sense of belonging to the society. The relationship between education, work, and integration should be about how these facilitate human connections as well as human capital in different ethnic contexts and in relation to one another if integration is of concern in a receiving society. The importance of policy, according to Nussbaum, is that good policy in the area of each of these capabilities would be a policy that respects individual practical reasons and a policy that centres choice (39). Therefore, it is important to identify areas of risk in the integration of immigrants because, according to Nussbaum, the point of looking for capabilities and functioning(s) in different areas would be the identification of the best points to intervene through public policy (45) about that choice. The most challenging aspect of integrating immigrants with regard to the receiving country, even within Nussbaum’s argument, is that it is the job of the government to raise all ‘citizens’ above the threshold in the

area of all of her ten capabilities (109). The government is responsible for its citizens and not the non-citizens that live inside a given country. This causes a dilemma of disproportionality. In order for the government to be responsible toward an individual, they must be citizens. If immigrants are not recognised by state authority, any measures that governments implement, even based on international law, will take a patronising tone instead of a responsible tone, to the credit of the government and to the discredit of the immigrant. The immigration discourse needs to take a step back here because, in reality and according to many theories of migration, immigration is a natural occurrence in the world and happens for different economic, social, and environmental reasons (Massey, et al., 1993). In the globalised world of today, legacies and histories of environmental destruction and colonial pursuits cannot be delinked from patterns of migration. These histories alongside the patronization of immigrants by different governments fosters grounds for exploitation and low-wage labour because at the same time the nation-state would construct a sense of national identity to its credit based on this ‘hospitality’, especially in countries that once were hubs of colonial expansionism, as well as a grand narrative about the nation-state’s exceptional benevolence that welcomes the stranger while that stranger may be severely exploited and criminalized mostly determined by their mode of mobility and how they entered the receiving country. This is not to discredit the collective global achievements of humanity in establishing human rights or the grassroots activities of individuals and groups concerned with the state of immigrants or humanity in general but rather to criticise how governments have disproportionately politicized integration and sensationalized issues of migration either as something they promise to manage or to curb while millions of immigrants remain in institutional dilemmas with their lives on hiatus or commit to lower-paid jobs especially when there are less institutional supports available for their integration and many more low paying careers available instead, which would turn out to be exploitative. Policy-making must account for the share of collective development that these exploitative economies cause in order to evade entrenched intergenerational segmentation of immigrant groups, and socially invest into the empowering of immigrants through education and fairer opportunities by recognizing their legal existence as equal human beings, as well as providing the receiving society with ample contact and education about coexistence with the ‘other’ and marginalized groups of people since early childhood. The aspirations of both receiving societies and immigrants when migration occurs are crucial, nonetheless, and there is a need for transparency from these different groups about them. Different groups of society must be able to have public discussions and debates about migration that would facilitate such understanding. Nussbaum’s approach, however, is capable of delivering the inherent aims of

creating capabilities with regard to citizenship in terms of education and in most developed countries because education is not a right reserved just for those who already reside within a given nation as citizens, but for the children of immigrants as well, who have a right to an education that prepares all students for the same capabilities (156). The disproportionality, therefore, is that some would turn out to enjoy their capabilities less because of social and legal arrangements.

Nussbaum's capabilities approach acknowledges that the approach's promise of a new and relatively unified perspective on problems of capabilities, which are often treated in isolated fields, can include other issues with migration, the internet, and global warming on the top of the capabilities approach's list (143). One of the main isolated fields that the capabilities approach is already concerned with, however, is education, and its importance is central to the approach since its inception. According to Nussbaum, this is because education, and the school by extension, develops people's existing capacities into internal capabilities of many kinds, and this formation is itself valuable and a source of lifelong satisfaction because it empowers the exercise of many other human capabilities and a 'fertile functioning' of the highest importance when combating disadvantage and inequality. When addressing laws [or conditions] that deny children of illegal immigrants' education, for example, cases have asserted the importance of education in terms of how it relates to human capabilities because people who have received even basic education exhibit better chances for employment, political participation, and forming productive interactions with the outside world (152, 153). Furthermore, as Nussbaum points out, it is important not to limit an analysis of education and capabilities only to the knowledge or the skills that the school transmits because a true education for human development requires more than that (155). The school here is twofold. Firstly, it is where real-world skills are acquired, and secondly, it is where the first relationships outside the family unit take shape. Migration theories and the integration discourse have been highly vigilant with respect to the first point so far, but have missed out on the second aspect of the school. Grading systems and study tracks are, of course, important to educational success, future employability, and effective integration, but don't say much about their social aspects. The interpersonal skills and knowledge that students acquire during play, their travels to and from the school, and how they come to know each other as friends are all important factors in their future sense of self and sense of community because the school is where contact and recognition between different groups can occur at an early age. Therefore, new theories of migration are required that engage with these aspects of integration and cover multidisciplinary

grounds with a different methodological scope that can take advantage of mixed-methods for social research.

Contextualising Integration as a function of Aspirations and Capabilities

Hein De Haas has pointed to the lack of theorisation in the field of migration studies, considering the classical push-pull models that often end up with unrealistic assumptions about the world. The debate around the issue of migration is mostly inclined towards debunking the failures of these classical theories rather than the act of theorising itself (Haas, 2021). When considering the integration of immigrants, the debate and theorisation have usually already ended, and as the thesis has explored up to this point in chapters two and three, the integration researcher mostly has access to empirical studies that make the case for a push-pull model or are interested in identifying key correlational variables that either confirm or address the shortcomings of the models. This means that theorisation in the field of migration has already concluded before discussing integration as an integral part of the migration process. Migration studies, for the most part, are preoccupied with people's movement from one point to the next and with regard to what causes movement across space, including what promotes or hinders it. But the trends in demographic decline most visible in highly industrialised and developed economies barely address the settlement of immigrants in their societies, let alone the motivations and the aspirations of the immigrants who have uprooted themselves, often with higher hopes than mere economic advancement. That is not to say immigrants don't move to another country for economic reasons, but rather saying that a host of factors tied to the aspirations and hopes of the immigrants propel the decision to change the context that they live in and, at times, are perhaps even better equipped to live in.

Therefore, realising the immigrants' aspirations and capabilities will be critical to their future integration. Governments strike a tricky balance in amending their citizenship policies between providing positive incentives for immigrants to acquire their RC knowledge and enacting punitive measures for those who fail to meet certain benchmarks (Banulescu-Bogdan, 2012). Immigrants, on the other hand, generally seek a better quality of life, freedoms, and more opportunities when moving into a new country. Therefore, any comprehensive theory of integration must move beyond the spatial mobility of human capital and also include the aspirations of those who undertake that move and explore what it means to settle, integrate into, and acquire a social existence in a given receiving society. The complexity in the field of migration shows why there isn't a comprehensive integration theory yet, and the subject

remains highly context-based, as has been described in detail before. It also reveals the limitations of standalone empirical research that zones in on well-established variables like employment, health, and housing. This is not to downgrade the importance of these indicators or empirical research that establishes their correlations or their dependencies, but rather to emphasise that such social research mostly helps indicate the parameters of capabilities in a receiving society. While this is insightful for policymakers and governments of receiving countries, it doesn't really have much to say about the immigrants' actual pathway to integration. In fact, some bodies of immigrants are often overlooked in official data collection either because of various unknown statuses of residence or the lack of a legal existence within the systems that would, ideally, represent them in the data (Bachmeier, Van Hook, & Bean, 2014) and when they do try to represent them many immigrants are shown to be hesitant to take part in different surveys because they feel like it might pose a risk to their status in the receiving country (Abrego, 2011). Any theory in the field of migration and integration would not be comprehensive without an orientation towards the immigrants themselves and their aspirations. As the Comparative Integration theory discussed in Chapter Two, integration is a mutual process of give and take with a byproduct that is neither manifest in the giver nor the taker but rather the lending, the acts of giving and taking, leading to a new paradigm of shared co-existence.

De Haas' Aspirations-Capabilities framework proposes a way out of the lack in systemic theorising. Starting by addressing the fact that much of the thinking on migration remains ever contingent on nineteenth century concepts, models, and assumptions, the underdevelopment in the realm of theory is now at odds with the huge increase in the number of empirical studies on migration because it hinders the meaningful interpretation of empirical facts and entrenches methodological nationalism (Haas, 2021, p. 2). The Aspirations-Capabilities framework also points to the misleading 'migration is too complex' fallacy, referring to arguments from social theorists who claim that migration is too complex and diverse to be universally theorised, but this is a misleading notion because the main question here is not: how to come up with a universal theory of migration? It is hardly the job of social theory to come up with overarching universal laws, as it is highly prone to its historical and social contexts, but the main question, according to De Haas, would rather be: what are the reasons for the lack of progress in a generalised understanding? The answer to this includes a set of biases and divides: receiving country bias, dominance of methodological nationalism, methodological divides between qualitative and quantitative approaches, divides between

forced and voluntary migration, and the divide between international and internal migration (3). De Haas clusters and criticises early migration theories in two paradigms of functionalist and historical-structural social theory. Functionalist paradigm refers to the optimization strategy of individuals or families making cost benefit calculations; therefore, it suffers from inherent difficulties explaining the differences between social and geographic processes of migration in relation to structural inequalities where one group can enjoy more access to migration opportunities while others may be deprived of such opportunities and that's why functionalist theories miss out on how migration can reinforce pre-existing inequalities (6, 7). Historical-structural theories, on the other hand, do argue for the impacts of structures on reproducing or reinforcing inequalities both vertically between groups and horizontally across space, but they grapple with realising human agency in the process because it would be unrealistic to depict migrants as either victims desperately fleeing destitution or as entirely rational and free actors who make rational cost-benefit calculations constantly (7, 8). Migration theories, according to the Aspirations-Capabilities approach, can be combined across different analytical dimensions, namely different levels of analysis or different geographical, regional, and national contexts, for more comprehensive frameworks (11). Furthermore, agency and structure remain key problems in conceptualising how individual migrants and groups of migrants exert agency within broader structures in conventional theories, agency being the ability of human beings to make independent choices and have those choices be meaningful in creating change in the outside world, structures being social arrangements that significantly shape the impact of that agency (14). The migration aspirations part of the framework addresses this by paying attention to people's general life aspirations and perceived opportunity structures based on geographic elements that are also affected by culture, education, personal disposition, identification, and information (18). The migration capabilities aspect of the framework is contingent on immigrants' positive and negative liberties; hence, subjectivity becomes a matter of interest in this framework (17). The contribution of the framework, according to De Haas, is in expanding the understanding of mobility not so much as the act of moving or the capability to move but rather as the ability to decide where to live (20). The reception of the receiving society is, nonetheless, influential in such decision-making alongside the institutional arrangements that would allow for it to begin with. The key point here that makes aspirations-capabilities a possible integration approach is that a decision about 'where to live?' is essentially an integration decision even before out-migration occurs. Living somewhere has implications for settlement and intergenerational investments in the receiving country's specific capital, such as acquiring the national language either in the process of migration or

even planning these sorts of investments way beforehand, starting from the country of origin. This is also why many governments may make the routes to legal residence and citizenship lengthier and more difficult as a deterrence mechanism, so they impact the migration aspirations of immigrants even before they try to move to that given country, but by doing so, governments also diminish the capabilities of those who already reside within that given country to integrate.

Aspirations-capabilities frameworks are also of interest to institutional perspectives on integration outcomes because they identify spots for integration policy intervention through different policy inclinations, either towards assimilation, under-aspirations or under-capabilities, and multiculturalism (Lutz, 2017). Aspirations-capabilities frameworks help build systematic knowledge of how incentives and opportunities interact; therefore, Integration is conceptualised based on the immigrants' individual aspirations to become a fully functioning member of the receiving country and their capability in instigating that integration effectively, which depends on both the motivation and the ability to integrate (14, 15). Migration studies need to view the issues of migration, including integration, through a critical lens that reviews migration studies as the site of an alternative politics of resistance and struggle as well (Favell, 2022). Segmented assimilation theories, for example, have greatly contributed to the understanding that cultural assimilation is not a guarantee for upward mobility, and sometimes keeping to a selection of old ways by the immigrants may actually promote their social mobility (Vermeulen, 2010). Intersectional analysis can be insightful for both integration policy and coming up with better ways of promoting the development of receiving societies and the immigrants who live within them, but the intersectional analysis must come to terms with the fact that immigrants remain legally and socially bound to an immigration status for a long time in the current state of affairs, even in the most multicultural of societies. Migrants' experiences can be explored more fully in intersectional frameworks that appreciate the social aspects of migration after moving into a new country and while settling in, and how those may be facilitated institutionally by the receiving society. This, in part, starts by realising that many of the obstacles that these immigrants face are, in fact, related to their immigrant status and that status needs to be accepted as a fact of the world that procures migration-specific hurdles in a legal and institutional setting and ignoring it doesn't change much. If the intersectional analysis does not address the migration status for what it is, it would not be able to resolve the issues that arise when integrating into a receiving society (Statham & Foner, 2024).

Following Houtkamp, this is why the critical literature argues for a new lexicon of inclusion rather than the euphemistic terminology of integration because it marks the shift toward a transnational way of thinking. This means that diversity policy strategies should take note of acceptance by both minority and majority cultures, they need to befit the new transnational times, and they should effectuate successful participation alongside feelings of belonging and acceptance among minorities, but the caveat here is the importance of recognising public opinion's influence as well regarding the implementation of diversity policies when the public opinion prefers assimilation (Houtkamp, 2015). Studies also point to the importance of educational integration and early education in the institutional setting with the data showing that in Germany, for example, formal schooling does not automatically equalize educational disadvantages for students from a migration-background, instead it might even exacerbate such disadvantages for certain groups with schooling effects being stronger in areas like the science and math but weaker in the area of languages (Passaretta & Skopek, 2025). Based on other findings in countries like Germany, educational policies are shown to need to actively aim at facilitating the inclusion of immigrants and their kids to alleviate such disadvantages within the education system because, now, after the 2015 influx of immigrants, educational policies critically require well-founded concepts that schools can implement as guidelines (Gries, Redlin, & Zehra, 2022). This issue has been raised repeatedly in the Italian context and during the interviews that were conducted for the study as well, and is discussed in Chapter Five¹¹. In another example, ethnographic studies in the American context advocate for bidirectional assimilation models that can produce a modified version of the nation more similar to immigrants and minority groups, which facilitates their identification with the nation, and one of the core institutions of interest is the school. This is because schools act as the transmitters of national values, and a new shared notion of national identity can emerge in the process of integration inside highly diverse schools. This new shared notion of national identity includes how a nation defines itself and how it perceives itself as a result of the influences of immigration, both of which bear significant implications for educational standards like language policies, curriculum, and teacher development (Lash, 2018). Studies show that Italy, in particular, is experiencing a substantial arrival of international teenagers, with some fleeing conflict and others moving there because of predominantly socioeconomic motivations and that they often come to learn about the differences between their expectations and the realities on the ground, including excessive bureaucratic procedures, different languages, and cultures

¹¹ See also Annexes.

(Santiago, Tonetto, Lopes, & Salva, 2025). While education plays an integral role in their integration, the education of those who are unaccompanied remains especially complicated; at the same time, educators emphasise the importance of dialogic action and active listening that acknowledges their knowledge and history as rights-bearing individuals capable of taking charge of their own narratives, therefore, making intercultural approaches essential (59). Hence, the school in different contexts is not only a microcosm of the broader society that it represents, but also a place where aspirations and capabilities are created. Studies in the school, beyond grading systems and route tracking, can function as a new lens for integration research and an experiment in analysing the new diverse society with a transnational habitus. This new transnational lens would be interested in looking into the initial aspirations of the students and their families, as well as the capabilities of the schools and their teachers, in order to explore how different segments of society interact when diversity occurs in everyday life.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the mediatory logic behind most theories of immigrant integration. This logic constitutes second language acquisition, employment, and integration. The school, as the starting point of this logic, is of interest for two reasons. Firstly, as a microcosm that reflects the mechanisms and collective aspirations of the receiving society, which are oftentimes of a national nature. Secondly, Schools are also crucial in creating capabilities for students from all walks of life. The chapter focuses on aspirations and capabilities as a framework for integration by arguing that integration must be studied as the social aspect of migration. The chapter's contribution is in framing integration as a form of social investment that policy-makers should take note of when implementing diversity policies. This includes the concrete skills that schools provide the students with, as well as the interpersonal interactions of the students that happen as part of their daily school life. It argues that both are equally as important to integration, yet the latter is much less academically established compared to the former. Finally, the chapter drew from the aspirations-capabilities framework to point out the importance of institutional arrangements and personal agency in the integration process as they affect not only movement from one place to another but also settlement in a given place. Any question of immigration and settlement, according to the argument, is always a question of integration; therefore, the aspirations-capabilities framework paves the way to realising integration as a crucial part of migration, and one that occurs mutually between immigrants and receiving societies.

Chapter Four

Summary

This chapter is the first part of the mixed-method research methodology of the thesis and analyses open-source data from MIM. The chapter lays out the methodology for the quantitative data analysis carried out and approaches the data in different stages, including: macro analysis (national-level) of Italian state schools and private schools, and the analysis of state schools by level of education using a time-retrospective approach that tracks the changes in the population of students in Italian state schools in a ten-year time period from 2015 to 2025. The chapter concludes by discussing the findings of the analysis, including its implications and limitations when citizenship is employed as a metric for integration.

Introduction

So far, the thesis has discussed why integration is highly context-based and how, through statistical analysis, the right indicators can capture generalised patterns of integration. The employment of large-scale demographic numbers and statistical analysis is formative when arguing for the importance of socially investing in the integration of immigrants. This is because the collection and management of large numbers is administered by governments, and longitudinal analysis of demographic data can reveal trends in immigration and settlement. Such analysis and its outcomes have implications for policymakers, firstly with regard to the progress of different groups of people in society and secondly for planning future policies. Schools have a substantial role in the educational integration of all groups of people into society, as they provide not only formal education through which most people experience future economic integration, but at the same time, schools provide social spaces where different groups of people interact with each other. These two aspects can be described as economic integration and social integration, and they have an arguably larger influence on the integration of students with an immigration background in schools, especially first-generation immigrant students, as a primary point of contact with the receiving society. States keep track of the enrollment and progress of students through census and usually categorise different immigrant groups in larger swathes based on their nationality or citizenship. The Italian Ministry of Education and Merit, for example, keeps track of different student groups based on a few generalised categories, including Italian and non-Italian in their public datasets. The non-Italian group itself is broken down into the subgroups of EU and non-EU citizenships. Such data can demonstrate general patterns, but do not capture their implications fully, especially if indicators are as generalised as a handful of groups. The demographic trends within the schools, however,

are ascertainable especially through large-scale longitudinal analysis. The data also has implications for the share of different student groups based on the kind of school they are attending, whether it be private or public, and the concentration(s) of students with an immigration background within different educational levels because it indicates what policymakers can evaluate and prioritise nationally. Beyond this, any census data employing a handful of indicators hardly ever indicates the implications of the vast diversity in individual schools. Schools are managed differently at national levels, mainly in how the schools are administered, coded, and ranked based on governmental references. Coding and ranking schools show how governments recognise the existence and needs of each school in order to manage them accordingly. Management can also mean that each school itself may appreciate a degree of autonomy in tailoring schooling to the needs and background of the students, the resources available to the school, and the general aspirations of the school, including its staff, students, and their parents. Hence, a mixed-method approach to the study of integration that understands the general share of different groups within the educational system at the national level and appreciates the challenges that schools face at a local level yields more true-to-life results. This is especially interesting when integration is being studied as a process because it has different levers and contexts.

Methodology

Following Singer and Willett (Singer & Willett, 2009), this chapter showcases change over time and reveals points of variation in the demographic composition of students in Italian schools with social sciences-based concerns, such as demographic decline, points of immigration decline and influx, and concentration of different student groups in different levels of education. For this purpose, the chapter analyses open-source datasets and the publicly available annual census that the Italian Ministry of Education and Merit¹² publishes on their official website (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, 2016). More than a hundred charts were generated for the analysis of the data from thirty-six datasets that appear under the “Students” section of the open-source data on the website. Twelve of those charts were selected for the purposes of this chapter and further analysis. The chapter cross-tabulates summary metrics for the entire ten-year period that the data is available for (2015 to 2025); in some analyses, however, the data regarding the citizenship of students was available only from 2017 to 2025, making up for a shorter timeline.

¹² Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito (MIM)

Furthermore, the chapter looks at macro-level groupings (national level) by analysing Italian state schools and private schools. It also analyses the student population in Italian state schools based on their level of education using a time-retrospective approach that tracks the changes in the population of students in Italian state schools in a ten-year time period from 2015 to 2025. The focus on state schools is threefold: firstly, because most students with an immigration background attend state schools in Italy, secondly, because state schools are inextricably linked to the state and immediately affected by its administrative policymaking which is crucial when integration is viewed as a matter of social investment, and thirdly, it complements the mixed methodology of the study that interviews teachers working in Italian state schools. The teachers who were interviewed taught in the provinces of Padua, Turin, and Udine, which will be discussed in the next chapter. This selection of provinces was intentional too, as they represent different parts of Italy that are located in different regions and include border regions as well as larger urban areas. The data were harmonised, and a multi-year aggregation including all Italian state schools was conducted. The complementary chapter conducts interviews with teachers from these provinces with the aim of providing a comprehensive and representative set of data that explores the role of education and schools in the integration of students with an immigration background through qualitative data as well.

Use of AI

In order to help with the analysis of the data, the research used Gemini for practical purposes. The version used for the analysis was Gemini 3.6 Flash, which is a free and basic LLM designed for all-around help (general usage), and unlike the 3.1 Pro designed for advanced math and code, it is not employed for elaborate mathematical analysis and formulations. The purpose of use was to extract the basic functions of Excel with the following prompts: How to combine 10 files in Excel? How to generate a pivot chart in Excel? How to calculate the SUM of multiple variables in percentages in Excel? Furthermore, the AI was not asked to generate any formulas, code, or to calculate anything. None of the information Gemini provided was directly copied into any part of the research; it was only used as a helper tool for the basic functions of Excel. This is because the researcher's knowledge of Excel was limited before, and it was the first time that the researcher worked with multiple large-scale and open-source datasets for independent research.

Analysis

The Analysis of both Chapters Four and Five follow AIR's (American Institutes for Research) guide to segregation, desegregation, and integration measurement in three stages (American Institutes for Research, 2024). The guide is designed to help education leaders and researchers to identify segregation, desegregation, and integration measures based on their research context and priorities by realising the interconnected aspects of these phenomena and helping relate them to the best metrics and tools for their initiatives. According to the guide, integration is the creation of educational communities where students and adults of different backgrounds teach and learn, but at the same time collaborate to enhance the educational experience of the entire student body. Indicators of integration here include diverse school staff, student engagement and incorporation of their voices in inclusive academic settings. According to AIR, the research must include three stages when analysing the data, including: explaining the complexities of integration to help better understand it, applying a set of guidelines that promote identifying priority indicators (chapters Two and Three explained the topic of integration as well and contextualized it within current migration theories), and finally, identifying existing measurement tools that match key dimensions of segregation and integration. Following AIR's guidelines, key dimensions include: evenness, exposure, concentration, access, engagement, and student outcomes.

This chapter focuses on the first three dimensions of student evenness, exposure, and concentration based on the data that is extracted from MIM datasets, and the next chapter will focus on the second three dimensions of the guide, including student access, engagement, and outcomes. The existing measurement tool that can be identified in MIM datasets concerning the student body is citizenship. Citizenship is categorised in the following order in the MIM dataset: Italian, non-Italian, EU citizenship, and non-EU citizenship (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito , 2016). The qualities of citizenship as an indicator of diversity are open to debate, and this will be outlined later in the chapter, but its importance from an integration perspective and from a longitudinal perspective is to inquire about the population changes of different groups in Italian schools and their concentration in different educational levels. This can indicate areas for policy intervention and examine the educational system's readiness to engage with growing diversity in the schools, with reference to the interviews with the teachers who are currently teaching in Italian schools. For the purpose of analysis, the chapter divides the analysis into the following sections: firstly, comparison at the national level based on citizenship in state schools and private schools; secondly, comparison at the educational level

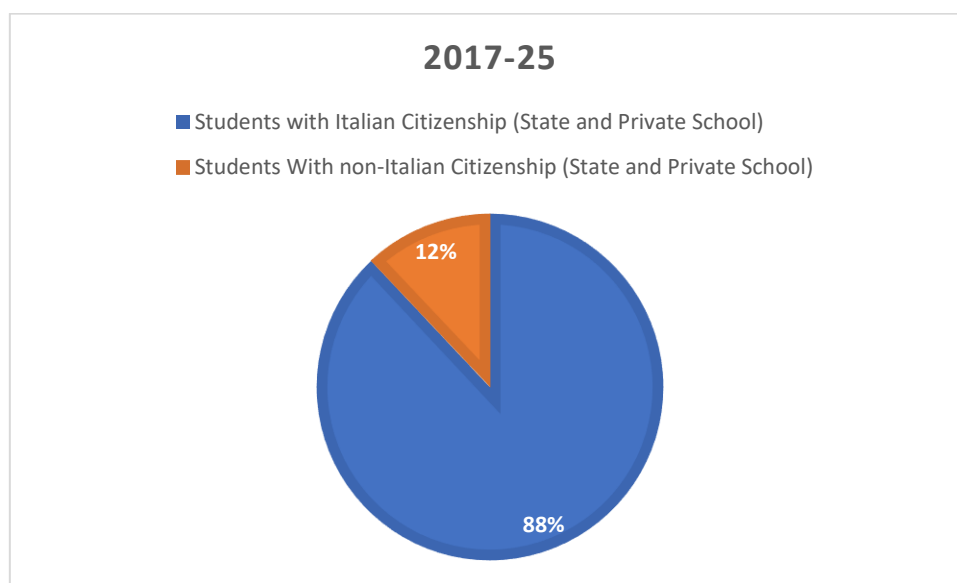
based on citizenship in state schools; thirdly, comparison based on EU citizenship and non-EU citizenship in state schools. The analysis, in general, includes macro analysis (national-level) of Italian state schools and private schools, and the analysis of state schools by level of education using a time-retrospective approach that tracks the changes in the population of students in Italian state schools in a ten-year time period from 2015 to 2025.

The analysis shows that Italian citizenship students form the vast majority of the student body in Italian schools, but this is more pronounced in private schools. From a level of education perspective, the Italian citizenship student population is shown to decline, especially within primary schools, with non-Italian citizenship students shown to grow in general but comparably rather than radically from one year to the next. There is a gap, however, between the population attending state schools versus those attending private schools, with fewer non-Italian citizenship students present in private schools. Furthermore, only the data for state schools were analysed in the chapter because they host the majority of students with an immigration background and are, therefore, more optimal for a large-scale analysis interested in students with an immigration background. The numbers, nonetheless, don't fully indicate what schooling is like on average for non-Italian students in Italian state schools; that is why this complementary aspect is analysed in the next chapter using qualitative data.

Comparison at the National Level Based on Citizenship in State Schools and Private Schools

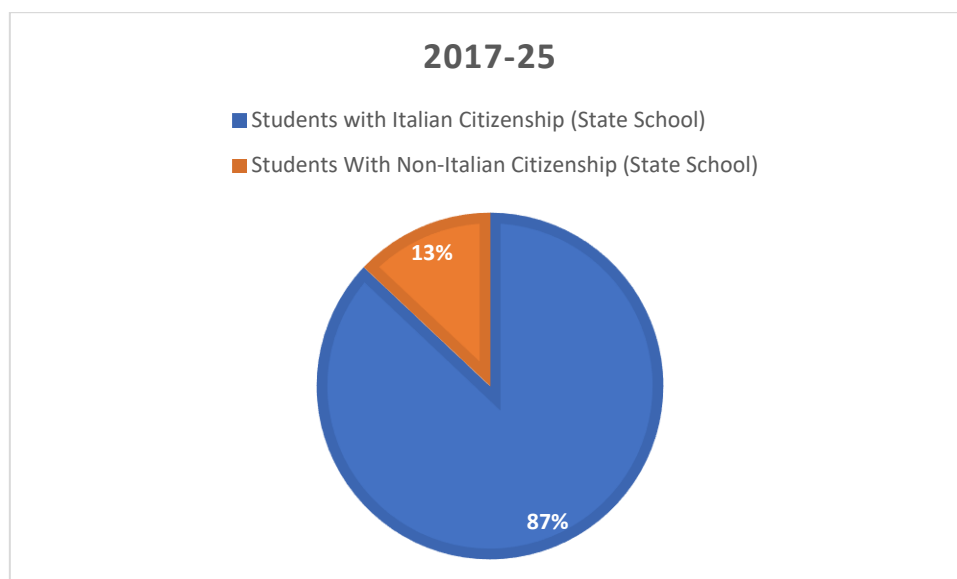
This section focuses on the cumulative percentage of students with Italian citizenship and non-Italian citizenship in both state and private schools over the time period of 2017 to 2025. It also shows the changes in the population of these groups in both state and private schools.

Figure 4.1¹³



The cumulative percentage of students with Italian citizenship and students with non-Italian citizenship in Italian schools from 2017 to 2025.

