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**Collaborating to create a more inclusive society**

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**Abstract**

In the contemporary society, the inclusion of migrants is a strong challenge that plays a crucial role. The present work aims to examine, from the educational perspective, the inclusion process of migrants with disabilities within the host society, analysing the barriers and opportunities that they meet during their journey. It is necessary to understand the dynamics that happen between those who enter into a foreign country and the host country, with particular attention to those problems that may arise during this transition. Thanks to an exploratory research concerning the current migration stage, we discovered the importance of sharing educational interventions and projects, in order to encourage the full inclusion of all those involved and guarantee them a better life quality. [...]

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## **Collaborating to create a more inclusive society**

### **Abstract**

In the contemporary society, the inclusion of migrants is a strong challenge that plays a crucial role. The present work aims to examine, from the educational perspective, the inclusion process of migrants with disabilities within the host society, analysing the barriers and opportunities that they meet during their journey. It is necessary to understand the dynamics that happen between those who enter into a foreign country and the host country, with particular attention to those problems that may arise during this transition. Thanks to an exploratory research concerning the current migration stage, we discovered the importance of sharing educational interventions and projects, in order to encourage the full inclusion of all those involved and guarantee them a better life quality. This, it can be possible taking into account all the challenges they face, including language barriers and difficulties in adapting to new cultural contexts.

From this, it emerges the urgency to have an educational approach based on collaboration between all stakeholders, with the aim of achieving results that are more meaningful. In this work we will look at migrants with disabilities, where their inclusion requires an effort by the host society, educational institutions and immigrants themselves. The shared design of educational interventions, with participatory and emancipatory approaches, is an important strategy to promote inclusion and improve the living conditions of all the individuals involved. The shared design of educational interventions is an important strategy to promote integration and improve lives conditions of all concerned people. Such kind of approach underlines the importance of empathy, respect and mutual understanding, which are essential for the success of the inclusion process and for the creation of a multicultural and cohesive society.

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Nella società contemporanea, l'inclusione dei migranti è una sfida forte che gioca un ruolo cruciale. Il presente lavoro si propone di esaminare, dal punto di vista educativo, il processo di inclusione dei migranti con disabilità all'interno della società ospitante, analizzando le barriere e le opportunità che incontrano durante il loro percorso. È necessario comprendere le dinamiche che intercorrono tra chi entra in un Paese straniero e il paese ospitante, con particolare attenzione a quelle problematiche che possono sorgere durante questa transizione. Grazie ad una ricerca esplorativa riguardante l'attuale fase migratoria, abbiamo scoperto l'importanza di condividere interventi e progetti educativi, al fine di favorire la piena inclusione di tutti i soggetti coinvolti e garantire loro una migliore qualità di vita. Ciò può essere possibile tenendo conto di tutte le sfide che devono affrontare, comprese le barriere linguistiche e le difficoltà di adattamento a nuovi contesti culturali.

Da ciò emerge l'urgenza di avere un approccio educativo basato sulla collaborazione tra tutti i soggetti interessati, con l'obiettivo di raggiungere risultati più significativi. In questo lavoro esamineremo i migranti con disabilità, dove la loro inclusione richiede uno sforzo da parte della società ospitante, delle istituzioni educative e degli stessi immigrati. La progettazione condivisa di interventi educativi, con approcci partecipativi ed emancipativi, costituisce un'importante strategia per promuovere l'inclusione e migliorare le condizioni di vita di tutti i soggetti coinvolti. La progettazione condivisa di interventi educativi è un'importante strategia per promuovere l'integrazione e migliorare le condizioni di vita di tutte le persone interessate. Questo tipo di approccio sottolinea l'importanza dell'empatia, del rispetto e della comprensione reciproca, che sono essenziali per il successo del processo di inclusione e per la creazione di una società multiculturale e coesa.

Parole chiave: migranti, ambiente educativo, ascolto, disabilità, inclusione.

## **1. Migrants in the nowadays world**

On 10 December 1948, the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with the aim of enshrining the rights and freedoms of every human being, through which with the Article 1 recognizes the freedom and equality of all, underlining, with the Article 2, the need to eliminate any difference that could undermine the freedom of

everyone. The Article 14 highlights the importance of encouraging full access toward another country to refugees or asylum seekers, when they find themselves in situations that harm their own person and undermine the mentioned rights. In fact, every human being, with the exception of situations in which the subject has committed non-political crimes, has the right to be welcomed in other countries, far from persecution (Senate of the Republic, 2018).