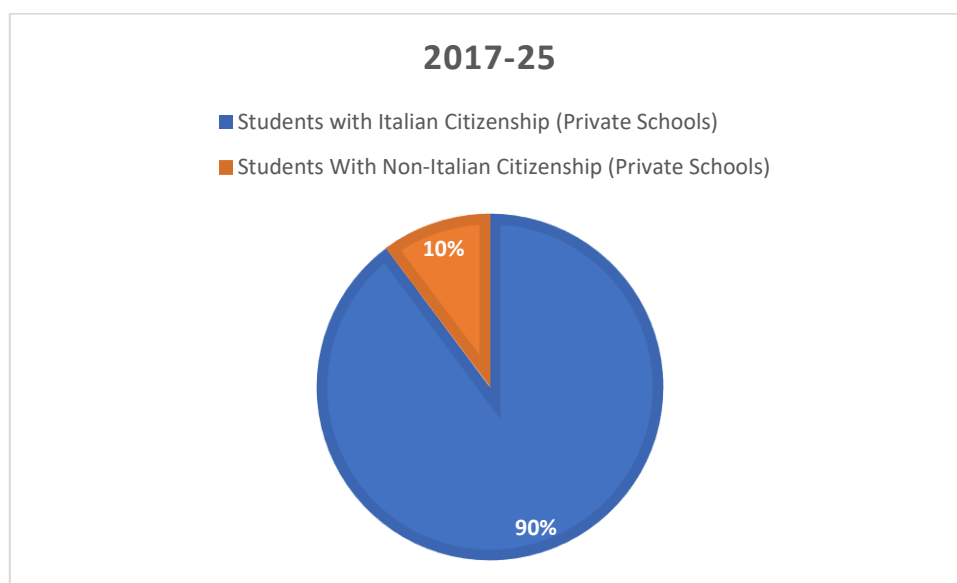
Figure 4.2



The cumulative percentage of students with Italian citizenship and students with non-Italian citizenship in Italian state schools from 2017 to 2025.

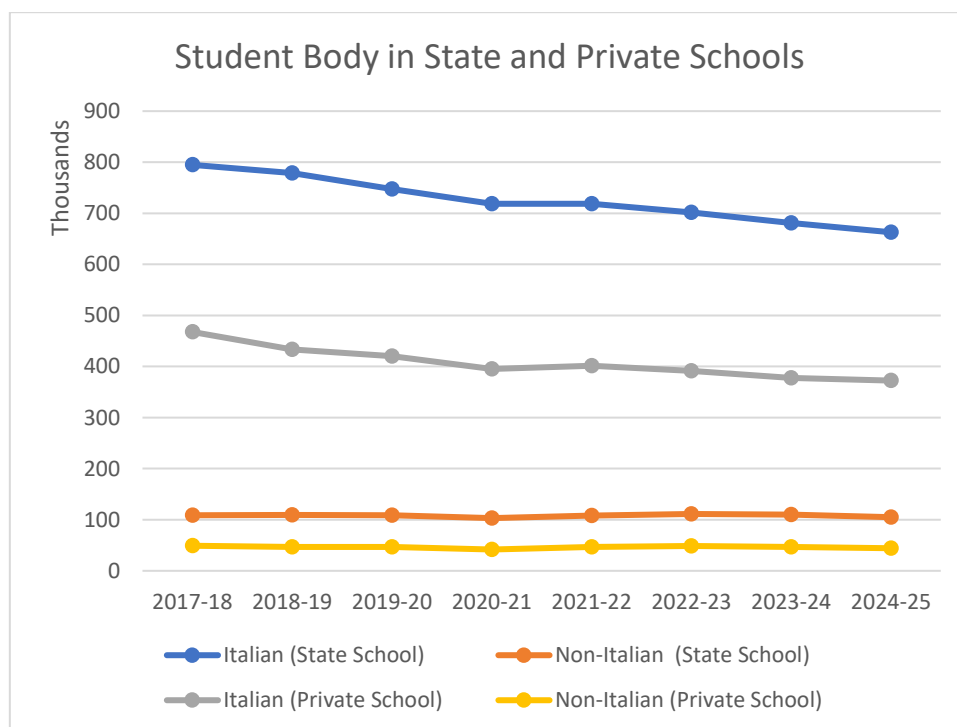
¹³ The “State School” terminology in the research is used as a direct translation of “Scuola Statale” which is the terminology used in the open-source datasets of Ministero dell’Istruzione e del Merito (MIM), the Italian Ministry of Education and Merit.

Figure 4.3



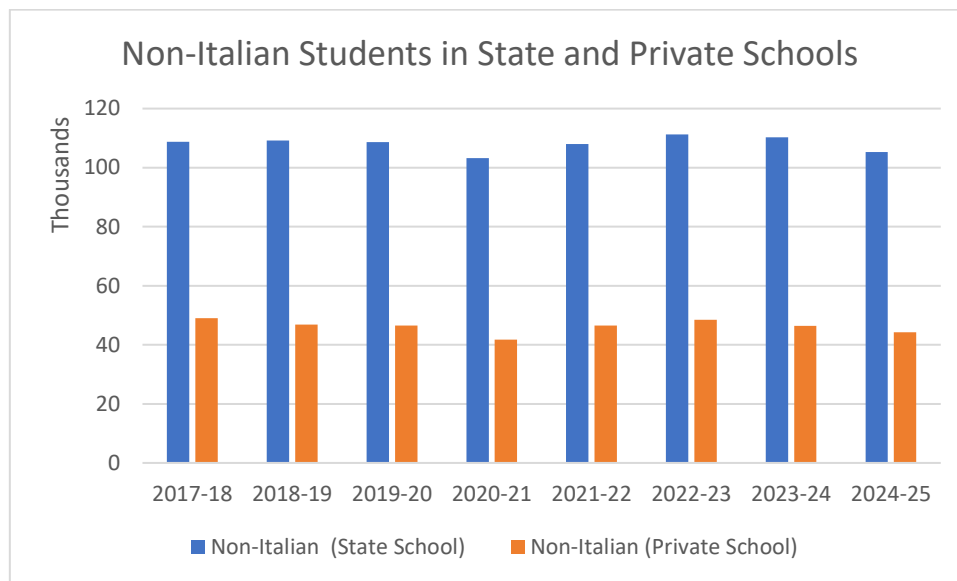
The cumulative percentage of students with Italian citizenship and students with non-Italian citizenship in Italian private schools from 2017 to 2025.

Figure 4.4



The number of students with Italian citizenship and students with non-Italian citizenship in Italian state schools and Italian private schools by school year from 2017 to 2025.

Figure 4.5



The number of students with non-Italian citizenship in Italian state schools and Italian private schools by school year from 2017 to 2025.

Figures 4.1 to 4.5 show the cumulative share of students with Italian citizenship and students with non-Italian citizenship in percentages from 2017 to 2025. Italian citizenship students form the larger majority in both state schools (87%) and private schools (90%). While the Italian citizenship student population in both state and private schools is clearly declining, they are still the larger group by far, but the non-Italian citizenship student population has progressed as a slim minority and at similar rates each year. More non-Italian citizenship students consistently attend state schools compared to private schools.

The general divides between state schools and private schools are of interest to the study tracks of all students, their future careers, and schooling experience. The differences between a state school education and private school education in Italy are interesting because, rather than being strictly about the quality of education, it concerns the socio-economic access of different student groups in general. Studies have shown that in Italy, private schools attract more students with richer families and affluence who are “difficult to educate” while state schools reward “talent” strongly enough to attract a brighter pool of students in general because traditionally, Italian state schools are demanding, selective and productive that leave a mostly remedial role to the private sector (Bertola, Checchi, & Oppedisano, 2007). This phenomenon can be understood in terms of a systematic paradox: students with more affluence and willingness who might not be able to make it to top Italian state schools can pursue education

of a similar nature in private schools. Theoretically speaking, the paradox is palpable from an intersectional point of view; students who may be more “difficult to educate” can face unevenness in their access to different educations in general. Such “difficulty” can come in different forms, and one such difficulty in the case of students with an immigration background can be linguistic deficiencies in the formal language of education. It is important that the institutional impact of concepts like a talented, bright, and productive student is critically debunked when schools employ them as metrics of success or aptitude. The relation of this paradox to the issue of integration is that, here, the study overall deems the school as more than the mere equivalent of education and is rather interested in how the school functions as a space for interaction among different groups of students. If students have uneven access to schools, this would mean that certain groups will end up in certain schools, which can even lead to unintended educational segregation. This is not to claim that schooling in Italy is tiered; in fact, Italy has long hailed an inclusive educational system in how to achieve wide-range inclusion, especially regarding students with learning disabilities, that serves as a leading model in the world (Begeny & Martens, 2007). It points out, instead, based on previous studies and analysis of the data obtained via mixed methods, that the way education is delivered institutionally can repeatedly promote some groups of students to some schools, beyond the inclusive educational model itself, as an outcome. Most teachers pointed this issue out during interviews as well: teachers are highly equipped to work with disabilities in the classroom, for example, but not with diversity simply because they lack the formal education in this respect¹⁴. The issue of diversity in schools can take note of how the Italian education system has successfully integrated students with learning disabilities in all classrooms and implement more inclusive measures in the area of immigrant integration as well (this issue is discussed in detail in the next Chapter).

Part of viewing integration as a social investment is recognising the growing number of diversities in Italian classrooms, how these students may be concentrated within certain schools, and providing adequate resources to work with students of all backgrounds. The basis of this critique is within Nussbaum’s capability approach (Nussbaum, 2011) and views schools as institutions that create capabilities for students regardless of their background. This issue has been raised during the interviews of the next chapter as well, for example, students with an immigration background may be deemed as being good at a linguistic subject simply because they speak multiple languages, which is not true on its own, yet find it difficult to attend

¹⁴ See the Interview with P207G in Annexes.

selective state schools exactly because their Italian may not be as proficient as their native Italian-speaker counterparts or make their schooling experience more laborious¹⁵. This is a systematic paradox because the teacher-school council has a direct impact on the admission and study track of students. In fact, previous studies have indicated that most immigrant background students are shown to be encouraged, either by themselves or their teachers, to pursue technical education that is more labour-oriented in the short term and enables them to gain an income faster (Santagati, 2021) and (Santiago, Tonetto, Lopes, & Salva, 2025).¹⁶ This is not to be taken as malevolence towards students with an immigration background per se because every study track has a productive role with respect to society and that is why such a track exists at the school to begin with, but rather, it can be studied as a matter of concentration of such students in a specific type of education that would eventually lead to a few sectors of the economy and making social integration more difficult by way of less agency in the student's future social mobility.

This can also directly influence the larger aspirations and capabilities of immigrants when they decide where to move and where to stay based on the prospects that these destinations deliver. More importantly, it raises important questions about why concentrations may manifest to begin with. Concentrations can occur on larger scales, such as in state and private schools, and on smaller scales such as in individual schools, but the main difference is that analysing the larger scale is more accessible to any study. Such questions, nonetheless, have more than one answer and have to do with the labour market, public policies, immigration routes and backgrounds, and integration prospects into the labour market; at the end of the day, they all relate to the capabilities that the students can have within the given institutional arrangement and how much it values integrating all of them.

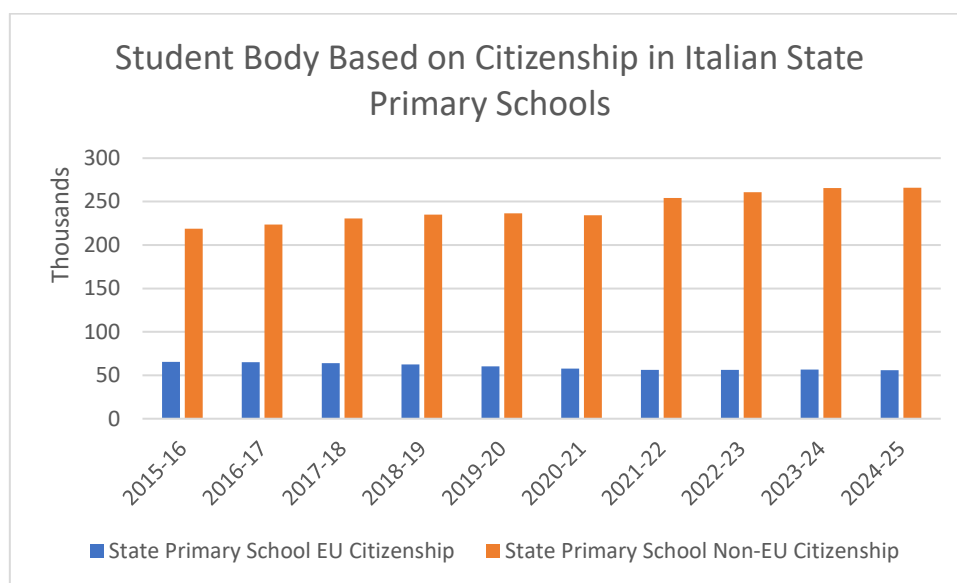
Comparison at the Educational Level Based on Citizenship in Italian State Schools

This section focuses only on the population changes in state schools. The interest in state schools is in the larger non-Italian population that attends school there and analyses only the non-Italian citizenship student data that is itself divided between EU and non-EU citizenship populations.

¹⁵ See the interview with C410B in Annexes.

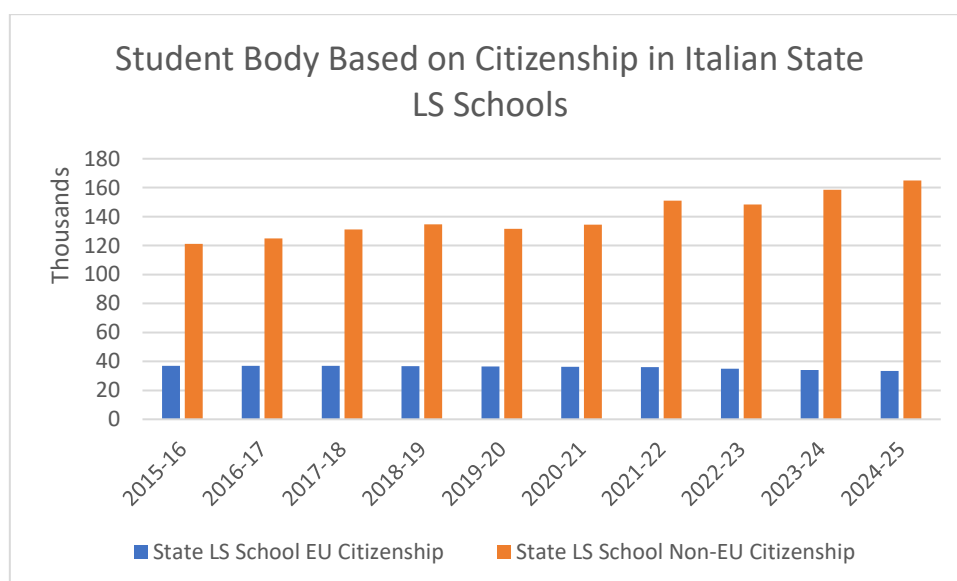
¹⁶ See also the interviews with C206B and D309W in Annexes for example.

Figure 4.6



The number of students with EU citizenship and students with non-EU citizenship in Italian state primary schools by school year from 2015 to 2025.

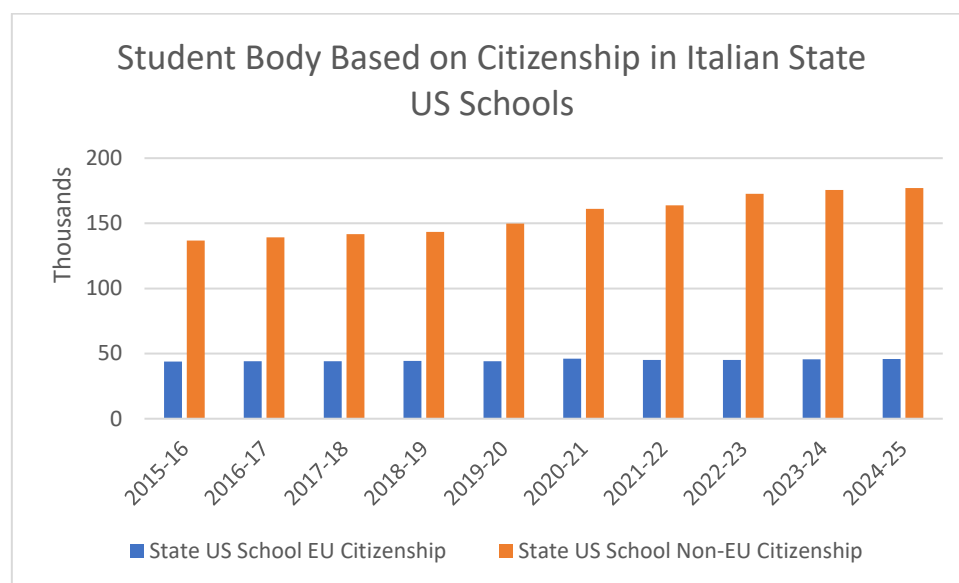
Figure 4.7¹⁷



The number of students with EU citizenship and students with non-EU citizenship in Italian state lower secondary schools by school year from 2015 to 2025.

¹⁷ “LS” stands for “Lower Secondary”.

Figure 4.8¹⁸



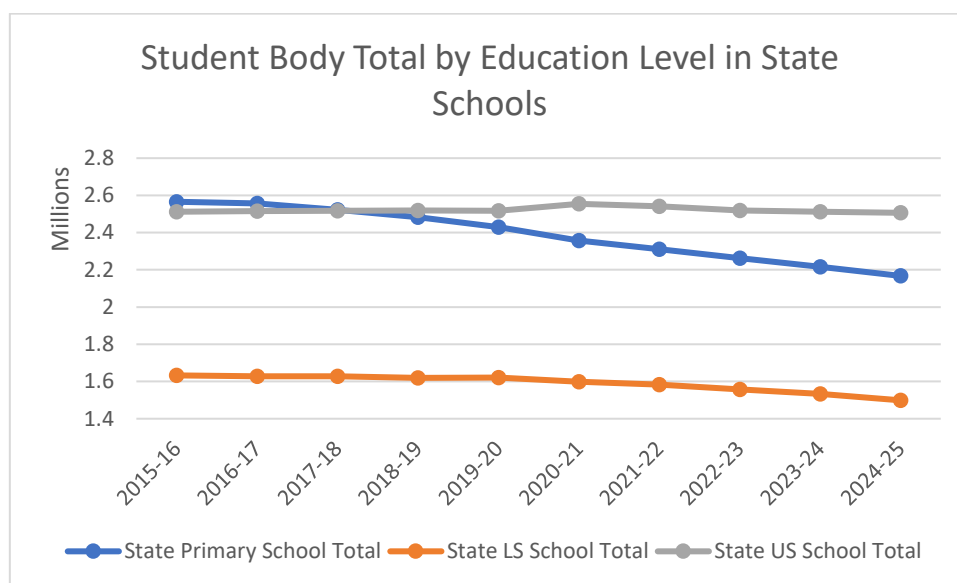
The number of students with EU citizenship and students with non-EU citizenship in Italian state upper secondary schools by school year from 2015 to 2025.

Figures 4.6 to 4.8 show the population changes in Italian state schools based on the level of education by EU and non-EU citizenship. Based on the data from MIM, state primary schools host the largest number of non-Italian citizenship students. While the non-EU student population has generally grown in all educational levels from 2015 to 2025, the population of EU citizenship students has been consistent in every level of education throughout the years and with a smaller share compared to the non-EU student population. The analysis of population change between different educational levels is twofold: Firstly, it shows possible areas for policy intervention regarding the integration of students with an immigration background; primary school, for example, is ripe for more effective schooling in Italy, considering that students are more capable of picking up linguistic and interpersonal skills at younger ages. Secondly, teachers who were interviewed in the study emphasised that working with younger students is much easier for them when they reflected on the concept of educational integration, but found it more difficult to try and incorporate students effectively at later stages of their education¹⁹.

¹⁸ “US” stands for “Upper Secondary”.

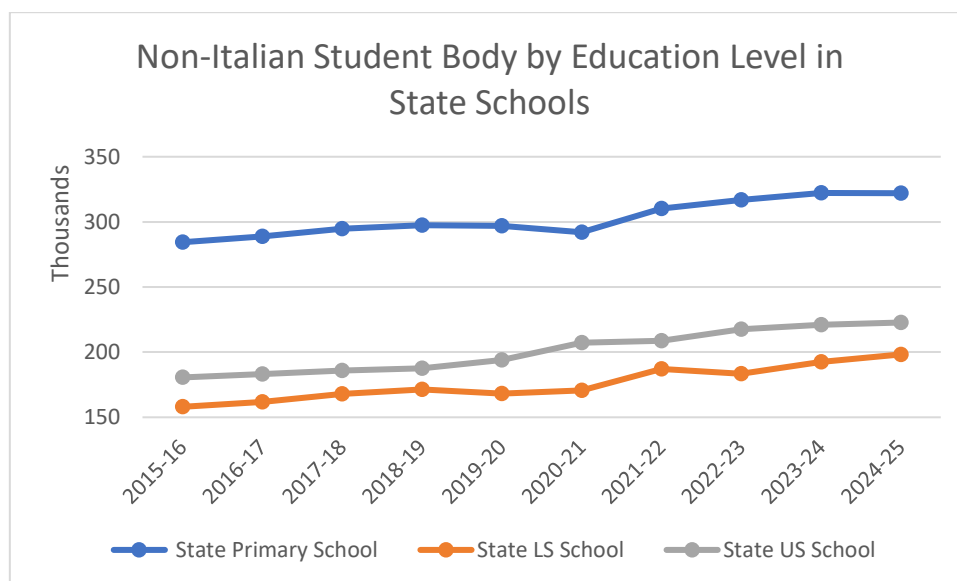
¹⁹ See the Interview with E304R in Annexes.

Figure 4.9²⁰



The total number of students by education level in Italian state schools by school year from 2015 to 2025.

Figure 4.10



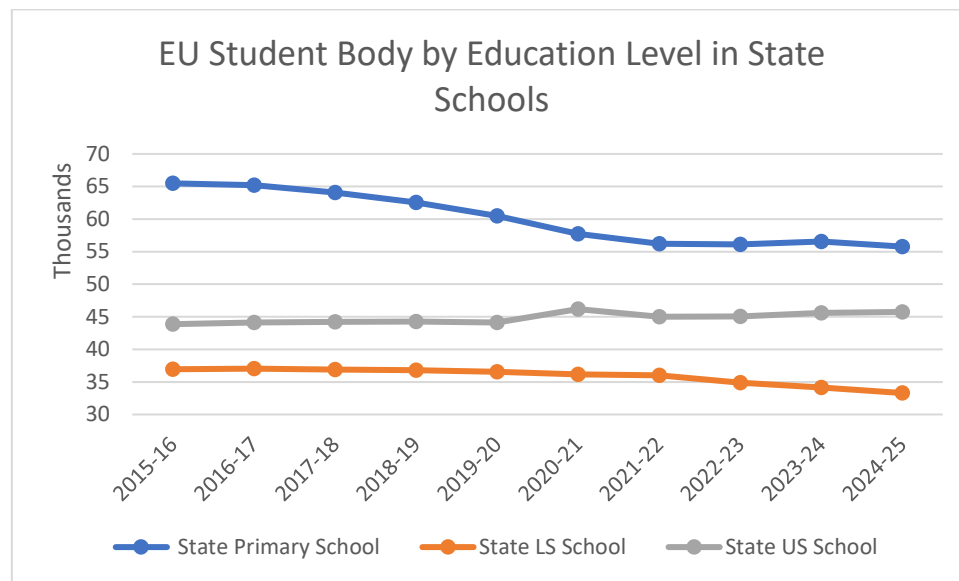
The number of students with non-Italian citizenship by education level in Italian state schools by school year from 2015 to 2025.

²⁰ “LS” stands for “Lower Secondary School” and “US” stands for “Upper Secondary School”.

Comparison Based on EU Citizenship and Non-EU Citizenship in Italian State Schools

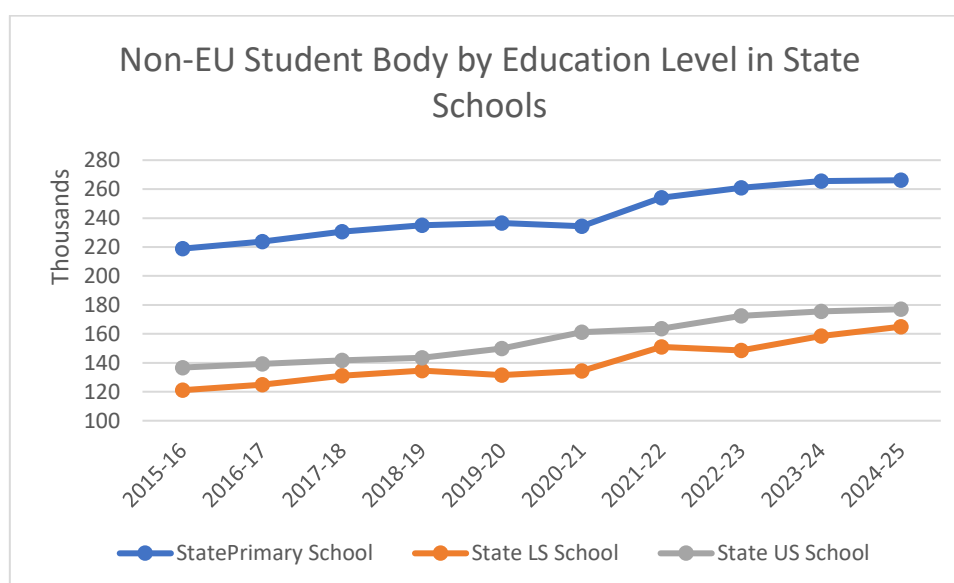
This section focuses on the breakdown of the non-Italian citizenship student group into students with EU citizenship and students with non-EU citizenship in Italian state schools from 2015 through 2025. The charts showcase population changes of these groups within state schools by level of education.

Figure 4.11



The number of students with EU citizenship by education level in Italian state schools from the school year 2015 to 2025.

Figure 4.12



The number of students with non-EU citizenship by education level in Italian state schools from the school year 2015 to 2025.

Figures 4.9 to 4.12 compare and contrast the population of Italian and non-Italian citizenship students at all levels of education in state schools, divided by primary school, lower secondary school, and upper secondary school. The total student body shows a steady decline in the ten-year period from 2015 to 2025. The analysis of the data shows that the student population in state upper secondary schools has remained somewhat consistent at about 2.5 million, while the student population in state lower secondary schools has declined from about 1.6 million to about 1.4 million in the ten-year period. State primary schools, however, have experienced a more pronounced student population decline from about 2.5 million to about 2.1 million. The non-Italian citizenship student body, however, has been generally growing at all levels of education. On the one hand, the non-EU student population has shown a greater number and growth in general, but especially in state primary schools. On the other hand, the EU student population has been actually declining in comparison, mostly in state primary schools, then slightly in lower secondary schools, and only marginally growing in state upper secondary schools. An obvious reason for such gaps from a statistical point of view is that the category ‘non-EU citizenship’ itself basically indicates the rest of the world minus the European Union. This is important because the nuances between different regions and backgrounds, such as the migration histories of different groups and the socio-economic situation of different students, would be lost to generalisation when they have formative roles in the integration prospects of the students and how they may interact with one another.

This issue was also raised during the interviews with the teachers who experience intranational bonding between their students in the classroom as a challenge when they try to foster interpersonal skills and interactions among all of their students²¹ The uneven number of students in different educational levels can indicate two things: a general decline of the majority population, that is, the Italian citizenship student body, as well as students leaving formal education sooner than they are meant to; the latter was a unanimous concern of the teachers interviewed, who believed that students should not have to leave school before they are meant to. This is also relevant to Nussbaum's capability approach, as has been discussed before; students should be able to remain at school and not abandon their formal education for reasons beyond their control, such as socio-economic deprivation. According to previous studies, leaving school earlier than the student must is more pronounced in the case of those with an immigration background (Santagati, 2015). It is worth mentioning that the non-Italian citizenship student body shows general growth in all education levels, but the population still represents a small portion of the total student body that studies in Italian schools. The implication of this large-scale longitudinal analysis is to present the fact that the population of students with an immigration background is growing in Italian state schools, but the more important point is to examine the readiness of schools for their presence and how they actually integrate them; a topic that will be discussed via the qualitative data analysis portion of the mixed-methods in Chapter Five.

Discussion

The data analysis showed major population trends in Italian schools. Other studies and analysis of longitudinal trends in Italian schools with similar interests have indicated that segregation is more pronounced in primary schools overall compared to lower secondary schools, and geographically it is strongest in major metropolitan areas and the southern regions of Italy, but with a persistent and significant heterogeneity within the same geographic zones (Abbiati, Ballarino, & Cartagini, 2025). The main question here is about the possibility of generating a generalised index of educational integration based on similar features in different locations. As has been mentioned before, integration is heavily context-based and prone to its geographic, social, and historical context. While this may not be feasible by looking only at population trends, the mixed-methods approach helps contextualise the implications of a

²¹ See the interviews with D309W and C105B in the Annexes, for example.

growing population with an immigration background in the schools, and how schools can promote their integration as a formative institutional arrangement.

However, what the data successfully shows instead is how administrative census measures diversity in schools and areas of opportunity for policy intervention. But at the same time, it doesn't fully speak to the reasons as to why concentrations may manifest. The reasons for any concentration can be looked at from different angles, including the geographical location of the schools, accessibility of different student groups to those schools, and cultural reasons as well. The most important point in the intersection of the abovementioned is how students of any citizenship can move about between these factors. For example, can students attend any school they wish to attend? Or pursue the kind of education they feel attuned to? Would their families possess the socio-economic capital at their children's disposal to attend that school? Or be happy for them to do so? And finally, what means and skill sets would the given school be capable of making accessible to those students? These are important because classrooms are mostly, and by nature, diverse because they host a collective, and the collective can be of different socio-economic backgrounds, different ethnic backgrounds, and different physical and mental capabilities compared to the mainstream.

This is not to dismiss the fact that generalised patterns can be demonstrated by putting the statistics of diversity to good use and extracting recurring incidents through description, comparison, and contrast, all of which help understand the broader picture of educational integration in Italy. It is rather to point out that the numbers don't capture that picture fully, especially when it comes to the defining factors for a given school outside the numbers, including the location of a certain school and the broader demographic composition of its surrounding area, the school's reputation and its educational promise, or how schooling is delivered. All of these are indicative of the school's capability to welcome students with different needs. Furthermore, the cumulative percentages do show the share of the different students within schools, but percentages do not necessarily equal how many students and of what kind of immigration background are present within that percentage and how capable the school is in educating them. It is paramount to realise a greater part of school life as well, both inside and outside the classroom. These are the aspects of school life that manifest in the collective social life of the school and encompass interactions between students and their families, with each other, and with the staff in the school. These are noteworthy for the methodology of measuring integration through education and require analysis at the school level by collecting and analysing qualitative data.

Limitations: Citizenship as a Metric of Integration

After analysing the data regarding the demographic composition of the student body in Italian schools, it is worth asking if citizenship is the right indicator for assessing integration. Citizenship, as represented by the MIM data, is important as an administrative measurement of demographic representation, but it does not reflect the actual diversity in Italian schools. Furthermore, in the longitudinal context of individual schools in a specific location, such as a town or province, citizenship can be useful for showing the concentration of different groups within certain schools in a broad sense. This is important because interpersonal interactions between these groups are crucial for integration. Studies have shown that the successful integration of immigrants into a host country's society, economy, and polity requires a pragmatic and multidimensional measure for integration that includes psychological, economic, political, social, linguistic, and navigational indicators (Harder, et al., 2018). Such indicators demonstrate the degree to which immigrants have the knowledge and capacity to achieve success in their host society, and can be applied across countries, immigrant groups, time, and methods (11487). In order for the data to be more representative of the actualities of Italian schools, the data must showcase diversity among students, diversity among the administrative staff, and the integration measures of schools. Some of these measures are made accessible by larger governmental regulations through funds and the teachers' 'formazione', and the measures that are implemented by the staff at school and classroom levels. The dependency of different indicators on the composition of the immigrant population may make them inadequate in themselves to indicate the outcomes of integration policies, but they enable policymakers to identify challenges, analyse progress, and set future milestones (OECD/European Commission, 2023, p. 17).

Citizenship is paramount because it is the main marker of an immigrant's full and equal membership in a society, with countries typically setting requirements deliberately high for acquiring it (Banulescu-Bogdan, 2012). The issues with relating it to the statistics of integration, though, are not a novel phenomenon or particular to a national context but rather a long-running theme in the study of statistics, including how statistical data is collected, administered, and represented. This line of questioning regarding the efficiency of a given indicator in representing its actual implications is what Alain Desrosières calls 'disputing the indisputable' in his renowned *The Politics of Large Numbers: A History of Statistical Reasoning* (Desrosières, 1998). This disputation includes reversing the relationship between history and statistics when overarching representations are opposed by micro-historical and

micro-sociological research (323). Representativeness of the data, therefore, would be crucial in better understanding the realities of immigrant groups in host countries. According to a 2013 EU Commission report on indicators and immigrant integration, behind the idea of any given indicator lie various policy purposes and various research methods, with each type of analysis requiring proper quantitative and qualitative methods (Huddleston, Niessen, & Tjaden, 2013). The report outlines three key policy purposes for using integration indicators, including: understanding integration contexts, evaluating the results of policies, and mainstreaming integration into general policies. This is because, according to the report, understanding the situation is the main purpose of any statistic. For comparing the situation[s] (e.g., comparing over time, or between cities, regions, or countries, or against groups with similar or different characteristics, etc.), indicators must be produced based on harmonised definitions, data, and calculations (42), but realising the context of integration requires bridging between indicators and their context. In the case of citizenship and integration, citizenship does not entirely capture the integration processes of different groups of students in classrooms, including internal migrations, intergenerational immigrant backgrounds, and the concentration of different groups within different kinds of education and educational levels. The intergroup dynamics of students in classrooms also play an important role in the interactions between schools and the student body they host. This is especially notable when analysing areas with more disparity, yet the schooling²² that all students receive regardless of their specific needs remains fairly standard and less tailored to the knowledge and experiences they already bring to the school. This directly affects the future study tracks of these students when at school and their introduction to the labour market.²³

Conclusion

Chapter Four analysed national demographic trends in Italian schools. The analysis implies that non-Italian citizenship students are growing in number in state schools but have a smaller share in private schools nationally. The presence of students with different backgrounds at school is highly relevant to future integration of students and the receiving society, because schools can facilitate future integration both economically and socially and serve as a preliminary contact point for both immigrants and receiving societies from an early age. However, generalised indicators of citizenship do not address the actual implications of the

²² The term ‘schooling’ here is meant to go beyond the formal education that students receive at school, it includes classroom dynamics, care, and interactions with fellow students and the staff present (including the school’s interactions with the parents) at the school.

²³ See Chapter Five for a detailed breakdown of this issue.

patterns that are identified via the analysis. Therefore, a robust mixed-method approach, including the analysis of qualitative data as well, can better realise the implications of schooling for future integration.

Chapter Five

Summary

This chapter complements Chapter Four as part of the mixed-methods analysis. For this purpose, the chapter analyses interviews with teachers from the provinces of Padua, Turin, and Udine in order to explore how integration of students with an immigration background actually occurs in Italian schools as well as how teachers view the topic of educational integration. The chapter starts by explaining the methodology employed for qualitative research, how the data were sampled, and analyses the data accordingly. Furthermore, Chapter Five discusses the findings of the data and contextualises their implications. The chapter concludes by assessing the implications of mixed methods and why it is optimal for the study of the topics related to the integration of immigrants, and puts forward the limitations of the data as well.

Introduction

While large numbers are informative when studies analyse social topics such as the integration of immigrants by enabling the discovery of large-scale patterns, they don't contextualise these patterns or provide information on the day-to-day impacts of these social topics. For example, how these students share the classroom together, what the role of the administrative staff is in their schooling, and how they experience schooling, not just being taught a curriculum. In order to respond to such questions, the research would need to go beyond the great numbers and engage with qualitative data as well. How such data may be collected is always dependent on the aims of the research, but, at the same time, always informed by the resources that are accessible to the researcher. The methods of data collection and the practical strategies for collecting the data and further analysing it are important when trying to address the questions of the research. In order to achieve a representative set of data with reasonable saturation about the integration of students with an immigration background, studies can approach different groups that are involved in the process of educational integration.

The students themselves are a great source for collecting qualitative data about their schooling experiences, and their parents can also speak to wider experiences and how they view the educational integration of their children. The school staff are an excellent option for data collection as they also have a wider perspective on what can actually be achieved at the school level and how they view their capabilities not only in the realm of educational integration, but also how it can be translated into the whole-scale future integration of the students into society. Governmental and public administration bodies and NGOs also present

valuable sources of data to explore areas of challenge and opportunities in the realm of integration. More specifically, in how they shape schooling through public and social policy, not just for the students but also for the staff, this is through allocating funds, extracurricular programs, and the specific training that the staff, including the teachers, receive to be able to teach diverse classrooms. Diversity, nonetheless, comes in different forms in any given class, whether it be the socio-economic backgrounds of the students, differences in learning abilities among students, or cultural differences of the students. But one group is exceptionally equipped to speak to most of these areas of interest, and that is the teachers. Teachers are instrumental to the development of students and the decision-making that goes on in the school. They are bridges between the administration and the student body because they are witnesses to how these different parts of schooling, including the students and the staff, come together while being capable of active intervention in how they manage their classes.

This capability of teachers in speaking to the different aspects of schooling makes them a comprehensive source of data in areas where the context is highly informative about the outcome. The study of integration, as it has been laid out so far, can prove to be highly context-based and interdisciplinary. While this may be challenging for any study that tries to understand it comprehensively, it also makes it a fascinating topic for inquiry in the social sciences. The choice of data sources, therefore, is instrumental in comparing and contrasting the different aspects of integration, which is based on access to and knowledge of that source when discussing these different aspects. Teachers are an ideal source of information about the topic of educational integration with their knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of schools in promoting it. They can also address how they view the potential and the realised impacts of educational integration on the overall future integration of students with an immigration background into society.

Methodology

Following Sandelowski, Chapter Five discusses the qualitative aspect of the mixed research methodology alongside Chapter Four, making the case for a sociological approach to integration and envisioning integration as a social investment. Sandelowski argues that researchers increasingly turn to mixed-method techniques to achieve two objectives: to expand the scope of the research and to improve the power of the analysis (Sandelowski, 2000). Furthermore, the researcher's orientation to inquiry and their methodological commitments will influence how they use each method and combine them in order to interpretively link the

qualitative and quantitative data (246). According to Sandelowski, mixed-method studies are operationalised at levels of sampling, data collection, and data analysis as reflected in how and why the research combines them to begin with (247). At the paradigm level, the mixed method is best understood as viewing positions and the explicit framing of different worldviews, each remaining distinct from the other (247). At the methodological level, these differences may be method-linked and best captured using different methods (248). When combining the methods, it is important to flesh out what kind of knowledge may be developed as the outcome, whether it be nomothetic or idiographic knowledge, in order to employ each effectively (248). At the technique level, the combination actually occurs, and each set of data can prevail over the other in the combination or have an equal priority in the study (248).

Chapters Four and Five together implement a sequential stratified purposeful sampling, meaning the research is adamant about making sure that different cases based on preselected parameters are included and tries to optimise the representativeness of the overall analysis as much as possible. Accordingly, in a maximally varied form of purposeful stratified sampling, the research would include a couple of cases from the different combinations that the researcher can spot (250). When combining the data, the thesis takes a constructivist point of view, which, according to Sandelowski, means that there is no hierarchy of data collection techniques whereby one technique is deemed to yield more objective or truer data than another and data divergences are treated as interpretive opportunities either showing that no true discrepancy exists between them or to point out what accounts for the apparent discrepancy (251). In other words, the techniques complement each other and reveal what may be missed by including only one method for the research. This is especially apt for researching integration because of the degree to which integration depends on the context within which it occurs. In order to realise this context, the chapter implements a qualitative description approach to explore the conditions of some of the schools in the provinces of Padua, Turin and Udine.

According to Sandelowski, a general view of descriptive research has negatively impacted it as a lower-level form of inquiry, which is often described as eclectic, while the goal of qualitative description is to provide a comprehensive summary of events in the everyday terms of those events (Sandelowski, 2000). Qualitative descriptive studies stay close to their data and are grounded in the surface of words and events being described with a reasonable combination of sampling, data collection, analysis, and re-representation of the data, making it the method of choice when a straightforward description of data is desired (334). Maximum variation sampling is desirable in the qualitative description approach that allows for common

and unique manifestations of a target phenomenon across a broad range of phenomenologically and demographically varied cases (337-338). When collecting the data, qualitative descriptive studies are oriented towards discovering the *who*, *what*, and *where* of events, with techniques including minimally to moderately structured open-ended individual interviews, obtaining a broad range of information about the events and presenting a summary of the informational content of the data when analysed (338). Emanating from this methodological reasoning, the chapter adds context-specific insights into what it means for a school to be diverse in practice, how educational integration of students happens in schools, and what the implications of educational integration are in the overall future integration of students with an immigration background into society.

Data Sampling

In order to collect credible data that would give life to the realities of integration in Italian schools, the research approached a diverse cohort of teachers for data collection and analysis. The choice to interview teachers was deliberate and made for multiple reasons. Firstly, teachers bridge between the schools (administration) and the students. This is crucial because it gives them valuable insight into both student life and school life, which they can reflect on as mediators between the two. Secondly, teachers are more accessible than students or the schools themselves in two respects: they are more approachable as an audience because they are independent adults on the one hand, and on the other hand, more capable of expressing themselves proficiently in English, which was the medium of the interviews. Thirdly, teachers contribute greatly to multicultural²⁴ classrooms because they can identify where administrative measures prevail or can be improved for the integration of all students in the classroom; therefore, their institutional as well as personal observations come with important implications for integration measures at the school.

The research used a snowball sampling strategy in order to contact teachers who were experienced with multicultural classrooms. The snowball method is implemented when the research group is specific, and the research is conducted on a small scale. It is frequently used in ethnography, action research, or individual case studies (Gierczyk, Gromkowska-Melosik, Scott, & Parker, 2023, p. 89). Like other research strategies, snowballing also presents its own set of limitations; it is methodologically justified and effective in reaching hard-to-reach

²⁴ The term “multicultural” is used with the intention of being inclusive of all student backgrounds that co-participate in the classroom.

populations (88). It is also recommended for idiographic research aims that give substantial voice to participants and allow for an intensive analysis of each case study (100). This has proven especially effective in accessing a network of teachers experienced with multicultural classrooms and willing to take part in interviews where the vehicle of communication is English. The snowball strategy resulted in seven interviews, and the data collected from those interviews were analysed to answer a key question: how do schools prepare students with an immigration background to integrate into society?

A strategic question with the interviews was: how many interviews would be apt to attain credible responses to the main question of the research? Guest, Bunce, and Johnson have tackled this question and made evidence-based recommendations regarding sample sizes for interviews and found that saturation occurs within the first twelve interviews and basic elements for metathemes are present as early as six interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Furthermore, if the research is more interested in high-level and overarching themes, a sample of six interviews can be sufficient to enable the development of meaningful themes and useful interpretations (78). This, of course, does not mean that such a sample is always sufficient for analysis; that is why the snowball strategy was optimised here to enhance the representativeness of the data collected during these seven interviews. This was achieved mainly by communicating with the interviewees about the topic and scope of the research and asking them about their experiences beforehand, rather than just interviewing all possible participants. For this purpose, the study paid attention to several factors, including regional differences, age, field of teaching, and the background of the teachers, to attain a desired degree of saturation in the study.

The interview, therefore, had multiple stages beginning with establishing communication with the teachers, clearly informing them of the topic and scope of the research, and briefly asking them about their relevant experiences. There were two factors that discouraged some of the potential participants who withdrew from the interview at this earlier stage: either that the potential participant didn't feel like they had enough experience to take part in the interview, or they found it difficult to communicate their insights clearly in English. The participants were not asked to submit a formal assessment of their spoken English proficiency and participated only if they felt comfortable and capable of voicing their opinions in English. After this initial stage, the participants were officially communicated with and

received a brief questionnaire²⁵ including an introduction to the research topic and fourteen questions that they could consider for brainstorming and familiarising themselves with the topic. The questionnaire can be summarized in three main departments: first, who is the participant and what their relevant experience are, second, how do they see the relationship between schooling and integration, and third, if they see schools as competent in promoting the integration of students with an immigration background or if they have to be spontaneous as teachers and personally intervene in their capacity as teachers with regard to the schooling of these students (if any). The participants received online consent forms²⁶ before taking part in the interviews, wherein they were asked to generate a code to maintain their anonymity and to help the researcher analyse their responses over time while keeping their answers anonymous using: the first letter of their favourite animal, number of siblings, birth month (2 digits), and the first letter of their favourite colour. These codes will be used later to refer to the participants' responses. They were also asked to optionally provide general information about their age, gender identity, and nationality.

Table 5.1

Number of the Interview	Codes Generated by the Participants
1	P207G
2	C105B
3	E304R
4	C206B
5	C410B
6	D108R
7	D309W

The interviews sought a broad range of experiences among the interviewees, and this included several factors. The first factor of interest was geographical variations, and the study managed to include teachers from provinces that varied in their location, from a large metropolis to mid-range cities and border regions that included Padua, Turin, and Udine. The second factor was to interview participants of different ages so the study could see if there are any differences in methods when teachers from different generations think about the

²⁵ See Annexes.

²⁶ See Annexes.

implications of educational integration. The third factor was to include different subjects being taught in the schools, and the fourth and final factor was to try to include non-Italian teachers as well to see if they approach this topic differently.

Of course, these data are not representative of the whole country or applicable to every school or teaching experience. It is also not in the service of manifesting an overarching universal theory; in fact, the most important point that should always be mentioned when studying integration is that integration appreciates a high degree of variability from one community to another. Instead, these mechanisms are deliberately sought after by the study in order to broaden the scope of the data because it is also imperative not to hyper-focus on a single community, as that in itself goes against a representative study of integration. Whenever it is said that integration relies on its context, it means that different communities operate differently, and they are not all even or operate the same way (see Chapters Two and Three).

These factors are all informative in the experiences of the students as well, like where a community is located, its surrounding infrastructure, the schools and what they can provide the students with, and the teachers who play a crucial role between the schools and the students, all of which are bound to these criteria. These criteria are influential in promoting the capabilities of the students who can navigate a fuller life when they become active members of their communities, and integration is an integral part of that fuller life. Therefore, having a compact yet optimised set of participants can achieve a generalised understanding of the most immediate challenges to educational integration and the opportunities to promote all students with different lived experiences when they share a space like the classroom together. The data helped provide a reasonable degree of saturation within the seven interviews by closely engaging with the participants' experiences, and it can be summarised alongside other information provided during the interviews as follows:

Table 5.2

Age of Participants at the Time of the Interview	Number of Participants
24	1
27	2
28	1
29	1
42	1

57	1
----	---

Table 5.3

Nationality of Participants at the Time of the Interview	Number of Participants
Italian	6
Non-Italian	1

Table 5.4

Subjects the Participants Taught at the Time of the Interview	Number of Participants
Languages and the broader Humanities	6
Mathematics	1

Table 5.5

Provinces Where the Participants Taught at the Time of the Interview	Number of Participants
Padua	3
Turin	3
Udine	1

The interviews included six Italian and one non-Italian teacher, from the ages of 24 to 57, two of whom identified as male, three as female, and one as he/him. The study did not ascribe a pre-defined set of answers to choose from, and the participants described themselves according to themselves. Summarising teaching experiences was not possible in a single coherent chart because the teachers' experience differed over time, their post as teachers, and their physical career-related mobility. Although it can be described as follows: one teacher taught math, and the rest taught either humanities, such as history or geography or multiple languages, including Italian, English, Greek, and French. Having taught or helped teach multiple subjects in different teaching posts was commonplace. These subjects were partly expected, as many teachers come across students with an immigration background in second

language acquisition classes. The participants' teaching experiences varied and included mobility from one province to another and in different roles as teachers, from substitute roles to high-level administrative roles, as well as teaching at different educational levels. It also included work-related mobility, from one province to another, the experiences of which they referenced during the interviews.

These indicators are relevant to the broader concept of integration and the general environment of schooling, and the interviews also confirmed their relevance (which will be included in the discussion of the data). The interviews were held in person via Zoom, and the auto-generated transcription of their responses from the app was safely collected by the researcher, and all interview-related data were discarded afterwards. No other tools were used for the purpose of analysis. The interviews were set for thirty minutes, but all of them took longer time although no interview exceeded one hour. This flexibility was in part meant to provide participants with an amiable space, as most of them spoke English as an additional language. They preferred to take their time with some of their responses and become comfortable sharing what was on their mind in English, which the study encouraged as well. The interviews, therefore, were conducted in a semi-structured and collegial environment that was mainly interested in the participants' experiences, and the researcher minimised intervention when participants were providing a response, only reinforcing questions where there was the opportunity for further elaboration. Another important factor was anonymity, which was important to all participants, and that is why the study links none of the participants directly to the actual schools they teach at.

Analysis²⁷

Following AIR's guidelines (American Institutes for Research, 2024), key dimensions for analysis included: evenness, exposure, concentration, access, engagement, and student outcomes. Chapter Four focused on the first three dimensions of the guideline, student evenness, exposure, and concentration, and this chapter focuses on the second three dimensions of the guideline, including student access, engagement, and outcomes. Conversations with the teachers informed the data analysis of the previous chapter about how a school actually

²⁷ The analysis employs two terms, with intention, when referring to the population of interest in the study: "Non-Italian Students" and "Students with an Immigration Background". The term "non-Italian" comprises a narrower description of a student's status and refers mainly to first-generation students, while the term "with an Immigration Background" is meant to be more inclusive of different kinds of immigration experiences and includes intergenerational immigrants as well. This distinction is important, especially when referring to the cultural aspects of schooling.

functions when coming across diversity and with respect to the integration of students with an immigration background. The interviews showed similar concerns about integration but divergent classroom methods as employed by the teachers in their day-to-day classroom activities. Guided by the questionnaire, the study was able to point out four main points of division in the participants' experiences, generational divides between teachers of different ages, curricular divides in how these teachers mitigate the challenges that a diverse body of students may present, compared to a more homogenous body of students, institutional divides between what teachers deem helpful to integrate all students and the institutional capacity of schools to provide them with sufficient means to meet their objectives, and finally, parent-school divides that emerge significantly if the parents of a given student are not proficient in spoken Italian.

Table 5.6

Main Divisions in Participants' Opinions on Schooling and Integration	
1	Generational Divisions
2	Curricular Divisions
3	Institutional Divisions
4	Parent-School Divisions

All of the participants were positive about education being important to the integration of all students, and especially those with an immigration background. "Schools are important to integration, and educators have a great responsibility", said E304R. The largest share of integration through education was in learning Italian at school, according to these teachers; however, the sufficiency of only teaching non-Italian students the Italian language was challenged throughout some of the interviews. Some teachers deemed learning the language to be sufficient for the successful integration of these students after they leave school, but other teachers believed that there was more work to be done, mainly through innovative teaching methods or extracurricular activities. "Not only the language, but culture should be prioritised and valued as well", said CIO5B. Nonetheless, all teachers attested to the positive impacts of educational integration on the general success and well-being of these students, both when they attend the school and when they leave it, with the caveat being that every student should be able to not leave school before they are meant to. But the more important question was, what is educational integration according to these teachers?

All conversations began with teachers taking apart the concept of diversity. According to them, diversity exists in more ways than one in a classroom, and more often than not, these “diversities” intersect differently for each student. According to them, diversity can mean socio-economic diversity because not all students come from a similar socio-economic background. Diversity could also mean different learning abilities among students, and they all agreed that the Italian educational system is very welcoming and capable in this respect, not only by including them in classrooms but also by providing the teachers with substantial formal education on how to work with different disabilities. The teachers also included students with a migration background as a large part of the diversity in their classroom, but a kind of diversity that they received much less formal education to actually work with. Educational integration, according to them, was being able to accommodate all students and help them reach their full potential. The main point, however, was how to accommodate different students, and specifically, with the objectives of the research in mind, those with an immigration background. One of the participants believed that the main way to go about this is that these students wouldn’t be and are not treated as different to the rest of the student body because they are included without any discrimination in school life and activities like everyone else. One of the teachers believed that the education of these students does not require a special emphasis on diversity because the school they attended was located in an already diverse neighbourhood and these students already interacted with each other enough outside the school. D108R elaborated on this during the interview like so:

I think that school [itself] is integration, [the] very fact that people are in school constitutes integration. [...] I think that the goal of the school is not to make integration because the school is integration, or it’s the foundation of integration, with learning Italian first and [the] things that are important to identify with the community. So, the cultural references, [and] points are very important to recognise myself [meaning the student] in this community.

Most participants, on the other hand, believed that the teacher needs to take an active role in facilitating these students’ integration in the way they taught not only them but the entire student body and how they led the class as a collective. This was reflected in all of their teaching methods when they thought about their experiences when they taught the educational material to the students. There was a high degree of variation between teaching methods and curricular activities carried out in the classroom. These curricular divisions could be broken down into sub-groups, including methods that specifically addressed non-Italian students and

methods that addressed the entire classroom. The first sub-group included one teacher who mentioned taking more time and explaining further to non-Italian students when teaching because the material being taught was very specific to religion and Italian culture and history. This was done because the teacher wanted to provide enough context to these topics that might otherwise escape non-Italian students, and occasionally the Italians too, and make the material more palpable for them. D108R had this example to share during the interview:

I have adapted [in] this kind of situation [...] so [for example] I know that if I talk about medieval history [to eleven-year-old pupils] you can take for granted that not everyone understands the structure of the Catholic Church [or] understand what I am saying [...] so I have to explain very well what those roles are [referring to historical figures and institutions].

Another teacher mentioned taking more time with individual students and even outside the regular class hours to help them with their language acquisition, for example, by creating three-column worksheets wherein the student would practice learning a new word by writing it in their mother tongue, English, and Italian. Using visuals and emojis as teaching aids was also commonplace in some of the interviews. The second subgroup that addressed the entire classroom was the majority and the younger participants of the study. They addressed the classroom mainly through the development of interpersonal relationships between different students. They achieved this objective by going beyond just teaching the formal material and transforming how it was delivered to the students. Activities included actively listening to what these students have to say both privately and collectively in class, as well as encouraging them to speak their mind regardless of their Italian proficiency, employing task-based learning, making personalised study plans and playing games in the class that stimulated learning through group work and giving students more autonomy with regard to how they learn. D309W pointed out during the interview that it is not always easy to facilitate multinational groups of students working together in the class because, according to her:

[We need to] take into consideration the person, because of the personality, not all of these students want to be part of the group [...] they [the students] create maybe a little group with other students from that country [their country of origin]. And even if you try to make them part of the group, the larger group, it's not easy. But it's always a work in progress.

According to the participants, students were also given an active role in the class by presenting how they approach the topic at hand. A math teacher, for example, shared that the students from different countries may have learned different ways to resolve a mathematical problem before, and when they point it out, she welcomes it instead of dismissing it, and listens with the class to how they go about resolving the problem. On the one hand, recognising and promoting the knowledge that these students already brought with them to the classroom in different ways was important to most of the participants, and on the other hand, they also recognised that these sorts of activities require a lot of time and energy on the part of the teachers as well as a great deal of openness and flexibility. “I do this job because I think schools can, maybe it’s a simple way to say that, but it can change lives, you know? It can give you the opportunity to change your life, it’s a starting point, you know!” said C206B.

The most important point, though, was not that these teachers wouldn’t want to follow through with these methods; they were rather discouraged because of the generational divide that, according to them, exists between younger and older teachers and the institutional divisions that become challenging in the process. The generational divide became pronounced between younger and older teachers in that younger teachers felt dismissed by senior staff as wasting time or not actually teaching the students what they are meant to learn during such activities. The institutional divide was attested to by the younger teachers as well, for example, in that they received detailed and well-informed training on how to work with students with different learning disabilities and mitigate them through their formal training to become teachers, their ‘formazione’, but not when it comes to students with an immigration background and ethnic minorities. These teachers recognized that because of the lack of a comprehensive training they need to be spontaneous and respond to different needs of the students on the spot and optimize their teaching methods based on trial and error, “what you do [as a teacher] is not always successful” said E304R, “As a teacher you feel left alone” said P207G, and according to C105B “too much is left to the teachers and the schools”. An important part of this spontaneity, according to them, was not just coming up with solutions for the challenges that different student groups present, but was more so embedded in their recurrent experiences and coming up with adequate responses to those challenges based on their experiences, and they felt challenged or left alone when doing so. They repeatedly indicated that all teachers require more training to work with students with an immigration background.

These issues could also be alleviated by seeking help from a fellow teacher during the class, according to some of the participants. In other examples, multiple teachers mentioned

that familiarising themselves with different cultures has helped them as teachers, and their students feel more confident in their teaching methods and included in the classroom because of it. For example, they would talk about a holiday that the student would be celebrating at home, but not an official holiday in Italy on the given day of the celebration, and let the student explain to their classmates what the rituals are around the holiday and how they would celebrate it. “It’s a small gesture, but means a lot to the students”, said C206B. This should be done in a way that “doesn’t make them feel exposed either”, said P207G. Accordingly, feeling ‘exposed’ can transpire even if the teacher does try to help such students, in one example, when the teacher is unsure if he can hand the student a dictionary when they ask for it during exams, because one school may allow such a thing and not another, the teacher may be unaware of such informal measures that schools may implement and put the student in an awkward position.

One non-Italian teacher who was interviewed mentioned that he would start by mentioning the celebrations he personally celebrates, and this encouraged the students to feel comfortable sharing their own experiences. His experience was that by setting himself closer to the students, they would also feel more empowered to contribute to the class in this regard. C410B, an international teacher, described his experience as:

These students [international students] were curious about my background, and of course, I was very open about it, like yeah, I am from the U.S. [United States], but I have also family from Asia. And it was also very clear because of my name. So, I think it was a positive impact not only on the minority students but on the general Italian students that they got to know [about the United States] obviously, they love to know about the U.S. because of pop culture [and I was] giving them a more, I guess, [a] more real view of how the U.S. is, because everyone has the idea of the U.S. as, like, Hollywood [...] but the reality is different.

This was interesting because an Italian teacher pointed to the lack of diversity among teachers at her school during the interview. Her school was one of the most diverse in the province of Turin, according to her and her experience was that if there was a more diverse staff present at the school, the students would feel more integrated as well because she acknowledged that the presence of such teachers who would be more informed about the different cultural backgrounds in a given class alongside other teachers can boost the students’ feeling of being included. The teachers who emphasised the importance of such activities

considered the students to be eager to bring up cultural topics in the classroom and share their culture with their peers. The teachers also thought that beyond recognising the heritage of a given student, it is to the benefit of the whole class because they learn more about the world, not just through their textbooks but in their actual day-to-day lives.