According to the 1951 Refugee Convention of Geneva, a refugee is:

someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion; or someone that is outside of the origin State and does not wish to seek the protection of that State as a result of such events and he is afraid to return home.

As proof of this, it is up to the host countries to offer protection and assistance to refugees on their territory. This obligation stems from the need to ensure that those who have fled their countries due to persecution can receive safe and dignified refuge in another country, through procedures ranging from initial reception to social and work reintegration, to guarantee an untroubled continuation to each. During last years, in Italy, there is a strong increase of migratory flows and asylum seekers. This is the reason for which it is essential and necessary to focus on the causes of this incessant exodus, within the scientific popularization serves as a basis for not only studying the phenomenon closely. Scientific popularization analyses it from various points of view trying to understand what lies behind it, but also, and above all, keeping alive the experimentation to build more and more performing educational interventions, especially against foreign children and adolescents.

The phenomenon of migration, also thanks to globalization, is gradually developing more and more, producing the need to create new opportunities, new ways of welcoming and of educational approach for everybody, in a so complex society, which it is at the same time so rich of individual potentials. Migration, emigration, are not nowadays phenomena, but it represents a continuous growth, that provides a union of cultures, a coexistence of different ways of

thinking and of perceptions, linking societies as different in some situations, as similar in others. Migration has ancient origins, but continues to be renewed over time, according to a globalized world, which has no more long distances and where relations between people and countries are reappointed.

Analyzing some studies it emerges that, in the world, every 113 people, one is a refugee or a migrant and almost half of these is a minor (Gabrielli *et al.*, 2019). This represents a high rate of foreign children and adolescents who need not only integration within society, but they need to be accompanied during the growth to achieve their educational success. Too often, these minors are alone; they had to face a journey without parents or had to lose them during the journey. According to Istat (2023), year after year the number of foreigners in Italy is running, with a growth of 127% in 2021 compared to the previous year. As a matter of fact, in 2022, about 5 million foreigners lived in Italy; the 83.8% of them were in the centre-north. In the same year and with an employment rate of 64.2% compared to 64.9% for Italian citizens. In the same year, in the province of Frosinone the number of foreign residents amounted to 23.377,50% of the resident population, the 31.5% of them have Romanian origin, the 13.3% is Albanian and the 10.1% comes from Morocco (Tuttitalia.it, 2023).

There is a clear imbalance between the northern and southern part of Italy in the school context, where foreign pupils with certified disabilities, according to a recent study conducted by the Ministry of Education, in the year 2020/2021 amounted to 14,3%; 25.9% in northern Italy against 8% of total foreigners with disabilities in southern Italy. It is fundamental to act on what may be the barriers to inclusion, which do not allow, especially in southern Italy, to give the opportunity to migrants with disabilities to be able to express themselves and live in an inclusive environment. The need to adopt an emancipatory approach in participatory research is evident, especially in relation to the percentage of students with disabilities compared to the percentage of students themselves: in fact, foreign students with disabilities represent 5% of the total of foreign students, more than 3.5% of Italian students with disabilities (MIUR, 2022).

Therefore, it is necessary to encourage action that is directed towards empowerment, and let the individual, subject of the research,

be an active participant in the research, giving him the chance to use as better his analytical skills. The mentioned skills must be related to the specific motivations, which are the basis of inclusion/exclusion dynamics, from the point of view of those who live them, and this is fundamental for the full inclusion of today's migrant subject. Very often, however, the continuous exodus contributes to the dichotomous scenario of inclusion/exclusion.

The so running exodus contributes to the clash between inclusion and exclusion, reinforced by the divergent views of the Italian people. In this stage, we are trying to strengthen the action of help and welcome for all those fleeing the war and poverty and that are simple looking for a territories that could offer them a more dignified life. At the same time, our Country is trying to limit the continuous entry of thousands of refugees, with a more restrictive and controlled action (Agrusti *et al.*, 2017). It is therefore tangible that the phenomenon of migration and its management is not univocal, but it is continuously influenced from several points of view, both political and economic, making a situation already difficult, even more dramatic.