I think it is a crucial point, because you talk [teach] about the world, but you have to have in mind that [the] world is next to you, in front of you, okay? And they [students] have to realise that too. You have to, like, walk with them in this path, letting them know that many people around them come from many different countries, we look at where these countries are on Google Maps, watch together their traditions, their cultures. It's very important to understand what really is that part of the world [like], said C105B.

This was particularly interesting in this teacher's experience because she mentioned that the school, although a large and central school in the province, was less attractive to Italian parents because of the sheer diversity of the school, and she thought that this was a shame because if their children attended that school, they would learn much more about the world in practice.

Such activities also had a pronounced existence outside the school itself in the form of extracurricular activities often arranged by the schools in partnership with other organisations. The teachers from Turin, for example, brought up the role of charity events and the parish that organised meet-and-greets and sports events for the students. The teachers from Turin highly appreciated the sports events because during such activities, different students would have the opportunity to be part of a team and work together, which eventually led to long-standing friendships among some of their students. The teachers who expressed interest in such extracurricular activities also found the meet-and-greets to be a great opportunity for interactions not only among the students but also their families. "The key is to have an alliance between educators and families. It would be good for the teachers as well to pivot from discussing grades to discussing the students as well", said C105B and according to E304R, "the school has an important responsibility also to create a network [among schools and families]". Another participant mentioned that the school holds an annual festival in a picnic setting as a great opportunity for the parents to interact with each other and "to make themselves known to other parents and the school as well", said D108R. Another teacher mentioned that her school holds a mother-tongue day: "I find it very, very beautiful, like when in the class we talk about

different languages and diversity, and the language is always linked to culture. So, it's not just like how you talk, [or] how you speak, but it's like how you live", said C206B.

While most teachers highly valued the impact of such gatherings, they also acknowledged the schools' limitations in arranging them, mostly due to the school's financial strains and challenges in coordinating such events; therefore, they deemed partnerships between schools and outside organisations and other bodies like the parish or NGOs to be beneficial. A successful initiative regarding students with an immigration background that one of the teachers (C206B) was part of, and mentioned, was *Teach for Italy*. They describe their mission as "strengthen schools in the most disadvantaged contexts, attracting motivated people to teach and investing in the skills needed to transform today's students into tomorrow's changemakers" (Teach for Italy, 2026). The parent-school divide, however, became a contributing factor when teachers reflected on how they can best advise students on their study tracks and progress at the school. This varied from one teacher's experience to another, but generally, the parent-school divide manifested in how schools and parents of non-Italian students communicate with each other. It was notable to all of the teachers that schools face a challenge in cases where the parents do not speak Italian proficiently when they try to communicate the status of the student with their families. This is often resolved by involving a third person, for example, a sibling who speaks Italian to a better degree than the parent, but nonetheless, it implied that clear communication about the needs of the student may be hindered because of it. C410B described the following situation:

I had a young student in the first year, she never had any problems with the language, you know she was born in Italy but my colleagues and the school had a problem with contacting her parents because my student wasn't doing well in some other subject so they wanted to contact the parents but the parents probably couldn't speak Italian so they couldn't communicate with the parents or when they would call the home the parents would pick up the phone and give it to the older sister who could speak Italian.

In another example, D309W mentioned that she finds it especially challenging to help with the education of unaccompanied students who have arrived in Italy as unaccompanied minors. She mentioned that one of her brightest students would find it very difficult to pursue his education because, as soon as he turns eighteen, he would need to leave the accommodation that he is allocated and therefore would be unable to pursue his education because he would

need to find a job as soon as possible to sustain himself. The teacher also mentioned that, alongside her colleagues, they are trying to mitigate this situation by finding a way for him to pursue his education because there is only so much that the schools are capable of doing and that they wouldn't want any student to leave their education before they are meant to. It was important to her to emphasise that this isn't something that she does alone, but rather what they do as a part of the school collectively.

I feel [like] a part of the group. I don't work alone; I never work alone. I work with my colleagues to [do] the best we can to make everyone part of the school. That's very important because that's why I always use we and not I. We want these students to stay at school. We don't want them to drop [out], said D309W.

She also mentioned that, given her experience at a vocational school, a lot of her non-Italian students attend the school because they can acquire, alongside the acquisition of the Italian language, skills that they can effectively and quickly translate into the labour market. One of the main advantages of her school, according to her, was that the students have the opportunity to practice what they learn at the school outside the school when they go to work for four weeks starting from third grade. This can also be an example of activities in partnership with outside organisations that promote integration of non-Italian students, but it was particularly important to this teacher not only because the school worked greatly on bridging between the school and the labour market, but also because the students got to interact more with the wider Italian labour market and society at the same time. These were also some of the main examples of how different disparities can intersect in a given student's experience by pointing out financial difficulties as well as the uneven levels of support and care that a given student may be able to receive. Another teacher also mentioned that while some of her students were eligible for and received financial relief from the government, they still needed to acquire part-time jobs in order to sustain themselves, while at the same time they were studying, and that such students are more burdened compared to most of their peers.

Discussion

The analysis of the interviews with the teachers showed that these teachers are invested in the education of all of their students, including those with an immigration background or from an ethnic minority. The teachers considered education to be formative in the integration of these students, not just at school but also into society. Where they differed in opinion was in how to actually achieve educational integration. Some of these teachers emphasised the priority

of teaching their students the material they are meant to learn at school. D309W, an English teacher, mentioned the following during the interview:

I always keep in mind that with migrant students, the goal is to achieve the minimum learning objectives. This doesn't mean that a student can't push to reach higher levels, okay? But it is important that the student can communicate in English and Italian with anyone. [Whether it be] a teacher, a classmate, anyone who works at the school and when they go out [to do] vocational training.

Some of the teachers emphasised the importance of giving their students more agency and recognition in the teaching process as well. According to the CEO's Educational Integration Model (Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej, 2022), educational integration is possible when three groups of student needs are addressed with the following priority: emotional needs, social needs, and learning-related needs. Measures that schools need to take in order to address these needs include addressing the challenges, identifying key integration areas, and improving the competencies of teaching staff (Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej, 2022, p. 1). The model defines integration in education as the ongoing process that allows schools to support the academic success of all students, regardless of their nationality and diverse needs, in order to gradually transform diversity from a challenge into an opportunity for refined instruction and education that aims to benefit all students at school (1). The model can be viewed as a way to rethink the integration of different groups of people into society as a social investment for the betterment of society in general. Institutions like the school can promote integration and translate the process of integration into interventions that create long-lasting capabilities for individuals that transcend time and space and are carried with them in different periods of their lives.

Paulo Freire's renowned *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has long served as a critical foundation to rethink how education is viewed. According to Freire, education is a dialogical practice that implies an epistemological relationship, and the dialogue itself is a way of knowing and not just involving students in a particular task (Freire, 2005, p. 17). Dialogue is an encounter between humans, and it is mediated by the world in order to name the world; it is a critical perception embodied in action and leads humans to attempt to overcome their limit-situations (88, 99). Furthermore, when the educational programming is dialogical, teachers and students have a right to participate in it as transformative beings (120, 121). When reflecting on this dialogue, the role of the school in knowing the world is fairly obvious; in fact, most

education is meant to know the world and name it, but schooling as an experience encompasses more than just knowing the world, but rather how a student comes to know the world. C410B, for example, described that some international students were thought of doing “better in languages because they are international students”, therefore, they should pursue studying other languages, but that isn’t always the case”. In another example, D309W mentioned that “the students with a migration background say [meaning the student would say] okay, I do vocational school, I want to be a mechanic, because when I work with [my] hands, I don’t need to speak [Italian], I don’t need to communicate [in Italian]”.

But what does schooling comprise? According to Gobby and Millei, schooling is a formal way of educating children and usually involves teachers instructing students in a formal curriculum including distinct subjects, but one can be educated without formal arrangements as well, which is referred to as *autodidact*; hence education is often confused with schooling (Gobby & Millei, 2017). According to Gobby and Millei, schooling as an institution is vested in power relations and practices that regulate the lives of the students; educating is not a neutral or isolated process wherein educators act as managers of students, but rather puts them in the role of public intellectuals in their own right (Gobby & Millei, 2017, chapter two). The personal motivations of the teachers were clear during the interviews; for example, E304R, on the one hand, had a bachelor’s in Asian and African studies and wanted to do a PhD in postcolonial studies because she wanted to learn more about the cultures and experiences of her students. D108R, on the other hand, considered changing jobs from a very diverse school to a less diverse one because she could find a school where she may experience “fewer problems, fewer challenges, and, where teaching may be more gratifying” but she felt more compelled to stay in her post because she is, according to her, “building the future, the society of tomorrow”.

The interviews with the teachers showed the extent to which they are instrumental to the experience of their students during their schooling. Their methods and opinions about how to recognise the competencies of their students were formative in how they reflected on educational integration of not just those students with an immigration background, but all of their students who share a class together. It also showed the extent to which they feel empowered to act on their methods and opinions. Empowerment of the teachers was understood in stages: the training that they receive to rectify the challenges that different classrooms will present to them, how they are received among their colleagues as fellow teachers, and how competent the school is both financially and logistically in supporting their initiatives alongside their students’. When it came down to their students, according to these

teachers, education was deemed of great help to their integration into society and recognised the measures that the school as a whole can provide, its limitations in providing them, and how to resolve these limitations. The most important point in every conversation with these teachers, however, was that the school provides more than just education to the students: “Education helps integration because it provides interaction”, said C105B. and rather acts as a place for socialisation and integration because schools are effective in creating capabilities in the long run. In order to optimise this wider role of the schools, the teachers believed that they would need more time, energy, and resources, as well as the freedom to manage their classes and teaching methods. “Freedom of schools is very important; freedom of teaching is very important”, said P207G. While all agreed that financial resources and inter-organisational partnerships are very helpful, the younger teachers also sought more staff training when it comes to the integration of students with an immigration background.

Limitations: Access and Communication as Defining in Data Collection

While setting up the premise of the interviews, the study took into consideration with great interest who would be an ideal participant for the study and who the study could actually interview. On the one hand, interviews with students with an immigration background would have yielded insightful data, but that presented large logistical challenges in terms of access and communication. On the other hand, interviewing teachers presented a highly prized asset to data sampling in their capacity as mediators. This is because teachers bridge between schools and students, are important to the schooling of all students, and are able to speak to both institutional and individual experiences of schooling. The language barrier, however, remained a disadvantage as the interviews were conducted in English but in an Italian context, although it did not hinder collecting data with reasonable saturation.

Implications of Mixed Methods

Chapters Four and Five assessed population change and integration of non-Italian students in Italian schools. According to AIR’s guidelines (American Institutes for Research, 2024), evenness, exposure, concentration, access, engagement, and student outcomes are considered to be important dimensions in assessing integration of students with an immigration background. These dimensions are prevalent because of the degree to which developed societies can enable students with an immigration background to move up in status or the extent to which they reproduce inherited inequalities from one generation to the next, and these issues still present major questions under the general rubric of stratification (Favell and Recchi, 2011).

The mixed-methods of the study permit a wider set of data and promote a more rigorous analysis that indicates national trends as well as local experiences of educational integration. This is highly relevant to the interdisciplinary study of mobility and educational integration of students with an immigration background in Italian schools. The mixed methods allow for realising general patterns in both assessments, but by no means provide an overarching or universal theory of integration. The mixed-method approach shows the immediate challenges for educational integration and the opportunities that exist in the Italian framework. The mixed-method approach, alongside the literature review of the previous chapters, also makes a case for the study of integration as a social investment that isn't geared towards one group of people in society but rather as a mutual process of give and take that benefits the general well-being of society. The data analysis confirmed the hypothesis of the thesis that institutional arrangements can serve as bedrocks of integration because they affect, with great influence, the aspirations and capabilities of immigrants not only when out-migration occurs but in the process of settlement within generations of immigrants as well. Schools are one of such institutional arrangements that have an important role in the future economic and social integration of immigrants because they provide education and a shared space for students of all backgrounds where they can practice a shared coexistence since early childhood. In Italian classrooms, although with a solid inclusive agenda, there is room for making the schools more integrative in practice regarding students with an immigration background. This is both from a higher institutional perspective through more targeted staff training and at a lower local level at the schools by allocating them more adequate funding and autonomy to tailor schooling to the specific needs of their students.

Conclusion

Chapter Five analysed how educational integration happens in Italian schools via qualitative data collection in interviews with teachers in the provinces of Padua, Turin, and Udine. The Chapter made the case for how teachers view the integration of students with an immigration background into Italian schools and how that translates to their overall integration into society. The Chapter showed that teachers are integral to the schooling experiences of students and are instrumental to their integration at school. This defining role is in how teachers approach the topic of integration, their capabilities in teaching diverse classrooms, and the measures they take in their capacity as teachers to integrate these students. Four main divisions became obvious throughout the interviews, including generational, curricular, institutional, and parent-school divides. Most teachers viewed teaching in diverse classrooms to be challenging

and had their own personalised responses to these challenges in the classroom, challenges that they felt needed addressing through receiving better teacher training and allocation of funds. The teachers viewed educational integration to be crucial and recounted its impacts on the overall integration of these students, and saw partnerships among schools and outside organisations as the area with the greatest potential for the integration of their students, not just at school but also in the long run. The chapter also argued for the relevance of mixed methods in the study of integration and social mobility as well.

Conclusion

Implications of the Thesis

The thesis argued that migration research is still based more on push-pull models and immigration policies to be more concerned with the arrival of immigrants, including how and why they may arrive, rather than the integration of immigrants and receiving societies. Through the aspiration-capabilities framework and the model of intergenerational integration, the thesis made the case for rethinking integration of immigrants as a social investment issue that benefits the overall well-being of receiving societies. Following the literature and through its mixed methods for data analysis, the thesis argued that integration should take a more central role in migration discourse because migration does not only entail the physical mobility of individuals but their settlement and social mobility as well. The institutional arrangements of receiving societies impact, with great effect, the capabilities of immigrants in both processes, and that is why, based on the argument, such institutional arrangements should be able to create capabilities rather than curbing them. The thesis argued that, in order to manage the aspirations of potential immigrants, states often try to manage the general capabilities of immigrants. Based on the capability approach, the thesis argued that while immigrants are incorporated in the development of their receiving societies, they should also be incorporated in the social fabric of that society and become empowered agents with influence in their communities. In order for such an integration to occur, immigrants and receiving societies must integrate since early childhood in a given receiving country. Integration, therefore, should not be hindered; it should be viewed as a social investment for the betterment of society. Such integration begins with institutional arrangements, and schools are considered the most critical in this study. This is because schooling is beyond education: it prepares all students for when they formally enter society by making skills and transferable cultural codes accessible to them; it is also a shared coexistence of different groups of students and a place where long-lasting capabilities are created.

In order to realise the potential of schools in the integration of immigrants, the study looked into non-Italian population changes in Italian state schools and approached teachers teaching in such schools. Italy is a great example in this regard, with a demographically declining population and the exponential growth in the number of students with an immigration background at schools. The study was able to show that while the educational integration of immigrants is theoretically very possible in Italian state schools, the inclusive model of Italian schooling does not always translate into every context or into the same effects at local and school levels. The study's hypothesis was confirmed: educational integration is possible and

deemed important in Italian schools, but there is no consensus on how it should be done and left to the initiatives of individual teachers and schools. However, most of the teachers interviewed felt a need for more formal staff training in how they approach growing diversity and work with students with an immigration background in Italian schools.

Limitations of the Thesis

The findings of the thesis can be considered a case study and not a universal overarching theory of integration. It discusses what integration means and how it has evolved through time and locates it within the context of educational integration. In order to realise this, the thesis takes Italian state schools as a laboratory and case study, but that does not mean that every other Italian school functions the same. It only locates immediate and recurring issues that may arise in the face of increasingly diverse classrooms and discusses how these may be mitigated based on the data. The researcher was familiarised with the Italian education system but has not worked within it. Since this thesis is written for an international degree and in English, and not Italian, many frameworks and resources during the research were of a global and not strictly Italian origin. This presents opportunities and challenges at the same time by allowing for a more international and comparative discussion, yet more locality would have been appreciated as well. The data collection in both quantitative methods and qualitative methods of the research faced sampling limitations that were acknowledged in their respective chapters as well, but this did not affect their representativeness or insightfulness.

Use of Digital Tools

Following the University guidelines, the thesis used the free version of Grammarly only to detect grammatical mistakes or misspellings that might have escaped the researcher during the writing process. It also used Gemini Flash accordingly, as a helper tool for Excel, which has been explained and justified in the relevant chapter (Chapter Four). The interviews for the thesis were conducted on Zoom, and the automatic transcripts Zoom generated were used to transcribe the interviews. The usage of this tool is also explained in the relevant chapter (Chapter Five).

Conflicts of Interest

The thesis has no conflicts of interest to declare. The research was done only in the academic interests of the researcher.

Further Research

This study has several implications for further research. The internationalisation of research into Italian schools, from their legacy in promoting inclusive classrooms to how they work with diversity, namely students from immigration backgrounds today, will be of great interest to local case studies and international comparative studies. The diversity of staff and teaching experiences of non-Italian teachers will be of great interest to the topics of immigration, mobility, and integration. The topic of regional and South-North divides in Italian schooling is also encouraged, as it can show a more localised aspect of the topic of educational integration in Italy. A focus on different migratory routes and arrivals, especially that of unaccompanied minors at Italian schools, will also be of great academic impact. Broader studies on social integration of immigrants and its discrepancies with economic integration, with a focus on public and social policies, are also encouraged.

Appendices

Table of Figures

Figure 4.1	71
Figure 4.2	71
Figure 4.3	72
Figure 4.4	72
Figure 4.5	73
Figure 4.6	76
Figure 4.7	76
Figure 4.8	77
Figure 4.9	78
Figure 4.10	78
Figure 4.11	79
Figure 4.12	80
Table 5.1	92
Table 5.2	93
Table 5.3	94
Table 5.4	94
Table 5.5	94
Table 5.6	96

References

- Abbiati, G. M., Ballarino, G., & Cartagini, D. (2025). School segregation in Italy: A longitudinal analysis using INVALSI data, 2010-2019. *Scuola Democratica*, 16(1), 19–47.
- Abrego, L. J. (2011). Legal consciousness of undocumented Latinos: Fear and stigma as barriers to claims-making for first- and 1.5-generation immigrants. *Law & Society Review*, 45(2), 337–370.
- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166–191.
- Alba, R., Sloan, J., & Sperling, J. (2011). The integration imperative: The children of low-status immigrants in the schools of wealthy societies. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 37(1), 395–415.
- American Institutes for Research. (2024). *Segregation and integration measurement guide*. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/measurement-guide.pdf>
- Bachmeier, J. D., Van Hook, J., & Bean, F. D. (2014). Can we measure immigrants' legal status? Lessons from two U.S. surveys. *International Migration Review*, 48(2), 538–566.
- Banulescu-Bogdan, N. (2012, August 2). Shaping citizenship policies to strengthen immigrant integration. *Migration Information Source*. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/journal/feature/shaping-citizenship-policies-strengthen-immigrant-integration>
- Begeny, J. C., & Martens, B. K. (2007). Inclusionary education in Italy: A literature review and call for more empirical research. *Remedial and Special Education*, 28(2), 80–94.
- Bertola, G., Checchi, D., & Oppedisano, V. (2007). Private school quality in Italy. *Giornale degli Economisti e Annali di Economia*, 66(3), 375–400.
- Brown, P., Reay, D., & Vincent, C. (2013). Education and social mobility. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34(5-6), 637–643.

- Center for Civic Education. (2022, October). *Educational integration model for schools admitting migrant students*. https://ceo.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Educational_integration_model.pdf
- Desrosières, A. (1998). *The politics of large numbers: A history of statistical reasoning*. Harvard University Press.
- Esser, H. (2004). Does the "New" Immigration Require a "New" Theory of Intergenerational Integration? *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1126–1159.
- Esser, H. (2006). Migration, language and integration: *AKI research review 4*. Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB).
- Esser, H. (2008). *Language acquisition and age at immigration: The difficult conditions for bilingualism*. University of Mannheim.
- Esser, H. (2010). Assimilation, ethnic stratification, or selective acculturation? Recent theories of the integration of immigrants and the model of intergenerational integration. *Sociologica*, (1), 1–28.
- Faist, T. (2013). The mobility turn: A new paradigm for the social sciences? *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36(11), 1637–1646.
- Favell, A. (2022). Immigration, integration, and citizenship: Elements of a new political demography. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(6), 1–30.
- Favell, A., & Recchi, E. (2011). Social mobility and spatial mobility. In A. Favell & V. Guiraudon (Eds.), *Sociology of the European Union* (pp. 50–75). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Filhon, A. (2013). *Linguistic practices in migration: Models of integration, language policies and the establishment of a social hierarchy of languages* (INTERACT RR 2013/02). Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute.
- Fondazione Fontana ETS. (2026). *Who we are*. <https://fondazionefontana.org/en/>
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. The Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Gabrielli, G., & Impicciatore, R. (2022). Breaking down the barriers: Educational paths, labour market outcomes and wellbeing of children of immigrants. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(11), 2305–2323.
- Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and nationalism*. Cornell University Press.

- Georgi, V. B. (2024). Migration and the quest for educational equity in Germany. *Dædalus*, 153(4), 184–205.
- Gierczyk, M., Gromkowska-Melosik, A., Scott, S., & Parker, C. (2023). The snowball sampling strategy in the field of social sciences: Contexts and considerations. *Przegląd Badań Edukacyjnych (Educational Studies Review)*, 2(41), 87–104.
- Go, J. (2016). *Postcolonial thought and social theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Gobby, B., & Millei, Z. (2017). Schooling, its history and power. In B. Gobby & R. Walker (Eds.), *Powers of curriculum: Sociological perspectives on education* (pp. 1–26). Oxford University Press.
- Goldstone, J. A. (2012). A theory of political demography: Human and institutional reproduction. In J. A. Goldstone, E. P. Kaufmann, & M. D. Toft (Eds.), *Political demography: How population changes are reshaping international security and national politics* (pp. 10–30). Oxford University Press.
- Goldstone, J. A., Kaufmann, E., & Toft, M. D. (2012). A theory of political demography: Human and institutional reproduction. In J. A. Goldstone, E. P. Kaufmann, & M. D. Toft (Eds.), *Political demography: How population changes are reshaping international security and national politics* (pp. 10–30). Oxford University Press.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, Eds. & Trans.). International Publishers.
- Gries, T., Redlin, M., & Zehra, M. (2022). Educational assimilation of first-generation and second-generation immigrants in Germany. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 23(2), 815–845.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82.
- de Haas, H. (2021). A theory of migration: The aspirations-capabilities framework. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9(1), 1–35.
- Hannam, K., Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006). Editorial: Mobilities, immobilities, and moorings. *Mobilities*, 1(1), 1–22.

- Harder, N., Figueroa, L., Gillum, R. M., Hangartner, D., Laitin, D. D., & Hainmueller, J. (2018). Multidimensional measure of immigrant integration. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(45), 11483–11488.
- Hemerijck, A. (2018). Social investment as a policy paradigm. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(6), 810–827.
- Hollifield, J. F. (2004). The emerging migration state. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 885–912.
- Houtkamp, C. (2015). Beyond assimilation and integration: The shift to 'national' and 'transnational' inclusion. *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, European and Regional Studies*, 8(1), 73–87.
- Huddleston, T., Niessen, J., & Tjaden, J. D. (2013). *Using EU indicators of immigrant integration*. European Commission. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2837/34091>
- Kaufmann, V., Bergman, M. M., & Joye, D. (2004). Motility: Mobility as capital. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28(4), 745–756.
- Kogan, I. (2007). *Working through barriers: Host country institutions and immigrant labour market performance in Europe*. Springer.
- Lash, C. L. (2018). Making Americans: Schooling, diversity, and assimilation in the twenty-first century. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 4(5), 99–117.
- Lindo, F. (2005). The concept of integration: Theoretical concerns and practical meaning. In *Social integration and mobility: Education, housing and health* (IMISCOE Cluster B5 State of the Art Report, pp. 7–20).
- Lucassen, L. (2024). Migrants and minorities into citizens: Education and membership regimes since the early modern period. *Dædalus*, 153(4), 43–60.
- Lutz, P. (2017). Two logics of policy intervention in immigrant integration: An institutionalist framework based on capabilities and aspirations. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 5(1), 1–18.

- Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), 431–466.
- May, J. F. (2021). A research agenda for youth policies and investments. In J. D. Sciubba (Ed.), *A research agenda for political demography* (pp. 147–160). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito. (2016). *Portale unico dei dati della scuola*. <https://dati.istruzione.it/opendata/opendata/catalogo/#Scuola>
- Modood, T. (2023). Multiculturalism: How it can contribute to depolarising the current political polarisation. *IPPR Progressive Review*, 30(1–2), 78–83.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- OECD. (2015). *Immigrant students at school: Easing the journey towards integration*. OECD Publishing.
- OECD, & European Commission. (2023). *Indicators of immigrant integration 2023: Settling in*. OECD Publishing.
- Passaretta, G., & Skopek, J. (2025). The role of schooling in equalizing achievement disparity by migrant background. *Sociology of Education*, 98(1), 62–85.
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Combining qualitative and quantitative sampling, data collection, and analysis techniques in mixed-method studies. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23(3), 246–255.
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23(4), 334–340.
- Santagati, M. (2015). Researching integration in multiethnic Italian schools. A sociological review on educational inequalities. *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 7(3), 294–334.
- Santagati, M. (2021). Writing educational success: The strategies of immigrant-origin students in Italian secondary schools. *Social Sciences*, 10(5), Article 180.

- Santiago, F., Posser Tonetto, M. L., Moreira Lopes, J. J., & Salva, S. (2025). From intervention to accompaniment: Educational pathways with unaccompanied foreign adolescents in Italy. *Educazione Interculturale*, 23(2), 49–62.
- Schneeweis, N. (2011). Educational institutions and the integration of migrants. *Journal of Population Economics*, 24(4), 1281–1308.
- Schneider, J., & Crul, M. (2010). Comparative integration context theory: Participation and belonging in new diverse European cities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33(7), 1249–1268.
- Sciubba, J. D. (Ed.). (2021). *A research agenda for political demography*. Edward Elgar
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Singer, J. D., & Willett, J. B. (2003). *Applied longitudinal data analysis: Modeling change and event occurrence*. Oxford University Press.
- Statham, P., & Foner, N. (2024). Assimilation and integration in the twenty-first century: Where have we been and where are we going? Introduction to a special issue in honour of Richard Alba. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 50(1), 4–26.
- Teach for Italy. (2026, July). *Insegnare per l'Italia*. <https://www.teachforitaly.org>
- Vermeulen, H. (2010). Segmented assimilation and cross-national comparative research on the integration of immigrants and their children. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33(7), 1214–1230.
- Waters, M. C., & Jiménez, T. R. (2005). Assessing immigrant assimilation: New empirical and theoretical challenges. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 31, 105–125.
- Wimmer, A., & Glick Schiller, N. (2002). Methodological nationalism and beyond: Nation-state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global Networks*, 2(4), 301–334.
- Zelinsky, W. (1971). The hypothesis of the mobility transition. *Geographical Review*, 61(2), 219–249.

Annexes

Interview Questionnaire

This is a list of questions for the interviews as a component of the thesis for the master's in Mobility Studies. The research uses mixed-methods for social research and the qualitative portion of the methodology complements its quantitative part. The qualitative data helps better understand and give an actual experience to some of the data analysis of the prior chapters of the thesis. The interview is semi-structured and can be conducted in person or online on Zoom. Each interview is set to last about 30 minutes with teachers who have experience teaching in diverse classrooms. The aim of the questionnaire is to get an insight into the dynamics of diverse classrooms, how teachers approach diversity, and how interpersonal relationships may develop in diverse contexts. The questionnaire is also interested in how the inclusive Italian educational system operates in practice, particularly state-mandated measures towards diversity and integration, as well as the personal measures that the teachers may take based on their experience teaching in diverse classrooms.

Questions

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. What do you teach?
3. How do you see/define diversity in the classroom?
4. How diverse are your classes?
5. Is diversity a challenge for you as a teacher or for your students? Can you elaborate on this topic?
6. Do you think schools are important to the integration of immigrant-background students? Why/how would you say it is?
7. Is integration of the students important to your school or to you as a teacher? Why would you say that is?
8. Does your school aim to promote integration among students from different backgrounds?
9. What strategies has your school implemented to facilitate interaction and integration among students with different backgrounds?

10. Are they effective in achieving the proposed goals? Do you follow them? Or have you implemented others?
11. Do you see any differences between school strategies and teacher strategies? If so, can you explain how are they different?
12. How do students from different backgrounds interact with each other in your classes?
13. Are there any specific measures that you would take as a teacher to facilitate their interactions? How do you see your role as a teacher?
14. Is there anything you have gained from experience that helps students integrate more effectively?

Interview Consent Form

Educational Integration of Immigrant-background Students in Italy

Hello there,

I am a master's student in the Mobility Studies program at the University of Padua, Italy. I would like to invite you to participate in a social research study conducted as part of my thesis. Please read the following information carefully before participating.

Purpose of the Study:

The aim of the research is to get an insight into the dynamics of diverse classrooms, how teachers approach diversity, and how interpersonal relationships may develop in diverse contexts.

Participation Details:

1. You may take part if you are 18 years or older and have teaching experience in Italian schools.
2. Completing this consent form will take approximately 5 minutes.
3. The interviews can take place either in person or online on Zoom.
4. The study can be anonymous; you do not need to provide your name. Your data will be anonymised for analysis.
5. Your data will only be used for the purposes of the research.
6. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point without providing a reason. If you withdraw, your contribution will not be used in the analysis.

Confidentiality:

All individual respondents will be kept strictly confidential. The raw Data will not be disclosed to third parties. Only the researcher will have access to the raw data.

Risks and Benefits:

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this research poses no harm or risks to participants. If you feel discomfort during the interview, you may stop at any time. Although there is no monetary or material compensation, your participation will contribute to valuable research on the integration of immigrant-background students in Italian schools.

Contact Details:

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact the researcher:

Midya Navidi

midya.navidi@studenti.unipd.it

By clicking "I Agree," you acknowledge that you have read the information above and voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

I agree

I don't agree

Do you want to participate in this study anonymously?

No

Yes

To help the researcher match your responses over time while keeping your answers anonymous, please generate a code using:

1. First letter of your favourite animal

2. Number of siblings

3. Birth month (2 digits)

4. First letter of your favourite colour

Example: Dog, 1 sibling, March, Blue → D103B

Please write this code down, as you will be asked to use the same code during the interview.

Age

Gender (Optional)

Nationality (Optional)

Signature (You can write your name)

Interview No. 1 with P207G, July 8th, 2026 11:09

Interviewer We want to start just by you introducing yourself. Who are you? What do you teach? Just a general background.

P207G I am a teacher of Italian, Latin and Greek in the public Italian school. I don't have the contract at the moment. I've been working for the past year as a teacher in the public school, but right now, I'm not anymore. I was basically a substitute teacher. So last year, I went in three different schools, all in the province of Padua. And two of them were in particular in the city of Padova. Well, the first one I went to was in the countryside, like very far from the, from the city of Padova. And I would like to become like a full-time teacher, but for now I was just able to get these kind of contracts as like a substitute teacher. But in one of these schools, I was able to stay for basically five months, like continuously. And this gave me like a hint of what it is to be an actual teacher of a class for a year. Because otherwise, if I had just to stay for one month, three weeks in one class, of course it couldn't be very knowledgeable in classes, dynamics and everything. But since I was able to stay for five months, I think yeah, I was able to do an experience that resembles, I think, the experience of a normal teacher kind of. So yeah, this is my thing. I have taught also in private schools, but mainly as like one to one. So, the diversity of course is not, it couldn't be assessed, of course, in this kind of teaching environments when it's just, you know, one on one tutoring, it's not a classroom dynamics, it's not a school dynamic. I wouldn't say, but yeah, I was able to, to see a lot of diversity. Like it depends on schools for sure. Which kind of diversity are we talking about, I think? So, for example, when I was in the Liceo Classico and even the one far from the city center of Padova, maybe even more. That one there was not much diversity in terms of where people, where the students come from, where their families come from. They were basically all Italians from generations and generations with the surnames of the Veneto region, you know, the very stereotypical kind of surnames and everything, because the kind of school the Liceo Classico is very fixated, like it's, teaches a lot a lot in Greek. And my subjects are probably the families of immigrants find it more difficult to understand why is it useful to learn these languages? It's some sort of tradition, I think, to learn Italian and Greek in Italy and Latin and Greek. And so. Families who immigrated here from, I think, cultural from places where Latin and Greek are not part of tradition. They struggle maybe to see why it's useful or why to do this kind of school, they are getting there though. I've seen, for example, in Mestre, I'm sure that in the Liceo Classico here, since the immigration is much bigger, I would say you can see more diversity also in the classes there. So, I think slowly, slowly there is getting more diversity also in this

kind of school where I saw the most diversity, I have to say, it's in the last school I was in, in Padova, there was a technical, technical high school. So, I know from speaking to my colleagues, from speaking to principals of other high schools here, that at least in Veneto. But I think it's a problem, a problem. I mean, it's a trend in all of Italy that the children of immigrant families, they get sent basically to this kind of high schools, which are more focused on getting the competence to get a job straight out of high school and not to go in university. Of course, it's possible still to go to university after a technical high school. Nobody stops you. But, yeah, maybe the families of immigrant families find it more useful, to have, an access to the job market immediately after or it's simply because I learned that a lot of a lot of teachers in middle school, when they have to give, you know, to when they have to send the child to tell the child what they see for them, like for their future education. Usually, they never tell them to go to Liceo because stereotypically, maybe they think that they are not capable of doing this kind of very theoretical education, learning Latin and Greek and all these things, because simply these kids maybe had problems with the language. But overall, for the way, for what they liked, they would have liked that kind of education. But since I don't know, like I know the story, for example, of a girl who was, whose family came from Central Africa, in Mestre. She was told by her teachers to do a technical high school, because they thought that she had problems with studying. In fact, her problems were simply with the fact that she didn't speak Italian, maybe at home. So, she didn't have that fluent Italian yet. But her dream was to become a doctor, to study medicine. And so, at the end, they were like, okay, maybe you can go to a high school, to a Liceo. But you, for us, you can do the scientific one, even though it was the one that she wanted to do. But for us, it would be better if you do a linguistic one because you're good with languages. Just because she spoke many languages, you know. So, this is the at least the principal of the school semester where I was doing my internship. Yeah, I also did an internship, like this story I know because I was doing an internship in this school in Mestre where I live currently. And the principal of the school told me about this story that happened some time ago. I don't, I don't remember when, but in the end, this kid, this girl went so to the linguistic high school, but at the end, she did go to Medicina to study medicine and she was able to go through it and to pass the, the medicine.

Interviewer Very interesting actually, because also in, when you like, read the literature about it, that work element is very important in general, like where you end up through the education and the one that leads to a, let's say, stable job as it's perceived, is usually a preferable option. And it is, it's like a common experience, I think. But thank you so much. It was very interesting

talking about diversities in the classroom as well. Do you think, as a teacher, you said your classes are becoming more diverse, perhaps as you see it, is it challenging for you or for your students in any way? Does it come with specific challenges?

P207G I think so, yes. It becomes challenging for sure when there is the problem of the language. For example, there is a big problem that I didn't see much just once. But usually, the schools do offer us to offer courses of Italian in the afternoon, Italian for foreigners, Italian for studying in particular, it becomes a little difficult when you want to include this kind of kids in the, in the class, like these kids who don't speak a good Italian and they feel pressured a lot. I've seen, when you ask them a question, maybe like with all the, the respect of course, and with all the will of integrate them, you know, to the class discourse. Since as a teacher, you sometimes are supposed, of course, to ask to the class to do these activities of feedback and all these sorts of oral contribution to the class work. And, I feel that they have sometimes a lot of pressure. I don't know if it's because of, they feel, because of the fact that they feel judged, but they, their classmates maybe or by the teachers from the teacher's point of view, of course, it's easy to reassure them, at least for me to reassure them, to tell them that it's okay to treat them from a certain point of view as you treat the other people. So maybe you don't focus, of course, on the problems of grammar and the problems of, the lexicon if you have to do, a correction in that part. You do it very gently because you have to. You're teacher, of course you have to correct at a certain point, but also you try to take out the good things and to point them out. Oh yes, you did a good job in seeing this thing. How can we say it in a better way? I mean, we can do like that. So yes, I would say difficult but not difficult. It's stimulating for me, this kind of things as a teacher for sure. It forces me to adapt of course, but, more than difficult, I find it a good, difficult, so, stimulating for me for sure, but also for the class. I think that, diversity in a class can really, really improve the. The experience of the kids, not just of the teacher. It can be difficult for the kids, of course, because they have to adapt. They have to come in contact with something that they don't know. And that's always difficult. But, for the whole class, it's a big contribution. It's a nice contribution. I'm not just talking about having kids that have, different backgrounds or linguistical or cultural background, but also diversity, I don't know, simply means on how people learn, you know, like also that is a diversity. Like there is certain people who are very smart in getting what the professor wants to say, some others that they need more, like, , maybe visual inputs, they work better with the group projects, some people that really don't like them. So, this is already like kind of a diversity that can enrich a lot the classroom. But what the professor has to do, of course, is to give value to this by doing a certain

choice of , of methods, for example, assessing, of course, the class and then deciding to, to follow a certain path in the teaching and maybe give away some of his safe space because maybe the teacher, maybe also me, I was more used to just sit there, you know, and talk and that, but then of course, you assess the classroom and you realize that in order for everyone to really be a contribution to the whole classroom, you have to adapt also yourself a little bit to them. , so that is that can be difficult both for the teacher and for some students who are not used to a certain kind of method of teaching, but it can also enrich a class a lot, I think.

Interviewer Yeah, very, very interesting. So based on your experience, do you find different ways to adapt like differently to the environment of the classroom. And I think also that is like a big part of being a teacher because yeah, you always have different students with different needs, even with different goals being present in that classroom. And you have to kind of, balance everything for everyone and help them out at the end of the day with their studies.

P207G Yeah. But you see, because I've talked about with the benefits for the teacher, for the classroom, but also for the kids themselves who are diverse. Let's say everybody's diverse, of course, but like the kids that I have there are very different from the others. So, they cannot participate in certain discourses maybe, or don't feel represented maybe by certain things that get taught. I think, it can be good also for them to be, you know, like to be, for example, the only few kids that come from an immigration background, for example, in the class only if the professor thought, can really make a value of this because it's very easy for a professor just to put them, put them down. I don't want to say put them down. It's like push them down.

Interviewer Let them.

P207G Down. Let them down. Yeah. Like really not let them express themselves and like, because they bring a lot of culture, a lot of like a different view on not on the world in general, but also on the, on the topics that you start like I teach also history, for example, and it's just European history, Italian and European Christian history. And for example, this year I had to teach, whatever medieval Catholic schism and whatever, two kids that were clearly like maybe a hijabi girl, like somebody who was not Christian. And so, I really had to pause and be like, guys, do you know what a monk is? Do you know what a monastery is? And this really made me realize that maybe there is a lot of Italian students also who don't know these things, you know? So maybe they don't say anything because they know that they are expected to know this. And also, me from my part, I gave it, I took it for granted. But really some things, yeah, that you take for granted, seeing that there is somebody who don't share the same maybe

culture, the same knowledge as the others, really, as a teacher really made me question it and made me like be more open for explanation also. Yeah, I can, can I help the whole class realize that what they take for granted is a small portion of culture of like, history. I don't know if it makes sense.

Interviewer Yeah, no, that is very interesting, actually. Thank you. And brings me to my next question, which is like about integration in general, as in, do you think education or the classroom environment in general helps, students integrate better in the future when they enter society, when they're done with school, like these interactions they have in the classroom together, does this education prepare them, help them for integrating?

P207G I think so, then I, I don't have a lot of knowledge in that area. Like I can reply to what I think, not like data or anything, you know, I think it does. From a certain point of view, simply because maybe there are certain things that you can really get. In the dynamics with your peers. So, for sure it helps to hopefully learn the language, of course, but the question is, could they learn better if they were not in a classroom, but if they were in some kind of school dedicated to them? Of course, I think not, because it would be very like it would be discriminatory, but also from a practical point of view, I think that yeah, they benefit from it because they get to learn the language first, and then learn all sorts of things of the culture of like, dealing with their peers. I can for sure be useful in the future for their integration in the broader society because otherwise, who knows, maybe they would feel, they wouldn't feel safe to be in a diverse place and they would just speak the language of their parents. Maybe they would just hang around with their community, which is fine, but of course, it can lead to the creation of separate communities and also the same Italian people would grow up without ever having to deal, you know, with foreigners and like, maybe like with growing up, like with blind eyes to whatever else they have in the society. So, for sure it's helpful to force them a bit to go out of their comfort zone and to be together with people that don't share their same language, mother language and religion, maybe. So yeah, I think it's, it's beneficial for the both of them. Of course, the teacher has to play an important role in this, because what can happen is of course, that Buddhism, all these sorts of situation can always arise. So, the professor needs to be the one controlling this process, that it really goes into an acceptance and it becomes this diversity and enrichment for everybody. And it doesn't become the opposite because you hear stories of children coming from immigration backgrounds that have a very bad situation. Usually, it's worse with the teachers than with the classmates, and they find the teacher. That is a, I don't want to say maybe a racist who knows, like the teacher that cannot handle at all this kind of

diversity. And this can really, really affect them, I think because some of them really develop this sense of, oh, I don't have to show my diversity, you know, because he gets pushed down a lot. But if the teacher can really make it as a value, then this diversity in classroom can become a tool for a real integration and integration that it's not like I pretend to be like everybody else, but it's an integration, meaning that I can contribute to society with the things that I have, with the differences that I have in regards to society. And for that, the teacher really has to do the job, his or her job in that, like, it depends a lot on the teacher. It can really screw up. Like the whole thing about teacher in this in these situations.

Interviewer Yeah, they can definitely make a big difference in that experience because the kind of managing the classroom and the environment. But that also brings up the question of the school, like, because the school itself is like, education is one thing and the school is the institution, is where the education happens in all of its forms. Do you think, or are there other measures specifically taken by the school or even by the government that promotes integration or prepares teachers, students to integrate better? Does your school, and like schools in general? Do they help? Do they have specific ways of preparing for integration, helping with integration, promoting integration, all of these things.

P207G Every school now has to have a planning regarding children coming from, immigration, like directly, usually from immigration. So, children who come here from another country. And then every school has the procedures how to assess the level, how to integrate, how to know their level of Italian and their level of education in general. So, you, for example, you have to go see the education system in their home country or in the country that they have done the education until now. And with that, they try to assess the level, of course. And they cannot assign the child to a class that is much lower because of course their problems are just related to usually the language they don't know. So, what the schools do is to start with the course of Italian that runs parallel to the, to the school year, the normal school year. So, for example, these kids can participate to the class and have to participate, but also have a lot of, facilitations because they are still expected to learn the language, of course. So, their main effort is to learn the language in this, usually afternoon courses, not necessarily of Italian that are provided by the schools, these courses can be followed by the kids that have just come to Italy, but not necessarily if a teacher just sees that one of their students struggles with Italian language. It happened to me, for example, the student was in Italy, had been in Italy for some years already, but still they struggled. And so, the teachers meet in the meeting of all the teachers of are of one classroom and of one class. Yeah. And they say like, okay, we noticed that we have this

student and we think that we should tell the parents that it's better for the kid to follow this class on the afternoon. We vote. We want to tell the parents we vote. And the point is not mandatory for the child. But still the school knows this. And usually what we do also we for this, in this case, the school also offers, some benefits. I mean, somethings, like, for example, using the dictionary, from Italian to, let's say Albanian when they do the written exams, if they have to write down, for example. Yeah, and I did that. A lack sometimes is that it's not very, in my opinion, it's not very well organized. These things, it leaves a lot of freedom to the single teacher. So, I could have also said, I could have said, no, I don't want to let you use the dictionary. Of course, you didn't do that. But I see that like if, if somebody, if a teacher didn't want to follow this, they could do it because, I was never told by anyone that this child, like I arrived as a substitute teacher in this class and nobody told me what were the standard procedures. So, arrive there and I assign the written exam. And I see the student who had the dictionary. I was like, what is that? So, I go there and I see that okay, okay. And the student is like, usually they let me use it. I'm like, okay, for sure. But still, I don't know if it was a moment where the student felt a little exposed in front of the classroom, maybe, which is okay, I guess because of course, also all the, all the, the schoolmates, the classmates know about this, but still, if somebody had told me before, I would have come in the class already knowing about this kid with certain needs compared to the others. Well, sometimes you really have to improvise in Italian school. I think there are some procedures, but many others are left to the single teacher or the single group of teachers to decide on, which can make it difficult for a child, I guess if he finds or she finds a bad environment regarding the, the teachers, or simply an environment where teachers get reassigned and changed very often because of course, it's not the fault of the school, but it's just the fault sometimes of the fact that the teachers go back and forth so much that there is no time to create a very structured, place. So, to go back, sorry to the question. Yes, there are, official guidelines provided by the schools. Every school is supposed to have it. And it's possible to find this online for all the schools. And usually in this docent, they have a section dedicated to, to diversity and how they want to manage, manage, I mean, promote, you can say some schools for sure, promote some schools, manage diversity, and then there is another docent that is specifically for the integration of children with immigration background. For example, I did for my, research in this school and so I did an interview with the responsibility of the integration. What they did was mostly about integration of students with, mental or physical disabilities. I do remember talking much about integration of students with immigration background. The whole interview, it's mostly about. So, if you

want, I can, I can lead you into the rabbit hole of the Italian, of the Italian bureaucracy regarding, diversity, inclusion.

Interviewer Sure.

P207G Okay. So, there is usually, we call them the special educational needs. So, kids get assisted, you know, by the usually by the council of the teachers of a class. They get together after some months maybe, and they assessed the levels of the of the kids and they find, try to find the ones that have special educational needs. These special educational needs can already be enacted. It could be all sorts of problems from the minor ones or just for the dyslexia or other simple, Different methods of brain activity. So those gets the special educational needs because they have a prescription from the doctor, but it can go up to a very heavy mental problem.

Interviewer You need more specialized, a specialized teacher or person who is trained to work with like different students with different disabilities.

P207G Yeah, exactly. Exactly that. Okay. And, then though there are the special needs that can be seen and recognized officially also without any sort of medical psychological assessment. They are related to us. Usually. And the family. So problematic families or simply, problems related to. The fact that the person comes from a low, very low class like environment. So maybe they're forced, they have to work. Or the fact that they don't speak Italian at home could also be a way. And, when you have special educational needs recognised like this, you can benefit, all sorts of, adjustments like the, the teachers, once these needs are officially seen, can and have to implement a series of adjustments. They can be adjustments just in the way they teach. So, they have to maybe provide not just texts, but also other kind of, I don't know, the use of the dictionary. They can make difference, written exams, for example, and all sorts of other things.

Interviewer Sorry to interrupt. I just, something was interesting to me when you said like a recognition, does that mean the student has to, is there a process for the student, let's say, recognizing that the student has a special need and the student has to do something to get this recognition.

P207G Usually, you know, it's not a thing that starts because the child, the student asks for it. It's something that is the counsel of the teachers start.

Interviewer Is it, like an easy provision? Is it accessible to the students or do they have to do procedures?

P207G No, it is accessible to them. But usually what happens is that you have to ask permission to the parents. So, once you think you have, spotted a situation of special educational needs, what you have to do usually is to ask the parents if it's okay for them to start these kinds of things. What happens sometimes is that the parents don't want to, because they don't want their children to be spotted as the different ones, or because it would mean that the school sometimes has seen a problem in their own household. And what happens though? Not every time. Sometimes the teachers are very concerned about this. So, when they don't have the okay by the parents, they simply don't do anything. But there is where there are ways for the teachers to intervene. Also, without the parents. Official signature or something, which is not illegal. But of course, sometimes it's, like teachers don't want to pursue. I think all the way because they, they fear that the parents could say something against it. Now, I don't exactly remember how it works.

Interviewer Yeah. No, it's very interesting, actually. And, also a very enlightening and interesting conversation about this topic, obviously, I've not worked in the school system. So, to hear from the teachers and their experiences, it's, it's fascinating. I think I did get very good answers to all the questions but at the end, if you like to add anything, if there are any points that you feel like it should be mentioned as well.

P207G I think that in general, the Italian institutions and the Italian system values a lot. The integration, at least historically, Italy has been one of the, if not the first country in Europe to eliminate the schools that segregated people with mental disabilities, for example, from the majority, because the integration has been super, super important for the school. Italian school system ever since the beginning, at least theoretically, because then there have been, I think, a lot of problems in the practical, like putting this into practice. You know, it was a very nice idea. It was a very good idea. It was the perfect idea. And in fact, we did it very soon compared to other countries in Europe. But, I see the problems, now, in, in particular regarding to the immigration, I think it's not that there is no will to do that by the teachers, but I think that the system to get the license for teaching the official system, the one that I went through, for example, last year, 2025 really. We talked and they taught us a lot on how to navigate the world of mental disabilities and of the disturbing specificity, mental, like dyslexia and everything. But I think that not enough, not enough attention was put on the other methods of inclusion of

students coming from different, different backgrounds in terms of culture, in terms of language, in terms of immigration. And. Yeah, some things was done, but not enough. Like I found myself teaching and really a lot of things I had to use the, the abilities that I had from, for example, studying anthropology or because I am interested in this kind of things by myself, but otherwise I couldn't recall studying officially methods, methodologies for this kind of inclusion, you know? So, I think that, really if a teacher has, in Italy has a bad predisposition to this kind of things they're like, they could do some damage. And the opposite too, of course. And I don't get, I don't want to get political on how the situation is going now. Like, I don't know if you heard about that in Milan last year, a school, the school that, they proclaimed that the school would have been closed for the day of the last day of Ramadan, because basically half of their students were Muslims. They were in a neighborhood like, in Milan where they had more than half of the, the student population was Muslim. So, they were like, the majority of them won't even come to school, you know, so since schools in Italy have the freedom to decide some days of week of holidays extra and put them where they want. They decided to put it on Eid to make it a holiday for everybody, which I think was a very not just a very good sign of inclusion, but also very practical, like choice. From that point of view, when the government knew about it, oh my God, oh my God, you know, and now they changed the law basically just because of this, that this this holiday, you can put them only in certain days. Yeah. Basically, you cannot do that anymore. Even though some schools are trying to push it forward for their freedom. Because technically the freedom of the schools is very, very important in the Italian education. Every school is technically free and a lot of things and have to be free. Also on the Constitution, the freedom of teaching is granted to everybody. So yes, from a certain point of view, the institutions give some benefits, of course, to the children. But when the government changes. It's good to yeah, to let the school have their freedom, a freedom that can become a little a synonym of, these organizations sometimes, but some other times it's, I think it's a very important tool to, to protect from, , governments.

Interviewer Like for me also, like when trying to do this research for me, it's personally, like very interesting and important. The topic of integration and inclusion, especially now that you have like a rise in like, I don't know, immigrants in general, let's say in schools in different places, sometimes demographically, you have like a more like the example you mentioned, you have some population, like in an area like reside there more than the others. And then now like in real time governments, schools and different people try to come up with different ways of managing it, promoting it, for example, and how they, let's say, define that inclusion as well.

Like what, what does inclusion look like? What does it mean? And it's very interesting because it's a very ongoing thing. It's happening like in real time, as we talk, hopefully research like that does, you know, help it for the better and shed some light on the experiences of people because also this research, let's say in Italy, in an international, let's say English, research is not is scarce. It's not that much. It's a new thing in Italian, there is more like a body of discussion around educational integration, but like more international research is, is just beginning. So, I think it's kind of exciting. Also opens doors for like many more, research questions. I was having like new questions in my head as well, like about the role of the teachers, maybe the diversity of the teachers themselves, like within that. Yeah. For like other, yeah, research, if you were to zone in specifically on like, the teaching body and, , their backgrounds, their experiences and their education as well. But yeah, that would make up for, I think another thesis. Yeah. No, no, this one. Yeah. But it will be very interesting, I think.

Interviewer Yeah, so, because it is a real thing, like diversity is happening in schools? Like different processes play out at different levels. That is the like the student's level, teacher's level, school level, government level. And all of these are kind of interacting together very complex, but interesting, I think.

P207G Yeah, absolutely. You're doing like a good job in this. Like, it's precious to talk about this, this stuff because yeah, sometimes it feels that as a teacher, you're very left alone kind of in these things. So, if also the, the research would, you know, would focus on this more. It would be beneficial for everybody also for society for sure, because you build the society of the future in schools. Not to leave it, you know, like, you know, a blank zone, but like to focus the light also there. It, it helps. It helps a lot.

Interview No. 2 with C105B, July 9th 10:34

Interviewer So if you can, start by introducing yourself. Tell me about what you do, what you teach. A general introduction.

C105B I am [C105B]. I'm twenty-nine years old. I was born in Alba, but I live in Turin. And so, I taught a little bit in Alba and in Turin. Both of that. I get graduated in 2022 in Humanities, in particular in Italian literature, but I studied also languages. Well, I began to teach in Alba and I taught Italian history, geography, and also Italian as a second language. These are maybe also Latin. These are all the other subjects I can teach. And this year I attended a course to specialize in teaching, which is, necessary in Italy to teach. And I don't know how to say in English, you know, so this is my presentation, I think, and yeah.

Interviewer Very nice. So, you've been mainly teaching Italian and like languages with a humanistic background, that's it?

C105B I study the languages, but I can't teach them. I just study them. I can't teach all. Only Italian, geography and history, humanities.

Interviewer Mhm. Very interesting. Yeah. I also studied English literature myself and language, and I was a teacher for six years before. Okay. I have been teaching there, English, for six years, like to different students and different classes. So that's why I'm also very interested in this topic and sharing some of the experiences as well. So, how do you see or define diversity in your classroom? How diverse are they?

C105B Well, I think diversity, as you said, is mainly, immigrant background of diversity, but also social diversity and disabilities. It depends on schools. I mean, in some schools it is really widespread. And in other schools, it's nearly absent. I think it's also linked to the type of school. I'm in a middle school. I, I see more diversity because everyone go to middle school. Then in high school, I see some differences between high school between like in Italy where you study Latin, philosophy and so on more focused on studying and some professional schools, or technical schools where you study, but you have also practical subjects. And in professional schools, I see more diversity. I see more people with immigrant backgrounds. More. I don't know if people with disabilities, maybe more in in like high schools. Yeah. Studying focus and social class backgrounds is very important in this too, because maybe, lower social class backgrounds, people go to professional schools. It's not so strict, maybe once it was, in the last years it's not, this difference is not so important, but you can see it and I, yeah, when I taught

it in a scientific school, I had not disability student, not student with disabilities and, maybe two people with a different background. While, in other high school like Liceo de la Romana are more focused on humanities and anthropology, sociology and so on. There were many people, many students with disability, and more students with immigrant background. So not only there is a difference between, I think, between like professional schools and, but between like a, there is, there are some differences. This is my, my experience and, but I think it is fundamental for reaching education. And so in schools where I saw more diversity, it was easier to teach and to learn with students and to interact with them because they were like more used to interact with people that are different than them and discover like something, there is not like, like an alterity. Okay? Something different from the backgrounds they lived in. And I think this was very, very important to like grow students that are, that were ready to get new relations with new people, with new approaches and so on. The main obstacle to this, I think it's the, the environment because some schools are really, are really focused on that, but many, many schools are not. And many colleagues, many other teachers are not so focused on, like giving importance to diversity. And maybe they have no, like education themselves about that. So, if you don't study anthropology, if you don't study intercultural education, maybe it's very difficult to teach in some of these environments.

Interviewer Yeah, that's totally understandable. And actually, everywhere there are like differences and similarities, but going into professional schools, like, let's say more career-oriented kind of education. Yeah, that's more apparent. And also, like teachers feeling pressure sometimes to, based on their background or based on their resources, how to manage a diverse class. Which brings me to my next question. Like, for you as a teacher, is this diversity, in general, a challenge? And how do you navigate it when you are in a diverse classroom?

C105B Yeah. Well, yes, it is a challenge because it's not always easy to work together and cooperate in particular with families. I think we with very different backgrounds, cultures, maybe also very different opinions and views on education. And so sometimes it's hard to forget like an educational alliance. I would say that, so I think that families and colleagues, like other teachers are the two main difficulties, not students, in my case to relate and interact with students. It is not so difficult maybe because if you teach, maybe you like young people and you like to work with them and to grow together. While I have, I have some difficulties, some problems with other, like adults in the process, maybe also because, I was young, I was very young when I started. And so, I was like twenty-five and very interested in multicultural education and so on. And I arrived in some school contexts with, with many old people. And I

was really in trouble because I had to, to like, to give some advice, but I won't. I didn't want to, like, look like one who arrives and wants to change everything and create problems. And so, it was difficult to find like a balance in that. And I haven't found it yet. We'll see. Maybe in Turin, it was easier. I, I worked like just one year and not the full year because, you know, here in Italy, it's very difficult to become a teacher, like we say *Insegnante di Ruolo*, which means you have a contract with a school, forever. I'm in the first part of the career, so you have to change every time. And when I arrived here, I had like very brief, periods, like in a school, then another, then another. And so, it's, it's difficult also to promote change to promote new ideas to, all that. If you stay just like a month, two months, three months, I had, but after I would say after, after that. But yes, if you enter in, I see more younger, teachers. And so, it's a little bit easier. But if you say just two months, it's impossible to change things and to also, to help students to understand new ways of teaching. Because sometimes I, I was in difficult, difficult because I came and I tried to be more like, to hear to, to listen to, their problems, to understand their point of views and to promote cooperation between different groups. But they were used to something else. And so, you, you need time to change these patterns. And this, this is very, yes, a difficulty that I, I found also in Alba Liceo but also here in Turin with a middle school class.

Interviewer Very nice. It's very interesting. Do you do anything special in these classrooms? Like from your experience, you have learned that, helps you manage better, especially like with the different backgrounds of the students?