The requests for help, the needs to flee with the hope of living a dignified life, the states of vulnerability faced by migrants, have not of a unitary character, since they meet different stages and degrees. Just think of unaccompanied minors, to people with disabilities, to the elderly, each of them needs different helps and support, very often it is difficult to act in a timely and in an appropriate way, especially during First Aid and Reception Centres (Salinaro, 2020).

Due to this continuous change, there was and it is still increasing the number of studies concerned with migrants, and this has the aim of encouraging the implementation of new integration strategies, creating a multidisciplinary team, necessary to act from every point of view.

In fact, it is possible to find, during the first Aid and shortly after in the Sprar, today renamed "Siproimi", professional figures with competences in medicine, psychology, pedagogy, sociology and legal sector (Agrusti *et al.*, 2017). They, with their best professionalism and humanity, try to do all the possible to improve the first aid process that every migrant has to face, insuring a less traumatic stage. Very often, we tend to underestimate the perception that these people feel at the

arrival in our country or in others: every one of them has a different mood, a different life, a past and a present that needs individual actions. Working with migrants and for migrants, especially with those with disability, is something very delicate, we must take into account many factors that are almost obvious but very often, and in many circumstances, are not so simple.

It is also very important take into account the belonging culture of migrants, which is not only different from that of the host country, but also from other migrants, which generates an heterogeneous stage of cultures characterized by several ways of thinking and of living that very often can bring migrants against personal and cultural identity crises. The arrival in a new country with a new culture exposes migrants cultures to a strong influence, creating situations of confusion that are difficult to manage. Even more so, if you are dealing with unaccompanied minors or adolescents, in fact, their identity process is already troubled in itself, and so it is even more difficult to manage.

Adolescence, in fact, is very often minimized or otherwise and it is not taken into account, as it should be. Adolescence represents an inner emotional struggle between teenager's own biological and physical, psychological and social development (Mancini, 2011). The adolescent, not being aware of this change, assumes attitudes of contrast both towards himself and towards the surrounding world. Usually the guide of adolescents are their parents, friends, relatives (Palmonari, 1997), but this very often does not happen to migrant adolescents, who has to live alone a long journey to a new world, and at the arrival they are still alone, without emotional relations and reference points. Adolescents and not, in this stage are citizens of no one place, in this stage there is no sense of belonging to a community, a society, and this generates uncertainty and confusion. They feel like foreigners, like those who are and remain outside, generating a big distance between them and the welcoming country. At the same time, the condition of disability can also be experienced and addressed differently, resulting in the marginalization of the person.

## **2. Educational planning and management**

In traditional studies, professional figures develop research questions and methodologies without necessarily involving the subjects of study.

Instead, the co-creation of research involves the active involvement of migrants and refugees in the design, in the execution and in the interpretation of research. This approach promotes a more complete and contextualized interpretation of the collected data, generating interventions focused on the single subject and on individual needs. Through participation, aimed at the co-creation of research and interventions, as well as, the emancipation of the subject of research, it is possible to start from the involvement of migrants and refugees in the definition of objectives to be achieved. This process ensures that the issues addressed are relevant to their real experiences and needs, avoiding actions that deviate from the context.

The adoption of participatory methodologies, such as narrative interviews or focus groups, allows migrants and refugees to share their stories and opinions in an inclusive and respectful environment. This leads to a more classified and accurate data collection, often revealing shades and details that could be overlooked by a traditional approach. Through the narrative methodology, it is possible to be in contact with the migrant in a more confidential and direct approach, which helps the understanding of their way of thinking, perceptions and actions, and all with a better welcoming perspective. Mortari (2017) highlights the need to understand and perceive the point of view of the other, to help him in giving a reason or an explanation to what he is living in order to act in a conscious way during his next experiences.

Being responsible for the relationship with others, taking care of the other is a fundamental piece in the puzzle of the educational relationship between educator and educating, using a perspective of mutual understanding and welcoming of others' needs and harmonising the relationship through mutual trust (Salinaro, 2020). With the narration, it is possible to implement a meeting between cultures, where the migrant can better know himself and can show himself to others, discovering aspects of himself that very often is difficult to understand on their own and alone, especially in situations of discomfort or disadvantage. It is therefore necessary to explore one's own biography, historical and social, with the aim of exploring the different ways of understanding and learning one's own life, past and future (González-Monteagudo, 2018).