C105B Well, In the middle school. I had a class with many, many people with different backgrounds and maybe five people from Italy and twenty from the other parts of the world. And it was because it was like a part of the city that, like suburbs that has some of these backgrounds. And it was difficult. Many, many teachers were in trouble in the, in that class, but there I was like, disability support teacher. I don't know if it's the translation, but you understand. And in that way, I had the opportunity to be with the class for many hours. So not just the four hours of Italian teaching, but I saw the Italian teacher, the French teacher, the math teacher. And I saw also how the class changed when they changed, teacher and I. I wrote down some advice for myself how to do things and how not to do things in particular, not to do things, because I saw that there were like teachers who saw, I don't know, a little student, I remember it was like twelve years old and he, he was from Morocco. He was in Italy, like for two years. And he tried to, to say he already knew French, but the French talked in Morocco, and the teacher said, this is not French. French is from France. I teach you French French. And I was like, no, no, no, no. This is the opposite you have to do. I think you have to. Maybe he was like

a difficult student because he couldn't stay calm. He didn't take notes. But you have to, to like wonder. You have to wonder, why did he? He doesn't take notes. Why he's not focused on the subject? Maybe because he already know what you are teaching. And so, you can, like, ask to him if he wants to teach with you, you can say, okay, come here and write what I say. Or maybe, how do you pronounce it? In French you speak in Morocco. Because there are many French languages. And, so you can like find other people in the class who talk French at home, other accents. And you can promote these. I think this is a way you, you feel really included and like also part of the class and also, maybe you, you get used to, to study more, to be more, like, focused on what we do. And it's, it's also a way to create good students and not difficult students, you know? So, I try to do that, not in this class because I wasn't the teacher of Italian there. but I, I tried when I was teaching in Alba Italian as a second language because there, I had like fifteen, twenty students from all over the world, level, like three A1. So, they didn't speak Italian. And so, we had to speak all languages. So, I used English, French, drawings and gestures. Fortunately, in Italy, we, you use gestures. And so, I was ready to do that. And like we tried to focus on some words. They use that work. They needed to go to the supermarket, like, you know? Some language task, reality task. And it was, we started by, I am promoting their own languages. Someone couldn't write and so we go like A, B, C, all that. But people, many people could write but maybe they were very fluent in English, very fluent in other languages. And it was very important to me, for me to say the problem is not that you are not, you can't speak Italian, but you can speak Italian and I can't speak your languages. Okay? I can speak English, Italian, French. And so, you have many, many languages, you know, maybe more than me! And also, only because your language, and I don't know, other dialects are considered less doesn't mean you don't know a language. Okay? So, if you want to say, how do you say, I don't know, home, house in your language in Wolof, I'm happy to learn it. And so, it was, it started like an exchange. And I was, I tried to teach that too, to say this clearly, to say I'm here and I teach you Italian, to people that were normally older than me, but some, someone like my age, someone older and I'm teaching you Italian because you are here in Italy and you need it now. But maybe one day I will learn Wolof from you. Okay? And yeah, we started like with the languages and then we made some reality tests and so on. It was really, really fun. But it could be, it was possible because it was like a school for foreigners in a proper school, middle school, high school. There is no so clear attention to foreigners, to people with immigrant backgrounds, and maybe more from a language point of view, because now, maybe from this year or next year, there are some Italian as a second language teachers also in middle and high schools, proper schools. And they are like focused on people with immigrant

backgrounds that came to Italy like one, two, three years ago. And they can take these students out of the class, go in another class and teach. And I think it is very, very important. I could, I could try that when I was at university with a, like a scholarship. And it was very interesting. Interesting experience, I think it could be, it has to be. It is very important, but we have to focus not only on language, but also on cultural, cultural backgrounds, because there are many people with, like parents that were immigrants. They, they are Italian, but they are, they have different backgrounds and we have to find a way to promote and like give value to that. I don't know how, but it's very, it's very difficult. I, I'm trying to, but not so easy, not so easy. If you are one of the few teachers that do that in a school. I think we are many teachers with this focus, but widespread and not, if we had a school with all these teachers, it would be very, very easy. But it's not like that. We are like in different schools.

Interviewer And I think you are doing great actually like these methods that you are mentioning, like in the classroom. It's fascinating also like giving value to their knowledge, what they know and trying to involve them like everybody to contribute somehow. I think that is, that is very good. That's very interesting. But you mentioned the school. Do you think like the, the school, do they help you? Do they promote integration? What role does the school have? Because the school is the institution, let's say education is the process and the school is the institution where you do this.

C105B Mhm.

Interviewer How does the school help your work or promote integration?

C105B Mhm. Well, I think it's a difficult question because I think it's it very depends on the school. I don't know. I don't think that the school as an institution in Italy has this focus. I would rather say that it's the opposite and we can see it from the Indicazione Nazionali, you know, that like advice for teachers to how to teach, what to teach. They are very full of; how can I say it in a appropriate way? Things that cannot be said in 2026. And, so it depends on schools. I found some middle schools that are more used to that maybe because they, they are more in touch with families because students are younger or maybe because everyone go to middle school. So, so we, we have more multicultural backgrounds in middle schools there. I found some experiences that promote cultures, but not in a structured way. Like sometimes, like parties with different cultures with, you know, people who takes their food from the cultures and everybody share, sometimes in Turin, like not schools, but some associations which, like, cooperate with schools, organize some Iftaar during you know, like some I don't know, late

afternoon after school, people came, took their food. I think food is like a central part of that, yeah, I would say that, but sometimes it doesn't, it doesn't start from school, but maybe schools, like participate in other associations, initiatives. And this is what I see but well, I don't know if there is some structured, experience that students can do in some schools to focus on immigrant different backgrounds. It depends on schools and it's; I think it's too much, too much is left to the individual school or to individual teacher's discretion. And so, if you have this other like resource, you do something in this direction. But if the school doesn't have like a, I don't know, some teachers, a group of teachers that are interested to that in that it's very difficult to, to organize something structured maybe in the middle school is, we have more opportunities. But also in the elementary school, I think it's even better. But I don't, I don't teach elementary school, but it's like an impression that if you have like children, maybe it's easier to approach these things. Another thing is that I work with a holiday that is entering like a cultural hub, where we made some projects. I'm here for a project about colonialism because I have, in September I will start a PhD in postcolonial literature, and I work with them. They have a group, who, which goes to, to the schools into middle schools in particular, but also some high schools, and they like try to teach something about colonialism that is a really big void in Italian programs. And they, they try to do that in a language that is accessible for young people, maybe also with some workshops, some games they made some, like walks in the city and they see like the streets, which has the name of, Ethiopian city, and they say, why? Do you know why? And so, we start telling the story and I think this is not, like focused on immigrant backgrounds, but there ends up and they end up talking about that maybe sometimes they, there are also two girls, a writer and a content creator. I don't know how do writers in this project that go to do that, that are, that have, black skin immigrant backgrounds. And so, when they enter the class Students are surprised because they are used to see black people that are students and white people that are teachers. And when they have a black teacher, they are surprised. And they, like ask many things. For example, where do you come from? And they say Italy. And this is like something new that young students learn. Maybe sometimes black students ask, where do you come from? And so, it's, it's very important, in my opinion, to have black teachers, black educators, because it's like also representation matter, young students can see a possible future for themselves and not just the future of the adult black men that come to my course of Italian. That is okay. But it's not the only, It's not the only future possible for them. Yeah, I would say.

Interviewer Yeah, that is great. Actually, there is a gap in the, the literature in general, that I've noticed, is with this, and there is like little research actually about the teaching, the staff

and diversity in the teaching staff, if that helps integration through education, for example. So, I think that is a very interesting area also for further research. But talking about that, how in general, do you think like education helps integration? Does it help? And how it helps?

C105B Well, yes, I think it helps. And, in many ways. The first one, more clear for me is that, you learn how to interact with people with different backgrounds, with different opinions, maybe on things. And it can be very useful to grow up as a person who is ready to, not to fight, but to try to understand, to be like diplomatic. And I think it is really peace education, that is really important in this period. You know, you, when you talk about actual geopolitics in class, with many attentions because there are people may be linked to some environment that you cite to do quote, you, you have to be very, I think it is a crucial point because you, you talk about the world, but you have to, to have in mind that world is next to you in front of you. Okay? And they have to, to realize that too. You have to, like walk with them in this path and letting him, letting, letting them know that many people around there, around them come to many different countries, maybe also work together where these countries are on Google Maps, watching together their traditions and cultures is very important to understand what really is that part of the world. Maybe you have, like an imaginary link to rhetoric and like media, but you don't, media aren't the truth. And so, you have to, to teach also that. And, I think it's another part of the educational, like the way in which integration is education because you learn the word with interacting with people and not studying it, or like just watching videos on TikTok because you have to know that what is written in a book and what you see on TikTok isn't necessarily the truth and you learn also the complexity, the stratified multi-layered reality of the, of different people. Because you understand that maybe you have two mates that are from Morocco, but you see that one is nice and one is not. One is tall and one is small. One is, and so you, you don't ask to put all the people in a label, but you go beyond that. And I think it's very useful and it's useful also for other types of diversity. I would say that if you have a student with disability in a multicultural class, it's a challenge, but it, it can be really enriching because you see, you can say, okay, you are from there. There you are from there. And he's like that. Okay? Yeah, I think, that diverse, one type of diversity helps to understand other types of diversity. And you have also to see that in an intersectional lens because without that it's very difficult. I think it's, it's not, you have to do this activity or this other activity, but you have to, to create an approach that can see all of them, like people, like single individuals and not like a country or status. And, when we were talking about black teachers that are very rare, I think it's also linked to social class because many, many people in Italy, because of racism,

institutional violence, and many, many cause, there are many people with immigrant backgrounds that are poor or poorer than Italian people from generations and generations. And maybe it's difficult to come from a different country, like grow up here from, for some years, then finish high school, go to university, get graduated and so on in a practical sense, but also in a psychological sense, I would say, you know, if you are from a poor lower social class, maybe you have some problem in attending university, but in Italy we have many scholarship, so it's, it's possible but it's difficult. I have an example very, very near, very next to me. My best friend is from Romania. She lived in Romania just three years and when she was three she came here. She attended elementary school, middle school, high school with me and then university. But she had a scholarship and so she could afford a university and like the rent of the house. But she had to work because the scholarship, like, can help you with university and maybe the rent, but not like, the scholarship can't like cover all the, like, I don't know, how to say. And so, she had to work like part time work, part time job, for many years and she attended university while working. And so, like three years university bachelor's degree in six years, and now the master's degree in four years and not two because it's difficult while working. But I didn't have to work, if I worked, it was like, ah, this weekend I work, I work two hours in this period every day. And it's very different because I, I worked because I wanted to be more independent, to have some money, my money to go, I don't know, during summer the seaside while she was working for, like eating and paying the rent. And so, I think that even if you have the scholarship, but you have to work, you will have some problems and you will like have a graduation, like I don't know how to say, later. And so, it will be more difficult to get into school, to teach. So, it's like a circle in Italy. In Italian we say circle. So, we have a problem that creates another problem, that creates another problem, and so on. And yeah.

Interviewer Yeah, that is very interesting. Thank you so much. It's, this is all amazing, especially, like what you said, as in like, you're not just learning about the world by studying it, but by interacting with it. But also, as a teacher, remembering that you have the world in front of you, like in the classroom, that is, that is a fascinating point of view, actually, and it is very interesting. But about that, it is also true that there are these intersections of different disadvantages and disparities. They all like play into each other. And a lot of people debate how you can level the fields for different people and how much you can do it, or how you should do it. So, these are all like, even now, open ended questions to, to some extent and still being debated. But this is very interesting and I think I got the answers, great answers to my

questions. If there is anything you would like to add, that you feel like you should mention, feel free to do so.

C105B Yeah, maybe that I think the key point is to like, have an, to build an educational alliance between, teachers, between teachers among them, then between teachers and parents and families and also between educators in Italy, we have the figure of educator. That is something different than teacher. No, it's the, educator is someone who doesn't teach you but helps you to grow, to give you some values to, like, learn how to behave with other people and so on. And many people with like social class problems or disabilities, have an educator maybe at home, maybe in the afternoon in an association, a center or so on. So, I think these alliances could be very, very useful because this year in the project I attended, it was like a project for young people who didn't go to school and to help them to approach again to school or maybe to find a job, but to like find their path. And, in this case, this school was in an Oratorio. There is a, you know, Oratorio. Maybe it's like, I, I look how to translate it because it's very, it's oratory, but I don't think it's because it's like very cultural when you have, we, okay. When you have a parish, okay? Sometimes they have like a part of the place for young people in the afternoon they play, they study, and we, we have educators there. Okay? The school I worked in was in the morning in this place. And in the afternoon, we were with young people, not from this school, but from the like the area, from the neighborhood. And, they were like, we had to help them playing together and so on. And in the role, I had, I found out how important it is to know better. The parents, the families of the people you work with. Also, to have an equip, in Italy, like the teacher is alone with the class. You have three moments during the year where, when you, where you, like are all together, but there you don't speak about these problems that are crucial, but you speak about the notes. Okay? He's eight, nine, seven and so on, but they are not numbers, but we don't have time to speak about them, their lives, their stories, because we have maybe one hour for twenty-five people in the project. I, I was into this year, we had like eight students and we were on a trip of like eight educators and teachers and so on. And so maybe in, sometimes in class, there were four students and three educators. It's like something strange because they were like, students with particular necessities. Okay? But maybe something like that could be thought for school, more attention to, maybe if you have like ten students to look after, it's easier to have these attentions to, like promote their cultures to have them like, with their experiences and so on. If you have twenty-five and you have to do many, many things about your subject and you have to give notes, and maybe it's like a structural change that Italian schools need. And yeah, so I would say the educational alliance with people

around them and like more, more teachers for students to help them. But it's difficult because the state has to pay. And so, they don't have like, money to do that. And I don't know, but these are like, this is my utopian ideas.

Interview No. 3 with E304R, July 11th, 2026 10:59

Interviewer So if you if you're ready, we can start, you can just introduce yourself, what do you teach etc.

E304R I'm twenty-seven years old. I studied the languages and cultures of Asia and Africa in my bachelor. And, during my bachelor, I started, teaching Italian as a second language with a university project. And I like the, this kind of job. So, I decided to do a first level master in teaching Italian as a second language in the master. I did an internship in a adult school. So, a school for adults with an immigration background, that had to learn Italian and, take the middle school exam, and a diploma to, to like get a better job in Italy. And, after that, when I finished the master, I started teaching in a middle school, so too are children, like children from eleven to fourteen years old. And then someone was older, like fifteen. But this was the range. Specifically, I was teaching Italian as a second language. So, I didn't like have a class with also Italian students. I just had four different groups of students, all with an immigration background. Some were, it was very diverse because I had, students who were born in Italy, but maybe they had some difficulties, in, especially in the language. And I also had students who arrived in Italy maybe, two months before. So, it was very different. The students were very different, so my classes were mainly focused on learning Italian. Okay. Yeah. So, I think, okay, they were very diverse classes and the diversity was a diversity of, country of origins, there, there were also differences because, okay, apart from the economic and other kind of differences. But, just focusing on the language, I could see that, for example, students who already knew English, for example, were very, in a sense, privileged because, they could learn more easily Italian. And also, other Italian students were more interested in engaging with them because they spoke English. And English is like the social media language, the international language. So, it was seen as a very cool thing, I would say. While for example, other students who spoke, Chinese, Bengali, Indian had a lot more difficulties because their languages were completely different from Italian and also other Italian students were less likely to speak and engage with them because there was, a bigger gap, I would say. So, in my classes, usually students, like a problem we had was that, especially students coming from more nationalist country. I don't know if it's, like Albania. Albania, were more likely to just form a group and stay in their group and talk in their language. So, it was a bit difficult to like to create a, what would you say?

Interviewer Like for them to also join or integrate or have more mixed groups together? Yeah, it's very interesting, that you also mentioned the diversity. As a teacher, how, how do you see this diversity? Like what is it, what is diversity in the classroom? And how does that challenge you as a teacher? If it does and, how do you deal with it?

E304R Mhm. So, I'm okay. So, in my classes, like they, they must. I don't know if I'm understanding correctly, like the word diverse because I, I'm just understanding it intuitively. So, I don't know. So, I think that in, in my case, the first barrier was the language. So, the language was the most difficult thing to deal with because I had a lot of students speaking different languages and speaking Italian, but at very different levels, so my main difficulty was to make, just basically make sure that everyone was understanding and also trying to prepare lessons that were, suitable and adaptable to different levels, then some students were bored for the classes. If the class was too focused on the last arrived, okay, while sometimes the classes were too difficult for some students. And so, I think this was a, an issue and, a good tool we used as teachers of Italian as a second language was, to prepare. Games like, language games or maybe taking some popular games and adapting them to language learning in, in this way we could, either form teams, teams of people with like putting together, more different people so that they could work together and like separating the, the groups that were forming, just, with nationalities. I don't know if you're understanding.

Interviewer Yeah. Of course. It's very interesting actually.

E304R And I would say that especially with games, the relation with the school was a bit difficult because, I think Italian schools are a bit traditional in the way of teaching. So, you are a good teacher if you teach difficult things. You are like the authority in the classroom and the students listen, study and do the exercises. So sometimes, maybe I was, doing this kind of games with the students, maybe other professors entered in the classroom to take something, I don't know. And they were a bit critical because they were saying, ah, but you just play you, you are not doing, classes, lessons. And so also, and this is a bit, challenging because like, for example, my supervisor in Italian as a second language had to intervene. And to explain to the professors the importance of games also in language learning and, and also because I, I in my Bachelor, when I did the the project with the university, it was a project, based on, a task-based language learning. So, a very practical, way to teach Italian with the task tasks. So, it was like identifying one task that could be meaningful for the students and, use that task to teach the language. I don't know. So, it's very practical and it's very different from the Italian common

way of teaching. And so also this was a bit was seen as not a good way of teaching from the other professors. And so, the games played a big, a big part in our classes. Obviously, it was not only games, there was like a preparation phase, then the game and then, an elaboration phase. So it was, there was also like grammar teaching, etc. but the games were an important part also to overcome the differences in the class.

Interviewer Yeah, that is very interesting actually, I was a teacher myself, so I taught English for like six years and I had different students of all kinds of backgrounds and trying to manage that, as a teacher, I know it's, it's very difficult, but I think it's also very important. Like the teacher plays an important role there. So how do you think like your role as a teacher and the school's role, how do you help the students, integrate, the teacher and the school? Because there are different things that schools do, but the teachers also have to come up with their own initiatives, like methods based on experience. So how do you see this?

E304R Okay. Okay, this is a more difficult question, I think. The teacher and the school experiences were a bit, linked in some sense because, since I, I was a Italian as a second language teacher. This is a kind of new, new figure, I think, in the Italian school system. So, our insights, were also important for the school to develop ways of new ways of trying to integrate the students, okay? This school act more on, official. Yeah. Official level. Obviously, the school is more power in like finding funds, etc., so in, in my case, there was this attempt for this from the school to, for example, participate in competitions to get funds to employ, for example, cultural mediators, to also to deal with the families because, this is also an important part in integration to talk with the families of the, of the children, and also the school, can participate also in competitions to, for example, prepare, the Italian formazione. Okay, like a formazione of teachers to deal with the foreigner students, to students with immigration background. And so, I think the school acts on that level. And as teachers, it's not always easy. I think it's not always successful what you try to do in helping the students to integrate, in my case, it was very important not to be because, okay, it's middle school, so the students are becoming teenagers. They are very, undisciplined, I would say. So, in my case, it was important to not be too authoritative, so not be too strict. Trying to understand, to engage in dialogues that sometimes also could be seen as a loss of time. But in my opinion, they were important because if you if you are too positive or like if you put yourself in a opposition to the student with the student, like the relationship is damaged and the students will do what they want and there won't be any dialogue. So, I think listening, also listening a lot is a good strategy for me. Also trying to maybe ask them questions about their backgrounds and their life in their

countries of origin so that maybe they could share what they want you to share and also find something in common with other students, or maybe something that was interesting to them. And so, this was a, a way also to create a group, not a class. So, and also relationship also between them and, as an Italian, as a second language teacher, it was also helpful for me to talk with the teachers of these students because sometimes they were concerned. For example, I had a teacher. She was an Italian teacher. She had a class, a very diverse class, but also with a lot of Italian students. And she was concerned about what one student that we had in common, that came from India two months before and she was saying, he isn't learning anything. What do I have to do? And so, I, I was explaining to her that, for, for eleven years old student, it would be difficult to learn Italian fast, especially from his background. So, I, I think also, talking with other teachers can be a way of, helping the student integrate because you can maybe give suggestions and, yeah, to other teachers that also spend a lot of hours with the students and, yes, trying to talk with them because then there are a lot of conflicts in the class sometimes, so you have to talk with the students trying to mediate between them, then sometimes, it's very difficult to find a mediation or maybe a student need some alone time. So, you, you also can change the group class during the year to best help the students. Yeah. So, for example, I had a student that was perceived as a very difficult student, we, we also had an episode of a physical confrontation between two, two students. And so, I had some time alone with, with him, like teaching him Italian and he was talking a lot. And so, with this, also dialogue between, between us, then he was more, I think he felt more understood. And so also his behavior, became better. Yeah.

Interviewer Very interesting, to have like a common ground to like, talk to the students and also engage them, give them a say as well. Okay. Very nice. So going back to the, that integration question and with the education, do you think education and the school itself helps these students integrate better in the future? Does it promote integration? Does education help the students in general?

E304R I think the school has a very important role in the integration. And also, the teachers have a great responsibility. Teachers and educators have a great responsibility. Sometimes, some in a, in a practical sense, not always. It's the, it helps them to integrate, but it has the potential to help them a lot. And it depends also on the teachers and on the teachers. So, I think Italian schools should, invest more in teaching teachers how, how to deal with the students with an immigration background. Because Italian schools are still very much built for just Italian students. And so, the school has an important responsibility also to create a network, also to

help students integrate outside the school. Because, for example, I've seen, in one in the last school I, where I was teaching, they had, they had the links with other associations like, they could suggest students to go, for example, to a specific centre or to sport associations and so it was also a very important, the school was important also to help them integrate in the society outside and to build a network that could maybe arrive where the school isn't. So, yeah. And this was very important because a lot of students engaged in activities outside the school and it was very helpful to them. Yeah. Also, it could also help to build a network outside the school for the families, maybe suggesting places where they could go learn Italian. So it was, it's, it's a very, it has a great potential.

Interviewer Yeah, I agree, it is very important, and it can help a lot because the students come across like each other, different groups of people in the classroom, and they're spending most of their time inside the school. And if the school can facilitate this activity, which is fascinating, you mentioned it like outside the school, it can continue even outside the school, which is a very interesting point of view and comment. So, I think I got very good answers to most of my questions. If there is anything that you would like to mention now that you feel like it needs to be mentioned that we left out, feel free to talk about it.

E304R Okay. No, I just want to add something in relation to this last answer I gave you, it is a practical example because I am thinking now that, I remember some students in my class, get to know each other better through this, afternoon after school activities. So, a very good thing, because the school is, is a more formal institution maybe for the students, and so there is this, this limit, so the after school activities become even more important to make the students know each other, engage with each other. And I remember this, a lot of students were going to an after school center, and they were very happy, very enthusiastic about it. And it also made it more easy to, to get to know each other, like in, like breaking these groups based on, on nationalities. So yeah, I was thinking of this practical example and it's very important.

Interviewer Yes, that is a very interesting area for further research as well because, the, the research usually is about like grades and study tracks and finding a job. But for integration specifically, sometimes what is more important is these interactions, like how people, how much they are in contact with each other, Like, how can they get to know each other? Yes. So, this sort of social aspect of integration as well, which I also think is very important and it's, it's very good that schools do provide a space also like afternoon activities and these sorts of things that help the students to interact with each other more. And I'm very interested about this. So,

if you can tell me a little more like, how are these afternoons, activities organized? What do they usually do?

E304R I think, it's something sadly that depends on the schools, so I remember this school where I thought was very well organized also maybe because the teachers were more passionate about their job or had more knowledge about this or more interested in the integration, so, there was, I remember there was, afternoon activity specifically for homeworks, like to do homeworks with the students and it was inside the school itself. So, it was also very easy for the students, for the parents, because they didn't have to move from the school to another place, but they could just stay in the school in the afternoon eating because they had, canteen and then do the homeworks, etc. And it was very important, because, obviously students with the Parents coming from other countries maybe don't have help to do their homework, so they are a bit disadvantaged. And this afternoon activity was very important to them because it would help them study. And also, the students are very, even the more the, the most, undisciplined or distracted are, for them, it's important to, to get good grades. And so, they were also motivated to do these activities and, after homework, I think they were just playing or doing something. This was, helpful to them, but also, there was a center, I think linked to Christian Association, because in Italy there are a lot of parishes that organize a like summer camps or other things for children. And there was this one, it was, a center of the Salesian. Salesian is like a Christian order of, a Christian order, very focused on education, and activities for children. And so a lot of students were talking about this during, my classes. So, I was listening to them and they were very enthusiastic about this center because they, they're especially because they, they could do sports there. So, playing soccer, Playing volleyball. I remember a lot of girls were in a volleyball team, there is in Italy, most volleyball is mostly seen for girls and soccer for boys. So, they had this, they were very enthusiastic about that. And, for example, it could happen then that an Albanian girl was in the same team of a girl from Morocco. And so that afternoon activity helped them, engaged also in the class because they were becoming friends. And so, it was also important for me because, very difficult when you have like a group of Albanian people speaking Albanian to each other, a group of people from Morocco speaking Arabic. And so, it was also helpful also because, they spend a lot of time in other centers and in maybe with me, they spend only three hours, in a week. So, this center was also suggested by the school. So, the school was a link. Yeah. I think sport is very important.

Interview No. 4 with C206B, July 13th 10:00

Interviewer So without further ado, if you're ready, we can start the interview now and you can tell me a little about yourself. What do you teach? Where do you teach, the general background?

C206B Well, I, I am twenty-eight years old, so I've been teaching since five years now. I teach in different cities in Italy, in the north and I studied before to become a teacher. So here in Italy, it's not usual, very, very usual to study, to become a teacher. Like the, the old teachers just became teacher after high school. But since 2012, it's mandatory to have a degree. So, I studied for five years, social studies and primary school studies, and I became a teacher. Then I started working in schools after graduation. Actually, I applied in this program who's called teach for Italy. I don't know if maybe you have seen it or hear of it, but it's a program to host, aim to, fight against, how do you call it in English? Sorry. My English is very rusty, desegregation, maybe.

Interviewer You can tell me a little maybe about the context of it. What do you do? What is it meant to do?

C206B Yeah, it's, it's meant to create inclusive classrooms because, like the main problem here in Italy, it's that a lot of children, a lot of kids, they drop schools. So, there is this big, big problem. And the problem of Italy and what I feel as a teacher, actually, it's to, like fight against this problem because I think it's, it's a very, it's very bad if you have a bad experience in school until you drop it, you know? So, this was my very, very inner desire, you know? so I went to Turin, which is a city like a quite big city in the north of Italy. And I started working in this school who was called the [School]. And this school is very interesting because there are a lot of nationalities. We have forty-four nationalities in the school, but Italian. So, this is very interesting because it is quite close to the city center, but a lot of people who are Italian, they don't send their children to our school because they think it's not like a good school, because a lot of students come from other places in the world and they feel it's not easy to learn in this kind of school. Okay? I feel, and I think it's a big opportunity in the other hand, because, you know, like in my classroom, there are eight, eight cultures, eight languages and the mixing of all of them, it's very beautiful. In the other hand, it's very difficult to manage. So, the, the main thing is that you have to think in a different way then. I don't know if you you're working in some other schools in the city or in the country. So, this is like a little bit of my journey in school for all.

Interviewer Very interesting. And what do you teach? I might have missed it.

C206B I've been teaching math, mostly math and science. Geography, like scientific subjects. We teach a lot of subjects in the classroom, not just one and I am in third grade right now. Like the next year, I'm gonna go to the fourth grade.

Interviewer Mhm.

C206B And I also teach, we call it special needs. Like we have a student with special needs in classroom. So, I also work with him sometimes and like with, with the, with the whole classroom as well.

Interviewer Yeah, that is very interesting because most of the teachers I have talked to so far, they teach Italian or the languages, which makes sense because you would definitely come across like students from different backgrounds in those classes.

C206B This, yeah, that, that is a thing actually, because I, I used to be very interested in languages like also in university, my favorite thing to study and to research was language and oh, I mean, it is like that also now, But then I had to teach math like it's, it was requests from the school, but teaching math, I can see another part of the students because sometimes they don't know that the language when they come in school, they don't know Italian, but they know math. So, it's an opportunity to, to teach math because I can see what they know. Moreover, the language and sometimes it's very important to them because they are like, yeah, I don't know the language but I know something and I want to show you so you can see I am someone.

Interviewer Yeah. That's an interesting kind of the beauty of math. It's a language of its own. You can work out like the different things without even like necessarily knowing a Language. Very interesting. But talking more about diversity. How do you see diversity in your classrooms? And is it like a challenge for you? Does it challenge you as a teacher?

C206B Yeah, definitely. It is a challenge to also to see the real diversity because we mostly focus, I talk like we, because we are a team. So, I'm not alone in this process, we, I think that the most important challenge and the most difficult one is to like to know the other cultures before the children arrives or the children are there and to have the curiosity and the time to like see this diversity, I mean, cultural diversity, because there are, as you said, there are lots of diversity, like how you learn, how you manage things, how you are in a relationship. So, in all of these areas, the children are different, but staying in the cultural diversity in the language, diversity, the challenge, the challenging thing is that I don't know the other culture as well as

mine. Like I've traveled a lot, I study a lot, but I had to like stay in a curiosity way seeing them. So, this is not very easy to do because you have lots of things to do when you work. A lot of things to think about and you want like as a teacher, you want to learn a lot of things. But I, I've learned, what I've learned in these years is that you can learn from them and you have to like create an environment where these differences, this diversity can show up. Like you have to create the opportunity. And this is not easy because you have, this is a choice. Like the most of the teachers in my school are like, yeah, I have to teach Italian, I have to teach math, I have to teach science. So, I'm gonna do that. I'm going to do that. I'm going to do that again. For me, it's like, and for us as a team. It's like, yeah, we have to teach these things, but they have a lot of, a lot to teach to us and to others to each other. So sometimes, I mean, every day we try to, you know, create some moments where this can show up and it's, it's really a choice because you have to like, don't do something else. And maybe the other classrooms do that and you don't. So maybe sometimes the other teachers are like, yeah, where can you find the time to do that? And I'm like, I just don't do something else.

Interviewer Yeah. Very interesting. Talking about, like making it show up, this diversity and making room and the time for it, are there any things like specifically that you do as a teacher or the school does? Like the role of the school is also important here because you work within the institution that is the school. So, there is the school that has to take its own measures and there are laws, but there's also the teacher who is present in the classroom, has an experience actually working with the students. So how do you make this moment show up and how does the school help? What is the dynamic like?

C206B Mhm. Well, the, the school is very interested in this dynamic also because as, as I said before, we have lots of students with different backgrounds and cultures. So, we have a group of teachers in the school who's called like a multicultural group, let's call it like that. And they have, I mean their object is to create more. I mean, at first, it's to welcome the children who comes to school. So, they do interviews to the children and their parents. They ask about their backgrounds, also the school backgrounds, like, have you been to school? Where? How do you have like grades? And something like that. And the other things they do, it's to like promote activities for different inclusion differences, inclusion and differences show up. Let's go like that. So, it's a, it's a very, a big thing in our school. But I have to say that it's just a group. Like not every teacher follow the group. Not every teacher creates these moments. Not every teacher sees the difference and the diversity in this way. Okay, so the school is very interested in it, but not everyone like it's, it's kind of difficult to talk about the school because we are a lot, we are

like one hundred and eighty person teaching in the school. So, it's not like a compact group where everyone is in, in the same way like some thought. Another thing the school does is that we have, kind of always have, people who speak other languages as mediators. So, when we have to talk with the parents, when we have to, I don't know, maybe know about other cultures, we can talk to them. And this is a very big help. And as a teacher, I can say I. I don't know, for example, something, something very small, very easy. It's like every morning we, we start the lesson asking the children, how are you? And to like choose maybe an image or an emoji or whatever, like, every day changes. And this is a moment where they can speak about themselves. And a lot of the time we use that moment also to, I don't know, maybe talk about something about their culture, their life. So, for example, I don't know, sometimes a child can say, yeah, today I'm happy because it's, I don't know, a holiday in my country. So, I'm happy. But I'm also sad because I'm not there. But I can talk to my grandma who's there and that's it. So, this is a small moment, but it's very, very important for us and for them because the older children can know what's going on in the other parts of the world, in the other country. And we as teachers, we know something about them and we, we give the opportunity to say that. So that's why I was talking about create the moments because this is not something that happened always. Like also in my school experience, I go to school and I start lessons like math, science, whatever. There is no this moment as something usual, you know, or for example, something happened that sometimes happened, I don't know, maybe we're talking about something, for example, multiplication facts in math. And someone says, well, I learned to do that in some other ways. Can I show you? And I'm like, yeah, always. And, and maybe he or her, she shows me, some I don't know, maybe some methods who she learned in Egypt or in Morocco. And we learned that all together. And we, I mean we learn in also methods of different cultures. Some other things I have to do to my studies, to my students is to like, ask their parents how they learn to do that things. And these, it's sometimes problematic because, not all parents can, you know, write and read and do math. So sometimes the kids are more, literacy, I don't know how to say that, like they have more literacy than their parents. So sometimes this is very difficult and very hard to accept from the parents. But what I see mostly is that the parents are very, very happy that their children are learning. So, you know.

Interviewer Yeah, that is very interesting. I've seen, like from different people's experiences and my own experience as well. Because before doing this master's, I was a teacher too. I was teaching English for like six years to different students in different contexts, like classrooms. So, engaging them was a good way. Like they, they felt they also belong in the classroom or

they matter. They can, even like at a didactic level, to teach them to speak up, to participate, to engage. I think it's a good thing. And it seems to be helpful also for like students of an immigrant background.

C206B And also what, what comes to my mind, like most of the time they don't speak well. Like appropriately. So maybe they make some mistakes, some errors. And what we do intentionally is to like, let them speak as much as they can, as much as they want, because like, without correcting them all the time, because like, that's not our purpose. It's something they do maybe in different moments. And this, I don't know, I'm a young teacher, so I don't know if it's a good thing to do or it's not. But I think that it contribute to create a good environment in the classroom.

Interviewer Yeah. Fascinating. And, so talking about education, like the schooling in general, do you think education helps these students to integrate better, like in the future as well, into society? Is the school helpful? Is the education helpful in general to integrate better in the future?

C206B Like in general or my school in specific?

Interviewer Well, both are interesting points of view. Like what your school does specifically or in general as well. Do you think if educational integration is possible, like education, helping these students integrate better in the future?

C206B Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. Like I do this job because I think like schools can. Maybe it's a simple way to do that, to say that. But it can change lives, you know? Like it can open your mind. And it can give you the opportunity to change your starting point, you know, like if you, maybe your parents, they don't have study, they, they didn't give you the opportunity to learn something. The school can give you that. But it actually doesn't do that all the time, especially here in Italy. Like, most of the time, who starts from a disadvantage? Disadvantage a starting point. It does. He doesn't or she doesn't go anywhere. And this is like something that makes me very angry and very sad because schools should be a quality place, a quality time. But it's not like that always. So, I think theoretically, in the theory, in the mind, it can be, it can be the place, it can be some, a place where integration can be, you know, managed and it can be an opportunity. But what I see and also what I studied, it's not like that. So, we have to, you know, try to change how the school works, the system works so, so that it can be more efficient that because some, most of the time, diversity is seen as something that it's difficult that it's obstacle. So, it's like, well, he doesn't know the language, so let's leave it there. Let's make him

learn something else. Put him in this like more easy classroom where children have, I don't know, maybe one or two years left. And this is not integration for me. This is not like something that works for the children and for the future.

Interviewer Yeah, that is very interesting as well because, in the literature, like this is a new area of research in general. We have more in Italian, but specifically like in English or like in an international way in Italy, because now there are more students. It's becoming like more of a conversation within academia, but it always mentions that although it tries to be inclusive, it is a bit more difficult in practice. How do you actually do it?

C206B I, yeah. And also, Italy is very, I think it's very innovative, innovative and, and very interested in inclusion for like disabilities and people who have disabilities. And, you know, all of these difficulties linked to the learning, the difficulty, the disability learnings. But it's not very used to the, the diversity, meaning like, people of different cultures because here in Italy, we didn't have much of immigration in the years. But it's like, since, I don't know, thirty years, maybe like, it's not like in Germany or France who they have a long history with that we are, you know, at the beginning. Historically speaking.

Interviewer Yeah. And, it is difficult, like everywhere, you know, like, in every country. And the main obstacle is always the language because they have to start somewhere and languages is, like me being an English teacher previously, I know it's not a skill you pick up like very quickly, it needs a lot of practice. It takes a lot of time. So, yeah, it's a little bit of a pressure in general everywhere. So, my last question would be, how do like the students, these different backgrounds of students, this diversity, how do they interact with each other? And what is your role as the teacher between them? Do you mediate it? Do you help them? Is it challenging? Like different aspects of it?

C206B Well, I think they want to share their, their diversity with the others. It's not always like that, but most of the time they want to like, they want to tell you what's going on in my house and my family in my country, in my, you know, and so my, my role is to, I mean, in one hand, as I said, to create the opportunity to show up these things and the other, I don't know what to say, that it's like to make what they say important. Like, when they, when they tell me and the others, because we're like a group. It's not just them and me, but it's us. I'm like, wow, that's really interesting. What's going on? I don't know, in other places. Fatima, can you say, can you tell us or, Sami, can you tell us? And also, the children who are more, I don't know, shy, they don't talk as much. I see that that they are like, okay, I can talk about something I know finally.

So, it's I think it's very, very important to them. For example, last year I remember this like project I did in school in my classroom about languages in general. I was interested in making them notice the similarities in languages, in language structure. So, I started this project asking them what language do you know? What languages do you know? and they had to. Like create this, I don't know how to say how to call it, it's, wait, I'm gonna look for it in English. Ball! No. Oh. Coil!

Interviewer Mhm.

C206B You know what coil is? Like this.

Interviewer Yeah. Okay.

C206B Okay. So, and every line was a language. So, you can manage this line like you can, you can have a long line, which is a language you love to speak. You speak the most. It's the one. You feel strong, you feel, you know that language. But there are other lines, different colors of lines. And like one line can be short. One line can be very intricate, like you know, and another, another line, another language can be cut because maybe you talked it in your country and then you, you're not going to talk it anymore. So, I wanted to like create more awareness about the, the beauty and the importance to have lots of languages because like people who can speak more languages are more likely to learn other languages as well and other things in general. So, I wanted them to feel important, like to feel, wow, I can speak two, three, four languages. And this is not something regular. Like if you go to an Italian school, it's not like that. I didn't know two languages or three languages when I was a children, when I was a child in school. So, I, I don't know, I worked on these things because I felt it was important to make them aware of that. And it was interesting because one, one child, he said to me, well, I am from Bangladesh, but I speak English and Italian. And I was like, where is Bangla language? No, Bangla language is not a good one! And I was like, why?! Because like, he was like, well, I'm a bit ashamed of talking that language. And this was very interesting to me, to me to hear. I was like, I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to say actually. And I was a bit struggling with that because, like he was telling me, I'm here in Italy, I'm here to learn Italian. I can learn English because it's like a good language, an important one. But Bangla, which is my, like my home language, my, my country language, it's not that important as much because Bangladesh is not like a cool place. And this was very interesting to me to like, understand his, also his link with the, with his background, with his past, with this home country. And I, I was thinking that if I, if I didn't had like, if I didn't had create that moment,

that little game, that little activity, I wouldn't have known. So, it was very, very interesting. And they, they were like in, in these activities, they were very happy because they were like little teachers and they were like, yeah, in, in Arabic we say like that. And, and then what I, what I've seen that is, this little kid after he see, he saw that the other kids were talking in their languages. They were like showing their cultures. He was like, well, maybe I can do the same. And then he started to do the same. So, this was very, very beautiful for me to see because I was like, I was worried he like, he didn't feel very well. And then like this year, after one year, he asked me if he can teach me some Bangla language. So, he was like, with this little paper, teaching me some words and some like way of sayings. And this was like, the most beautiful impact I can see in the classroom, you know?

Interviewer Wow, that is amazing! Now I really love this! The thing you did like visualizing it also, like with the threads being able to touch it, measure it even, it's a very concrete and practical thing as well. Like because they touch it, they get to talk about it. And it helps to have a conversation, like just as peers, as people who are different. But yeah, that's about it. At the end of the day, everyone speaks a language or multiple languages, which is always great. Yeah, this is, this is very interesting. I think I got a lot of great answers to my questions. So, at the end, if there is anything you like to add that we might have missed out but you think is important.

C206B Yeah, yeah. One thing I was thinking about is that like, the school does this thing and I find it very, very beautiful. It's the mother tongues day. And during this day or like during the week. And in general, once a year, we as a school, like in many classes, we do activity to talk about languages, talk about different languages, talk about, yeah, diversity in this sense and language is always linked to culture. So, it's not like just how you talk, how you speak, but it's like how you live the language. What we, we talked a lot about dialects and how are they important, how we want to like, know them and also the, the parents are involved in this during these activities. And I think it's something very important that like every schools we should do, you know? So, this was an idea of the, the group I was talking before the, the multicultural group in the school. And you know, also, if it's just one thing, it's a lot, it's a big one, you know? maybe in some classroom they just do that, but it's okay. It's just something important. So, this.

Interview No. 5 with C410B, July 21st 19:06

Interviewer So I'm not going to go question by question. And we would try to just have a conversation and you can start by introducing yourself. What have you taught? Where have you taught like the general stuff.

C410B Okay. I mean, if you, if you need a recap of who I am.

Interviewer Well, as like, of course I'd like that, but also about the interview, your experiences and so on.

C410B Okay, so I worked at a high school like a public high school, as you know, I think it was the school year of 2023 to 20, no, 2024 to 25. So, I finished one year ago and it was in the province of Padova called [School]. And it was like twenty, thirty minutes away. I had to take by train, but it's in the middle of nowhere basically to give you some information, but also, it's the, I looked it up, statistically, it was the third or maybe the largest, the third largest school in the whole region of Veneto.

Interviewer Wow. Okay.

C410B I think they told to me, or I saw, that it was like maybe three thousand students in total for all of the high school. And then of course, the high school is divided into like their separate categories. And I was specifically in the linguistic high school part because that's the only part of the, like of the, high school classifications that has the teaching English conversation role, which is what I do. The other high schools, they still had teaching English, but it was taught English, taught by an Italian teacher.

Interviewer Mhm.

C410B And, yeah, I was not the only, I was the only one for teaching English, but they also had other languages and they also had the native speaker for those languages. But the other languages were German and Spanish. So also, European.

Interviewer Very interesting. Yeah, that is actually an interesting point that they would be looking for like a native speaker specifically and for the topic like conversations and beside others who would be teaching the language and as you might have seen, like in the questionnaire, the thesis is generally interested in diversity, how diversity is growing. But diversity is a very broad thing, which I have also encountered more and more in my interviews that teachers do tell me that. Well, different kinds of diversity. We have like socio economic

diversity, we have disabilities, we have immigrants, but I'm interested in seeing how that diversity translates to your work as a teacher. What do you see as diversity? How does it challenge you? Maybe. And yeah, in general, how do you come across that? So first let's see what diversity is. Is it challenging and how do you work with diversity?

C410B Okay. I mean obviously I'm American. So, when we classify diversity, it usually becomes by ethnicity. Mhm. Like ethnicity first and then by class. That's like generally how it's looked at. And then also like in a hierarchical way. And then also we might look at disability, neurodiversity, but then also these things can be like, they're obviously intertwined with each other. Specifically, for me, like it's not challenging at all, but obviously it's because of where I come from, but, like it's absolutely normalized and so for me, it was kind of a, it was a challenge for me to work in a school that there was like a lack of diversity.

Interviewer So it was not very diverse in that sense.

C410B No. Okay. Like if I can, if I can remember my classes. So I was, I had like every grade level of high school, like first year to the fifth year and within. I, it was only in very few classes that maybe one of them told me that they had a Romanian background or Albanian background. Mhm, or maybe one of them had, was like Moroccan background. And then there were a few of them. Okay. Out of, I had maybe one hundred students and there was maybe two of them that had the, or three of them. They had like the plan. I don't remember the, the correct word, but it's like the plan for disability that they have to be accommodated. So very, very few of them. Mhm. And yeah, in terms of teaching language, it was difficult because they're all Italian or at least like, you know, they spoke, all of them spoke Italian natively. Now, now remembering there was one immigrant student and she was from Argentina, but she was in the first year. So, but that didn't affect my work at all because actually she learned English before coming to Italy. So, in fact, her English was better than her Italian. So, yeah. In terms of my work, I found it a bit more difficult because previously when I taught English, people came from different types of linguistic backgrounds. And so, using English for them came more naturally to communicate versus here when they have to learn English in this type of high school, it's a bit like. It's not a need for them to know English. So, they see it as something maybe annoying to learn. And so, but that's a really general statement. Some of them learn, obviously they already like knew English almost fluently because they spent so much time on the internet. And so. Yeah.

Interviewer It was more challenging in the sense that there was like a lack of that linguistic diversity.

C410B Yeah. Like it would be, it became like me against them because all of them, they can like, even though I know Italian, like they felt more of like a camaraderie against themselves. They, at any time, they could go back to just speaking Italian. The only time that I didn't see this happen was, obviously I had the first-year class, and the girl just recently immigrated from Argentina, and she also kind of had a disability. So, the double factor was hard for her. And so, they were kind of being away from her based on the fact that her Italian wasn't fluent, even though she spoke pretty, like C1 English, obviously Spanish natively. So, there was a bit of these like bullying factors.

Interviewer Do you think the learning, like this, English like as an educational integration, let's say, help them to become more worldly students or integrate better in the future into society?

C410B I think, yeah, as a subject, obviously, like any language, it does make you more open minded, more worldly. And I think, yeah, English has an extra factor that it's the international language. And, and it's now like the language of the internet, the language of science. And so, it has extra factors to it. But I think there's a, there's another sense that because it's an international language, people obviously still associate it to like American culture, to British culture. But in fact, it's not true, there is an international culture.

Interviewer Mhm. Very interesting. How about this very slim minority that was international, for example, you remember like one student or three students maybe. What is it like for them? Like education. Did it make a difference for them in your experience or you coming from like a more diverse, let's say, background compared to the rest of the teachers or the student body? What you taught? Did that have anything to do with them integrating like within the school or even in society.

C410B Yeah, no, I think it's definitely positive for them because I had a lot of individual conversations with these students, and they told me about how basically they were put into this linguistic high school because of their migrant background, because they were asked to be better at languages. But a lot of them, to me, it's not true. They really struggled in this high school. I had a young student in the first year, she never had any problems with the language, you know she was born in Italy but my colleagues and the school had a problem with contacting her parents because my student wasn't doing well in some other subject so they wanted to

contact the parents but the parents probably couldn't speak Italian so they couldn't communicate with the parents or when they would call the home the parents would pick up the phone and give it to the older sister who could speak Italian. And so, for that factor, but then also we, I, we talked a lot about, I don't know, I guess with these students talking about how they feel, we have to because it was a conversation class. We talked a lot about difficult subjects in Italy. Like, I don't know, there's a lot of topics about immigration right now. What else can I say? Like, I guess fitting in. Mhm. And so and so. These students were also curious about my background. And of course, I was very open about it. Like, yeah, I'm from the US, but I have also family from Asia. And also, it is also very clear because of my name. So, I think it was a positive impact not only on the minority students, but on the, the general Italian students that they got to know, obviously they, they love to know about the US because of our culture. But also, I was explaining to them, like giving them a more, I guess more real view of how the US is because everyone has, the idea of the US is like Hollywood movie stars, this type of thing. But in fact, the reality is different, that like for me, coming from California, it's the most diverse place in the US. Like you don't, I don't know.

Interviewer Yeah, yeah.

C410B It was nice to tell him about that.

Interviewer Mhm. Yeah. It is very interesting. Like for them also to approach you as a teacher coming from a different background, but also like English itself is a very interesting topic because like in my interviews, I do come across, there are other teachers who teach languages, Italian, English, those, and even they were saying that students who knew English but not Italian would be more popular than like those who spoke in any other language but English because English was something that was sought after. And also, like with the students, there is a break, as in a lot of immigrants don't either, like make it to linguistic schools for example, or don't go there, don't think like it's a good option and It's also unlike what leads to a job specifically. That's why even within a very big school, there might be very few immigrants.

C410B Yeah, I actually, and I talked to my students about this because one, one random day that we were looking at something controversial, that there was more like migrant students in the technical schools than the Liceo type of schools. And some of the migrants told me, actually, they were recommended to go to this, even though they had the same like high scores in something else, you know, because they have to get recommended for our high school. And well, also like side note that it was a learning process for me in my job because it was the first

time for me working in an Italian high school. And so, I used it a bit as a way like this way of like not I didn't really know how Italian high school functioned. I used that to get the students to talk to me more. And so definitely in this aspect, they felt more open to criticize the system with me. And so, a lot of them talked about how they're doing this type of high school, but in fact, maybe they would have picked something else, you know, where they felt forced into the decision, things like this. But also, they would say things that like, they can see that the people that are in the technical school like behave badly, which is okay. I had to substitute a few classes and it's a bit true that they have more wild behavior, but it's also just a bit classist because they're obviously more poorer students and more migrant students in the technical school. So, I think it's a, it goes both ways that the teachers are not so caring about the technical school students.

Interviewer Yeah, the environment is very important actually, in shaping like the daily lives of the students as well, because they're spending most of their time during the day, probably in the schools. And when you have these sort of like recommendations and referrals and concentration of different student groups within different schools, then you have like the, all of the big questions, how do they interact with each other? How does the school interact with them? And how like, not just like the teaching but interpersonal relationships that help them integrate better into this host society, let's say, in the future. Which brings me like to my questions about the school. Did the school like. In your experience, if you saw anything, like have any specific things for this, even very small amount of international students or like immigrant background students? Did the school strive to help them in a way or integrate them easier?

C410B Not at all.

Interviewer Not at all? Like zero?

C410B Which is why I felt really bad for the one immigrant student that I had that like, in fact, she should have been like, not to my knowledge that if they had like an Italian for second language people, like I think they have the classes though, like after school. But I also think she spoke Italian fine. I think it was just a judgment by her classmates and my colleagues that they were doing this, but yet not at all. There was not really any sort of kind of integration, anything specific, any integration that I was aware of.

Interviewer Yeah. Very interesting.

C410B I'm remembering though for a while for like a few months there was, an Australian exchange student in just one of the classes that I taught and, but she had like a Sri Lankan origins, but it, but I don't remember like the, I don't think they ever did anything even special to each student. It was more like whatever, you know.

Interviewer Yeah. How about your own experience? Like as a teacher? Did you do anything from your own experience or like in a way to maybe help them or like, you know, because the teacher has a lot of influence in a sense, they command the classroom, they shape a lot of the classroom dynamics as well. So as a teacher, did you do anything specific or did you think there could be anything done to, to amend these situations?

C410B I mean, I didn't have a lot of power in my role. Like I was literally like a substitute person. So, there's not much I could have done like systemically, like if you even want to hear about my own experience, like I, I really like, hated working there because of my colleagues and because of the school itself. But that can be like a side portion, but in my own classroom when it was my hour, I did really try to, like when there was a special holiday coming up being like, okay, let's talk about this holiday. I even told them about some Chinese holidays when it was around that time of the year. Mhm. When I had to evaluate them, I remember that I told them like, you can pick something like I think I gave the topic of something important to you, like a tradition or holiday. And I remember that it made, to my students, very happy because one of them was Muslim. So, she did, I think she did her presentation about Eid because it was that time of the year. And then another one, she was Indian. And so, she talked about a whole bunch of food and drinks. And so, I saw that this really helped them. Like they were very excited to share this with their classmates. And also their classmates were interested to hear about it. But that's like the extent of what I could do. Yeah. Just give them the space and to feel open that they could talk about things.

Interviewer Yeah, a lot of the teachers also do mention that they have only so much power within the school, but they find like, the ways also when, when they care about that, to try and include the students and to engage with their culture as well. And not just like the mainstream culture, but I, I really liked it that you also talk about yourself, kind of not just being the teacher, but also like you have that part of you as well, which can be discussed. So, another interesting thing I think to be mentioned is, how about the interactions within the students themselves? Like, do you think they were uttered in a way or people didn't really care about their ethnicity or differences?

C410B Yeah. I don't think my students cared that much. Yeah. Because I came in like at a weird like halfway of the year. And also, for the most part, a lot of my students, they were very like open minded people. And I think you have to be or they develop that thinking being in the linguistic part of the high school, because it's Kind of like by learning languages, it helps them. And also, they have also gone on exchanges before in this school. So, they were already kind of predisposed to, to being very, you know, liberal open people.

Interviewer Yeah. This is a very interesting experience. Actually. It's kind of different also from the other people I've interviewed. It's been mostly like diverse schools and city centers, not like a specific, let's say linguistic school or like outside the city center and everything, which is very interesting. And the last question or questions would be about, do you think education in general, like just education, the school itself can be helpful to integrate students of different backgrounds, of an immigrant background? Can it, can it help promote them having more interpersonal relationships or develop skills that prepare them for the whole society better?

C410B I mean, yes, I mean, it's kind of a biased answer, but yes. I don't know, like, yeah, it's all-around sense. It prepares people to enter society even like on a linguistic level, like absolutely. It's necessary like, as you know, even myself, I did like a couple of months of pure Italian language school. And so yeah. I mean, thinking more about like, the linguistic school, maybe not. Because it put a lot of pressure onto these students. Like I think they have the, like the requirement to have like the C1 German, like C1 English, Spanish, and so. Yeah, I think in terms of like the goal of like, yeah, I think the goal of reaching the certificates in the school was unrealistic, but I think it was good, like to be like culturally open minded.

Interviewer Very interesting. And then the last question would be, what do you think the school can do in order to help those students better? Because you said like it didn't really care as much. Maybe it's just because, like it was just such a tiny portion of the students, but could the school have done anything in specific that would have been better, like for them to integrate, to have interpersonal relationships?

C410B I mean. I'm trying to think because maybe in comparison to like your other interviews, they were maybe a different type of high schools because my type of high school, because it was the linguistic, like they were already like very integrated.

Interviewer So it was not like a big issue.

C410B No, it was not a big issue at all for them. But they were also such a minority because this type of high school, like weeds people out, like a lot of people, I had to sit through meetings and like many people fail. Not many people fail, but bad grades within the first year. And then so as they go through the years, people leave. Yeah, people leave and change high school. So, it's really like the only the strongest survive, I mean, if I had to criticize more the system, I think they could do better in like the types of teachers that they have. But that's like a really separate becomes a more separate issue. Like, I really think they could work on hiring diverse teachers, especially for the purposes of language because, for example, one of my colleagues, she was very focused on like being British, even though she's Italian, she's like, no, I'm going to speak English Britishly. So, I think, which is fine, I guess, to expose people to different accents. But, yeah, I think they could work on more like if they're going to like, if, if Italy is continuing this, hiring native speakers as an assistant type of role they need to work on. Also, like the main teachers need to be more diverse. I don't know if that makes sense.

Interviewer Yeah it does. Absolutely. Because I've also taught in English schools before, you have like different approaches in that sense, because part of it is with the teacher, how they fashion themselves, like, I don't know, their worldview or how they have learned the language themselves and how they want to be perceived as a teacher. That is a big, big part of it. Like for me, I have an American accent because my teachers all had American accents. I, I started learning it when I was like six or seven. So, it was something that was automatically happening. So, then when I became a teacher myself, or even now I would be questioning like, ah, do I like, did I choose to have an accent or a specific accent or not? So even I have a debate with myself. It's not something I can really change. It would feel weird if I tried to do it, like another accent because that's how I speak English. I know it's not like to any, let's say American ear, they can tell that it is not American, but to non they feel like it's American. So, it's a very difficult situation. But we would have like even students who would look for a teacher with a British accent because they were like, a British accent is nicer. I want to have a British accent or a specifically, I want, I've had students who just come in the door and their first request is that I want an American accent. And I'm like, how about we start learning like the grammar and everything and then the accent comes along. It's not such an important thing, but, yeah, it's a, to me, it's very interesting. And I really enjoy these topics and conversations. And you gave me really, really good points all around. So, I thank you for that. If you have any questions for me or any points that you feel like mentioning that we have not mentioned already, you can feel free to.

C410B I'm trying to think. I mean, I don't think so. I think a lot of my experience is also biased from my own, like because I was being othered as the teacher. So, like, don't let that, I don't know, skew your data.

Interviewer No, no, it's about your experience, that is your experience. I think like, as a researcher myself, like we all have our, we think in our own way, we have our biases too.

C410B Because if you want to hear more about like how I felt working in the school, like I can also talk about that more, but sure.

Interviewer Why not? Yeah, of course I would.

C410B Because if I can add like, yeah, as I told you, I think before I was like the first non-white, non-European teacher ever in this school, ever for these children, I don't know, like, and I don't know how often it is in Italy that they have people with a non-white background Teaching in a public school. And so, I think this affected a lot of my experience because even from the first day that I showed up to work, like I had to go and like, hey, I'm the new teacher. I need to sign my hiring documents. I went up to like the office to ask them and they're like, why are you here? Like, like go to class. I was like, I'm not a student. And so, it's like two factors. One, like, definitely they were projecting like a bit, I think racism onto me. But it's also being young, like I'm close. We are closer in age to high school students than a lot of teachers. And so, this, this happened to me quite a lot that random colleagues, because I didn't know all the teachers in the school, they would assume that I'm a student and I can't really say if it's more the age or the factor of being white, but to me it seemed more normal because like at a certain point, it's very obvious that I'm not a teenager. Like, I have tattoos, I dress differently. Things like this happened a lot. And then also they were not, like my experience in the school was also that they were very, they were a very big school and they're very disorganized. And I think this is a general trend that the bigger the school, the more disorganized, the less personal like teachers become with the students. And especially for me going in, like I didn't understand the bureaucracy and they, nobody ever explained to me the bureaucracy. In fact, I just had to figure out when these meetings happened and like their voting system of how they talked about certain students. And yeah, so I found it very also hostile. And even to work, I think with my direct colleagues, are the ones that teach English like they're the full time. And then I came in during to the class for one hour a week. They were very, a bit like, of course they trusted me in the sense of like, okay, I'm the native speaker. But I felt that they also didn't trust me for whatever

aspects of my identity. But then obviously, as I talked about before, on the flip side of it, like I was able to build more trust with students easier. So, two things at play here.

Interviewer Yeah. That is, that is an experience and a very cool point of view. I'm obviously like, sorry that you have felt that way, but you kind of learn about yourself and your environment and the situations as well. And the fact that that kind of, became an asset in your relationships with the students that they might have felt closer to you.

C410B If I, okay, I just, it came up in my mind one experience that I had, that I had to go substitute a class. And I think it was like a technical school, I don't know. No, not, none of the students that even I usually see in the hallway had to go to a different part of the school. And when I entered, the students thought I was a student. And so, one of the students started to address me like informally in Italian. And so, all the other students were like this to him, like, because they understood that I was a teacher. Yeah.

Interviewer Yeah. It is, it is very interesting. So, I'm just taking notes.

C410B So yeah, definitely a lot of these things happened as like weird instances when I had to go substitute because these people didn't know me. And so based on a first impression, they would say very weird things to me and treat me weird like a student, they thought like I'm Chinese. Of course, I cannot be teaching English things like this.

Interviewer Wow.

C410B Which like, as you know, I'm not even Chinese. So, it's. Yeah.

Interviewer Yeah. And that is also like, maybe like, if we can call it that as a, you being an immigrant in Italy, that is also a story of integration on its own. Like for these students to have a teacher from a different background, but for the teacher as well, as a person, as a human who has to, you know, come across and work with these different situations, whether it be in their work environment or in more personal situations. Yeah. Like all of these, you know, for you, I think it is also kind of an integration story.

C410B Yeah. I mean, yeah, to conclude like this experience, it was, well, it was like majority negative for me in the sense of like the bureaucracy, the school itself. I think it was definitely like a positive impact for my students that I had. Like, they were all very sweet. And I can see that like, you know, they grew a lot with me and yeah, but also for me. Yeah. For me, it was also good because I learned how the school worked and it helped me to understand like, okay,

this system is not one that I like. So, I don't think I'm going to pursue this type of career in Italy. But like, as we talked about, Maybe I told you before, like I'm switching a bit now to focus on, like, actually teaching to migrants, working with migrant children. So, it was clarifying.

Interview No. 6 with D108R, July 23rd 10:04

Interviewer So if we can start, I would ask you, first of all, to introduce yourself and give me a background to your teaching experience or what you have taught.

D108R Okay, so I'm [D108R]. I've been teaching Italian and Humanities, in this comprehensive, institute's name is [School]. It's the first institute in Padua because in Padua, the Institute have a name and a number. I work specifically in the middle school since 2017. I am a teacher and I have a coordination role too. I'm leading a seven-member committee of teachers and with one representative from each of the institutes. So, in my school, we have two pre-schools, three primary, three primary schools, and two middle schools in the same neighbor, and so we manage the activities with seven people because we have several, we manage all activity related to foreign students. For instance, we manage the integration of students arriving directly from abroad and students are known as the new arrivals in Italy. We meet family, their family, and, the class placement. So, we studied their primary path in school maybe they study only two years. Maybe they study only four years. Or they didn't go to school at all. And the situation are very different. And we also organize during the year, Italian language courses both for absolute beginners or for those that just needing to improve the language, the language skill for studying. And every year we host, sort of, we name it, intercultural festival, which allows the students to explore the cultural aspect of a specific region in the world. This year, for instance, we focused on Africa and we hosted a percussionist from Senegal in our classroom last year it's about China. And two years ago, it's about, I can say India, but it's not only India, it's a subcontinent. Okay? so India and Pakistan and Bangladesh, etc., this is the task I have in the school.

Interviewer Yes. Very interesting. So, you would, would you say that you're working with a very diverse group of people?

D108R Yes, yes, we, I, work with the people who are arrive in Italy. Mhm. And after some years they were working here, they called the family. And of course, the law, for the law is compulsory to, the children have to, to go to school. So, they have to fill out a inscription for the school. And, normally they choose the school. It's the nearest their home. Mhm. And our institute, our institute is in a neighbor who a lot of people, maybe the thirty percent of people are stranger. And so this is norm, this happened a lot of time during a year. Maybe these years. We hosted thirty new pupils during the years. New pupils who arrived from Bangladesh, from Nigeria, from Morocco, from Pakistan. And they arrive and they are, I don't know, put in a

class even if they don't know at all Italian because normally it's the, the law say that you have to put the two in a class. Even if they don't, they don't, know Italy. Italian.

Interviewer Mhm. Yes. Do you think this, diversity, does it have challenges like specific to itself, like specifically related to diversity, challenges for you as a teacher and as a coordinator, as you mentioned, and if so, what are some of the things that you do to help, you know, mediate these challenges or improve the situation in general?

D108R Okay. So, I think that, it's a challenge because my school, is located in a neighbor with a very low social and cultural profile. So, the most of families are one income and the adults have limited formal education and normally they learn Italian informally. Children are normally the first native Italian speakers in their families. But they often speak a different language at home. So, they have a very limited vocabulary, and they cannot count on the family for assistance with homework, and families often, don't, don't participate to educational, , , because they have problems with language or they have problem like mothers often don't speak Italian or mother often, don't go out from the house and this is the first problem because you can have a lot of diversity in another context, , healthy context, I think because maybe, you know, there are international schools, in every town in the world. We have an international school in Padua too. And, and the situation, you can say it's like the same because a lot of diversity, but not including context. So, the difficulty we have is because the context is low socio-cultural profile and naturally this make a lot of difficulties about teaching subjects like history and geography and science, for instance, because students have a very short, very poor vocabulary and lack, and they lack the necessary cultural context. So, if they catch, ask a question to their parents, maybe their parents can answer, about, I don't know, everything, it's normal to know if you are born in Italy, naturally. I have, I have adapted this kind of situation because I've been doing this job from 2017. So, for instance, I know that I, if I talk about medieval history, for example, you, I teach medieval history to eleven years old pupils. You can take for granted that everyone understand the structure of the Catholic church. Okay? so when I was at school, a teacher say Vescovo I know what Vescovo is. But now I can take for granted that people understand that I'm saying. So, I have to explain, very well what those roles are and how this role, roles, are changed because now, naturally, they call the Medieval Age and now are completely different. And so, it's a new situation. When I was at school, we had all white, Italian and Catholic and the maybe, maybe there might be, a student with parents from southern Italy. But even that was quite rare in my little village. I believe that situation is not so different in a lot of parts of Italy even in, I think in some neighbor of Padua, we can find

some, something like that. So, a lot of Italian and similar people, but it's not the reality of my neighbor and I want to add that the school where I work is particularly because we know the phenomenon of white flight, meaning that Italian parents prefer the children here because the stranger, French students are much more, so the percentage of foreign students is considered too high for granted very good education, instead, these parents look us out. The neighbor. So, center, in the downtown or other school with lower percentage of French students. Or maybe private school. We have two private schools in this neighborhood and this is another reason we, why the percentage of French students in my school is so high. Because it's not true that we are, we have not Italian neighbor, but normally Italian make another choice.

Interviewer Mhm, very interesting. And also, because you have another role as well as the coordinator for the committee, more of an organizational part. That is very interesting to this research as well, and the next question that I would ask is, do you think this education, educational system, the education that these students are getting, helps them integrate better in the future? And what is the role of the school? Does the school help them? Does the school do anything like specific when you have like a majority of foreign students in a school, for example?

D108R So, I make an example, I have, normally, I have a part time contract, so, normally I teach in two classes, so last year, I have two classes in my third-year class and the second-year class in my third-year class. I took the twenty-two students, only six had two Italian parents, four were children of mixed couple, and the rest of us have parents born in foreign countries. In my second-year classes, I have two twenty students, only five, five or four are Italian. And, they have Italian region with two Italian parents. And the other come from various countries, very different, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Moldova, Romania, Nigeria, Ukraine, Philippine, Albania, but six students in my institute, six students with two Italian parents in my institute are very big number because normally, it's true, because I, I teach in a, in the northwest that is a less attached, arrive of a stranger family because, there are a lot of little houses, single house. It's not a lot of big building and, and so we have a middle-class student more than in other part of the neighbor, but normal in the other part of the school. The school is very, mainly through Italian people are two or one or three. No more. So, the first thing thinks it's very important in this situation is that they have to know Italian language. The foundation of integration is the learning Italian language and not in the superficial level they normally reached, with the context, but the, the aims of the school, would be to give to the students a level of proficiency. To make them live in the society like the others. Our school dedicates a much effort, as much

effort as possible for this aim, depending of the available funds, we organize every year Italian courses or programs for support. So, to make more strength the language for the native, non-native Italian speakers. This is the first thing, but of course, the school in Italy is organized, organized in a way, a particular way. So, my school, I have a lot of funds for this, but for instance, they are not fixed so we have not the same money, for the same, I have not, for instance, in the primary school, I have not that specific teacher for this task. So, we can use this fund for pay the normal teacher that are in school or for some external organization that have the teacher, but we have not a stable figure for this task in the secondary school. Now, we have a teacher of Italian for foreign students, for non-native Italian speakers, but every year we have to ask to the office, a school office, for this figure. So, for maybe last year we have this kind of teacher, but and now we have, we are sure we have the same, not the same people because change, but another teacher for the same task. But next year we don't know, because it's not the situation. We are a normal school. So, in Italy, don't you have, you have not a special school. We are not a special school because we have a lot of French students. We received a lot of money, but it's not fixed. It's not something we can say it's the same every year.

Interviewer Very interesting. Would these activities be just like teaching Italian or do you have other things that would be, for example, specifically about different cultures or like the students getting to know each other somehow or, you know, be more representative as well? Or it's more like practical, functional, teaching them Italian so, you know, they can move on with the rest. For example, having like a cultural event. So, we can have some encounter with each other? Or is it more so like teaching them Italian because that is the most practical one and you will need this one the most in order to go into society.

D108R So the question is that what it means? Integration or something like that?

Interviewer Yes.

D108R Like this. Okay. So, if you, maybe the situation is completely different if you go, if you speak with teacher who work in a school where native population are much more representative and you can find maybe two or three stranger, or maybe two or three students who have parents born in other countries. But in our context, the percentage were, we can say it's reversed, so for the students, I work in the middle school and I'm by the time the teacher, the children reach the middle school, they have a lot of experience, several years of experience, of sharing space and times with the person from different backgrounds for it's something that belongs to the experience, because I see this thing with my children, my own children, because I, I live in this

neighborhood. They grew up in this neighbor and even if they attended a private school, really just attached to the church because the nearest to our home, they grew up with the presence of people from different countries, culture and religion. And it's a fact of life, so we have, have not the, we need not, we don't need to organize something for integration, okay? Because they are integrated in some way. So, I speak about the students. Okay? For the family is different, of course, but we try because we organize this in an intercultural festival every year that finished, we sort of a party in a park attended by families. And the principal goal of this activity is to have people, to know the other primary, through food because everyone like eating. So when this festival, this party was born, it's just a picnic and then it's much more developed, if you want, I can provide you some materials, photographs etc. If you are interesting to show what it is and this is a great opportunity for interaction between family and also is a chance for the communities to make known themselves because normally, they live apart. The problems can be about opportunity, opportunities from the social economic context. So, to be strangers can be difficult, but to be stranger and know Italy is, is a real problem. I think the students interacts with between them. Like, every student in the world when they have the language, the language is the main obstacle. Even if the language skill normally in my school are very superficial, we can, we can have a relationship. Okay? between the children. Of course, there are cultural factors that can influence the relationship. For instance, a normal thing that we can think is Muslim girl who may have less freedom of movement because their family don't want to give her, them, a lot of autonomy and maybe this girl can be some difficult to go out with Italian friends or Filipino friends or Western European Union friends. But it's not the case for everyone. So, it's happened. It's happened. Over the years I work in this school, I observed that, friendship, relationship, can be born between a very different people for the better, for the worse. Okay? Because they are students. So not every relationship is good for the teacher. But this, I observed, that it's the socioeconomic condition that play a very big role to shaping relationship more than to be stranger or not to be stranger. Because in this situation, to be stranger, it's quite nothing because everybody is stranger. So, if you, if you want, you can say that the situation is like that because we have a very few number of known Italian students in a class. So, you can be friends only with Italian students because you have two friends in the class and so the people, the students, arranged the situation and they make relationship with everybody. Of course, there are. I like you; I don't like you. It's normal, but the reality is, particularly, that the things, this is the way to do the relationship because you can, you can stay with your group. There are not a group. Of course, there are a lot of people from Bangladesh. So, you can find students who say that, who prefer stay with their compatriots. Okay? From

Bangladesh, because they don't speak very well Italian. The problem of the language is, those obstacle of the language is faced. Bangladeshi boy who is very, very close to another is not Bangladeshi. I see everything in my, in my experience. So, we have not to do something particularly to make it easier for students to be friends or to be close. The problem are the family, but with the family, we can do very little things.

Interviewer Yes, that also, the family aspect is very important, like, can you reach them? Can you talk to them or involve them? Like in the school life of the kids? Sometimes even if they wanted to, because they don't speak Italian or don't speak it that well, they could not be involved as much, so it's a very important factor. But yes, I think, it has been very informative. I've gotten some really good responses to these questions and at the end, I would like to ask you if there is anything you feel like we missed out or you feel like it's important to be mentioned, please feel free to mention them.

D108R Okay. So, I think that school, school is integration. So, it's very fact that people are in school constitute integration. For instance, we have a lot of gypsies in our school, but they don't attend school. And, so they are often less integrated than born in Italia, in Italy. They are Italian, but they are less integrated than, Bangladeshi or Pakistani girls who came directly from Pakistan because they don't attend school and I think that the goal of the school is not make integration because the school is integration, or it's the foundation of integration, with learning Italian first thing and the learning things that are important to identify with the community. So, the cultural references points it's very important to be in a community and recognize myself in this community, a public school in this context, that's the most important thing we have. So, to shape the future. Because, may I just say that this I want to change jobs. Maybe I can find a school with fewer problems, fewer challenges and where teaching may be more gratifying, but I work in this environment in this neighbor and I'm very happy to, to do this because you give the feeling you are building the future. The society of tomorrow.

Interviewer Yeah, that is that is such a good way to put it. And that is also like how I see it because I was a teacher myself also, I taught English for six years and I did have students like from different backgrounds in my classrooms, but that's how I see it as well.

Interview No. 7 with D309W, July 25th 10:28

Interviewer Thank you again for taking part in the interview today. So, if you're ready, we can start by an introduction. You can tell me about your background, experiences, where do you teach? What have you been teaching? All of these very interesting things.

D309W Okay. Of course, my name is [D309W]. I live in Italy. I was born in Venezuela. And I came to Italy when I was nine years old. So, I started school from the last year of the primary school. So, I did my primary school, I did my high school, I did university, so the majority of my school, education was in this country in Italy. When I came to Italy, I knew Italian. Especially, no, only the speaking, because my parents are Italian and they talk to us in Italian, but they used the dialect to talk to each other. So, my parents talked in dialect with me and my brothers. They talked in Italian, and so I was familiar with Italian, but I didn't talk it. I didn't write it. I didn't read it, write it and, obviously I didn't use it to communicate, so it was extremely difficult for me when I came to Italy, where the school is, or was, and is much more organized than it was in Venezuela. I had to, I had a lot of difficulties, from the language point of view, and, I had also difficulties from an integration point of view because obviously I was used to a sunny country and a country where people were very, very open and, and I came to Italy, not, not Italy, but Friuli. So, a very, very far east country where people is very close. And, and actually I felt out of my comfort zone and also bullied, not from a lot of people, but from some people. And, what was my goal? It was to learn as much as possible and in order to keep up with all the others. And actually, I did it. I spent a lot of my energies. But, here I am and I am a teacher! That's my, my presentation. And it is something that I always keep in mind when at school. I have students that come from other countries, what does it mean? It's not always that these students come from other countries, but they also were born in Italy, are from parents that come from other countries. Okay. So, or. And they live, they came to Italy and were raised to Italy in, in Italy or they were born in Italy from a foreign parent. But these parents may also have again, the, how do we say?

Interviewer Nationality?

D309W Yes. The nationality the citizenship. Okay, it also depends because I asked them. I have a lot of students in this situation, when they gained their, or they obtained their citizenship, for the Italian laws, you, if you are not a teen, and your parents are, have also the Italian citizenship, you automatically become an Italian. Also, Italian. But if your parents are not Italians, you do have the opportunity to gain it when you become a teen. I think this is the law.

I'm not sure if it is like this, but actually, or you can have it. Of course, there are things that you have to respect, to obtain. It is not automatic. Okay. I have students with a migration background from Egypt, North Africa like Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia. And that's a big part of them. Then I have another big part of them that comes from the Balkans, mainly Albania, Serbia and Croatia. Then I have students from Ukraine. I have a student from China. And that's it. Yes. That's it. Why do I have so many students that, have a migration history? There are many reasons. the first one is that I teach in a vocational school. It's not a, it's not a technician school. It's a vocational school we have. Three addresses, opticians, mechanics, electricians and hydraulics, as you can understand, this is something we always fight against when the students say, okay, I do a vocational school because, I'm not good at study. I don't like study, or we don't do a lot in vocational school and we teachers fight against this because obviously they do a lot of, practical lessons. But we also have loads of lessons, in Italian history, English, Math. What else? Geography. Mainly these. Okay. So, they have to learn how to do things, how to, they learn a job, but they also learn to talk, to write and to listen to do a job. For example, you can do, you can change the tires of a car. You can do it and it's okay, but how do you do it? Explain. I put the car in this way. I take this tool. Okay, so you have to talk about it. And you have also to write reports, for example. So, you need to know how to talk, to write, about a topic. Okay? Apart from the category of the students with a migration background in this category, we have also a subcategory that is the newly arrived migrant students. What does it mean? It's not nice to call them a category, but actually they are those students that are not eighteen yet. And they come to Italy with no one else. They are alone. We call them in Italian, a minority, unaccompanied. That means that they are not a team and they come with nobody, especially from the north of Africa and especially from Egypt. In Italy they, they don't know Italian at all. Nothing at all. And they are part of this category for two years. After two years, they are like all the other ones. But when I say they are like the other ones, it doesn't mean that they are different. Okay. Because, in Italy, integration at school is a serious thing. The Italian school integrates anyone. So not only the students with, migration background, but also the students with special education needs with a disability. Physical disability or a mental disability. Okay? Or students with autism. Or students with something in the middle. Because. For example, they don't reach the minim percentage of IQ. We have inclusion also of students with specific learning disorders, of course. So, dyslexia. So, as I said, in Italy, inclusion is actually very, is something that is taken in great consideration. Always, always at any level. We don't have the class divided into groups, different groups, we tend to, create groups and in each group, we have, for example, a student with migration background, a student student with

specific learning disorders, and a student, that is part of these groups. But maybe he's not so good. For example, in English and he needs the support of all the others in the group. Ah! another important thing is that in Friuli Especially the schools like my school, have a lot of these students with a migration background because we live at twenty kilometres from the border with Slovenia. Okay. So, we have lots of people coming from Albania, from Serbia, from Croatia.

Interviewer It is a very interesting, so far, like the detail that you have provided is fascinating that you have, all of these different kinds of backgrounds. And immigration is also including different kinds. It can be internal immigration. It is from all corners of the world. And they come together in a classroom. So, I'm wondering, in your experience, with your school, how much does the school help you? So, the school as an institution, but you also as a teacher. We can talk about that later as well. But for now, we can focus on the school and how much this education helps the students to integrate when they leave school, when they enter society.

D309W Okay. We always do activities before the school starts for the little ones, for the ones who arrive to do the first year. Okay. so, before school starts, we do activities like, for example, the day before the school starts, we do five hours of full immersion, school showing the students the various classes, the laboratories and we create activities, funny activities, to make them feel part of a group and, hopefully a school. Okay. This is something we do before. During the five years because we have five years at school here in Italy of high school, we work a lot to include anyone because it's not only that people with specific learning disorders with special education need with students with a migration background need, to be included, but anyone, because, actually the students with migrant background are part of a group or part of a class are part of the school. Okay? We don't differentiate them and obviously they need activities to learn In Italian. So, when they, for example, come and they know nothing about Italian, we dedicate them lessons in class or in other classes to learn Italian. I can make you an example. What I do, I have a student from Egypt and he works with me. Doing what? The word in Italian is, a study. The word in English is, a study. How do you say it in Italian? How do you say it in Arabic, I don't know? And he tells it. So, he writes the three columns. Italian, English, Egyptian, Arabic, sorry. So, it's especially a work on vocabulary. And I have to say that these students that come, that come alone to Italy when they are eighteen, they leave school. Why? Because they want, but because they can't live where they live anymore. Because when they come here, they live in a community house. And for the Italian law, when they get eighteen, they can't live there anymore. So, they have to find a place to live and actually a job to pay the place where they

live in. So, they leave school. We have a student from Ukraine. He came this year and he is actually phenomenal. He's an extremely good student and we are already trying to, as a school to find a place for him to live because we, don't want him to leave school next year. It's not easy because we can't pay the school. The Italian school is public. We can't pay for him, but we are trying to find a solution. And it's not always so easy because lots of them also take advantage of not knowing Italian. Are they, not always, want to learn it and they find ways not to do it. I don't know if I, for example, they try to, I don't know how to say it so that we... Okay, Let's go on! No! every student have to study, to learn and to demonstrate. They, they can learn. Okay. What else? Going back to what you said. When I go out, as I said, we are a vocational school. So, they learn how a car works. They learn how electricity in a panel works. They know how to prepare glasses. They know it, so when they go out, actually not one hundred percent of the students already have a job, but they have actually a lot of opportunities to get a job in a few months, even if they are not Italians.

Interviewer Yes. That job aspect is also very important because many immigrants find themselves more in vocational training. So, it is very common, but just to go back to the question, do you think the, about the schools, do you think the school is just the education, like the formal education, like showing up to class learning Italian and, for example, learning the skill that will give them a job or, does your school, for example, do anything extra regarding students of an immigration background?

D309W What do you mean maybe an example?

Interviewer Sure. You know, when it comes to integration, we also like to see how they interact with each other. For example, the students. So, if there are events or activities for the students or the families, if there is, something outside the formal education that is targeted for the students of immigrant background?

D309W No, no, there's nothing, there's nothing that is just for that. That is just for them. There's nothing targeted just for them. For them because they are part of the group. They are part of the class. They are part of the school. So, what an Italian student does, a student with migration background does. There's no difference at all. Mhm, when we have, when they go to, when we have, for example, as you said, activities, also outside the school maybe they are not for anyone because not anyone is a saw fit to do them. But if you are Italian or if you have a migrant background, we don't care. We don't care. We don't care at all. They do it and it's the same for us. When we take them to visit cities, to visit libraries, to do a specific activity outside the

school. They are part of the group. They are part of the class. They, they go all together. There's no differentiation at all.

Interviewer Yes. Very well. Very interesting. And another thing I was very interested in...

D309W We work we work a lot for them, as you said, in making them part of the group and, giving them the tools to learn as much as possible Italian to stay as the same level as the, all the other students. But actually, I have students come from other countries or were born here in Italy that are way better than, Italian, Italian students. I have students that go to university.

Interviewer Yes, of course. I mean the very fascinating thing about this research is also like I come across, teachers in different kinds of schools and like different levels of teaching or what they teach, so it is very interesting to see how it can differ what they do. It is not about whether this is a positive thing or a negative thing. Just trying to assess like how, different factors are influencing education and how would that help integrating into society? So, the main thing we see is that there is a big focus on learning the language, not just in Italy, in Germany, in England, almost everywhere, because that is the way to communicate with people, to interact with people. There are also what they are taught in the class, their study track, like what they will end up studying, for example, at a university or finding a job. So that is very interesting to me how this work together in different contexts, and there is a lot to learn from it. I was a teacher myself actually, before, so I was teaching English for six years before doing this master's degree. So, it was a challenge for me when walking into a classroom, you know, seeing students of different kinds and trying to help them the best way I could. Some are studying more, some had problems at home, some were from a lower socio-economic background. And we had all of this. So, as a teacher, I think it is challenging. So that brings me to my next question. I was very interested in the point that you mentioned, for example, in the activities, you write in the columns in different languages, but like in general, as a teacher, are there any things that you have learned from experience or you do, with a student of immigrant background that you think, helps them, you know, do better in the classroom and improve in general.

D309W Okay, there's also a question, something that we must take in consideration. And it's the person. The person because, or the personality, because not all these students want to be part of the group. What does it mean? It means that they create maybe just a little, little group with other students from that country. And even if you try to work to make them part of the group, the larger group, is not easy, but, it's always a work in progress. In Italy, in the school,

we, especially in the vocational school, we, for example, in a lot of classes I work together with not all the hours, but some hours with a special education teacher associated always to a student with special education needs. But when there is a special education teacher in the class, that teacher is not just for the student with special education needs, but is a teacher for the whole classroom. Okay. And when we work during a lesson, when I work with another teacher, it's better because when you have a classroom of twenty-five people, it's not so easy to be alone working with, the class, working with people with specific learning disorder, with people who don't know Italian. It's not easy. I lost the, I lost the track. Okay. This is one important thing. Next what I do, I try to make them work in groups and when the basis there is the fact that we consider the student as, for example, let's make an example. If I were a student, I am different from you. I have a personalized learning; a plan and you have a personalized learning plan. They are different because I am different from you. Okay. Maybe I need more support in communication. Maybe I need more support in maths and you maybe need more support in, foreign languages. Anyone has a personalised learning plan. I, like all my colleagues, follow it. We can't do something that is not, that doesn't respect this plan. Okay? Then I work a lot on motivation. Even if you don't know how to say it in Italian, let's work on it, and we, I, personally do a lot of peer tutoring activities. So, one student helps the other and vice versa because maybe one is better in English and, he can have the other one, or the girl is better in Italian and can help the other student that don't know Italian very well. Okay. what else? Obviously, there's a constant monitoring on, the, the activities and also the process of learning. Okay. And that's actually not only for me that I teach English, but it's for anyone. when there is a student that has any kind of problems, we help him or her. Okay. And I don't know if you heard it from other colleagues and it's not rare, the European Union gave Italy loads of money to use where we need them. And the school was one of these sectors. Okay. And all the schools in Italy use lots of these funds to funds to create courses to improve the, to improve the level of education. And when I tell this, it's not just targeted to the students with migration background, but lots were for them. Okay. And not for all the schools because my school has a certain percentage of these students, but there are other schools that has zero percent.

Interviewer Yes. Very interesting, also that, resources do make, a lot of difference...

D309W We also do another thing that is very important. We work, especially in the vocational schools, we work a lot to create a bridge between the school and the, the world of work. We work a lot on this. Okay. And it's not only for the Italians, but it's also obviously for students with a migration different. What does it mean that for almost three years, the third year, the

fourth year, then the fifth year, we, not only my school, but all the vocational schools, and all the schools in Italy work on what is called a Formazione Lavoro, FSI, Formazione Scuola di Lavoro. Okay. So actually, in my school, in the first year, the students go to work for four weeks. They are not at school. They go out to work. And this starts in the third year, third year, fourth year and fifth year.

Interviewer I think that is also very interesting for integration. Like even from like an earlier age, they get to go and meet the labor force as well. Like the what, how it works, what options are there for them out there? That is fascinating! I think I've received very good responses to, to the questions and I'm grateful for your time. In the end, if there is anything that you feel like we should have mentioned, please feel free to mention it.

D309W Let me see. There's something. Okay. So, these are obviously, we. I always keep in mind that with migration students the goal is to achieve the minim learning objectives. This doesn't mean that a student can't push forward to live, to reach higher levels, okay? But the important is that the student can communicate in English and in Italian with anyone. A teacher and a classmate, a teacher, anyone who works at school. And when they go out to do what I told you is a Formazione Lavoro, okay? They have to know how to communicate with employers and employees. At a minim level. If they can do more, they are welcome, of course. And this is school. And during the lessons, when they go out for projects, when they do sports, when they do any kind of activities outside the school and when they go to work.

Interviewer Yes. and it is very important also like that is the point of learning the language, to be able to communicate in it. I think it is important. And the more you. and more interaction that people would have with each other would be better. Like from an integration point of view and language is the main way you interact with others and communicate with them. So that's why the language, like in immigration and integration language is the first, indicator, the first denominator always, it is the most important one in any research that is done about it. But this is very interesting and I really appreciate your time. And if you have any questions.

D309W Do you have any other questions for me?

Interviewer Not really. I think I got very good responses because I tried to cover a few things. The experience is very important, and then what do the schools do? What does the teacher do? And, how do the students interact with each other? So, these are the main, the main points that I'm trying to explore.

D309W Okay. There is another thing that I wrote is that, when I say we, because I feel part of a group, okay? I don't work alone. I never work alone. I work with my colleagues to make the best, the best we can, to make everyone part of the school. Okay? That's very important because that's why I always use we and not I. Okay. And we again work a lot to contrast and we want these students to stay at school. We don't want them to drop okay? School. And this is the key point because when, for example, the students with a migration background, say, okay, I do a vocational school, I want to be a mechanic because when I work with the hands, I don't need to speak, I don't need to communicate. No! we want them to be able to communicate and also to obviously work with their hands, with practical activities. But we want them to recognize that this is important in order to prevent them from leaving school. Because this is something extremely serious for vocational schools. And they must be supported. They must be helped to recognise what are the other strengths and carry on and not focus on always or only on their weaknesses. Okay? That's the main point of the school. In any kind of disability, but not, in any kind of disability, difference. Whether it is a specific learning disorder, a special educational need, or a student with a migration background, anyone, but also anyone. Any student.

Interviewer And that is amazing. I'm, I'm really happy to learn about your school and all that you have been doing. Like, it is invaluable experience.

D309W It's a lot!