According to Salinaro (2020), in fact, through a co-planning we



arrive at the co-construction of the process of reception and integration of the migrant. When a successful approach is implemented, migrants can be recognized as individual, with a history and a culture. This approach does not obscure their personal and cultural characteristics, but it helps them to adjust to a new way of living and being, and at the same time, it helps them to save their own values and ideas firmly, within a perspective of people enhancing.

For the continuous migratory flow, increasingly present in the Italian peninsula, it is necessary to develop always more diversified and personalized approaches for each individual, through a *modus operandi* that is focused on the individual and on his peculiarities. The figure of the cultural mediator is therefore necessary, he is defined as a “bridge figure”, who has the task of acting as an intermediary between the person and the welcoming country, in order to lighten the impact of the sudden change that the migrant is living. It plays the role of facilitator, eliminating those barriers, especially cornered with the language, which can hinder the free continuation of the social integration process (Machetti, Siebetchu, 2017).

As just mentioned, one of the main problems of inclusion is exactly the learning of the Italian language, which represents a strong obstacle in the integration within society, and for children, within the educational contexts. At the same time, the degree of stabilization of subjects within the territory affects full integration, in relation to the level of uncertainty related to the stability of the place where a migrant is located and in a certain time. For this reason it is necessary that there is an action that will facilitate the training of the subject, so as to create the basis for a solid and inclusive future. Through an emancipatory research, the migrant with disabilities has the chance to control the processes and results of the specific research, as well as their own lives, where they become co-researchers together with the researcher himself. By this way it is easier to adapt an approach that is aimed at emancipating to the subject of research, where the subject is not passive but actively co-conducts of the research, thus having the opportunity to orient it according to its point of view and to achieve inclusion according to its own methods (Traina, 2014). Therefore, the emancipation of migrants with disabilities is the key to achieve their full inclusion within society, and their own journey useful to become

autonomous and to gain their goals, and to finally become active citizens of the host society, are so fundamental to build their Project life.

### **3. Migrants with disability**

The current era of globalisation, characterised by continuous migration flows, brings with it challenges and opportunities. Very often, the migrant has to face a twofold disadvantage, on the one hand everything concerning his situation as a foreigner, and on the other a disability. Disabilities within migrant populations present a complex stage, since they are influenced by several factors, including the conditions of departure from the country of origin, the migration process itself and the welcoming environment. Every parent has his own perception and way to act in front of his child and in front of the needs, he may require, therefore, he may find it difficult to understand the different way used by the host country (Goussot, 2010). Considering the bio-psycho-social vision of disability, it is necessary to take into account the biological, psychological and social aspects of the migrant with disability, through an understanding aimed at the implementation of an inclusive process that is as performing as possible.

One of the possible barriers may be the health, as the lack of awareness by service providers on the diversity of needs of migrants with disabilities can contribute to the marginalization of this population. To fight against the so many challenges related and caused to a migrant with disability situation, it is necessary an integrated approach involving both public policies and social interventions. Promoting the inclusion of migrants with disabilities requires strong efforts on the part of the whole society, through which it is necessary to foster the right to care, to health and to study.

One of the fundamental aspects in the life of a migrant is School, which is an indispensable element, not only for itself, but also for its educational success, and above all for its inclusive nature. As is well known, foreign people with linguistic and cultural difficulties are included in the Special Educational Needs, to which special care is reserved for their own disadvantaged situation. Even more so, if the migrant also has a disability, he has a double difficulty, therefore, the School has the obligation to prepare itself for reception, eliminating barriers that can hinder its full development. If disability in itself is a

delicate situation, it is even more so when there are also cultural differences.

This, rather than representing an obstacle, must be understood as a *modus operandi* that must be adapted to the situation, through the knowledge of the person, his family and cultural characteristics of the person, laying the foundations for the creation of an educational alliance between family and school, which is necessary for the full educational and formative success of person. Very often, however, the dialogue between the two institutions is undermined above all by barriers of communication and by cultural differences themselves, both in educational and care terms, with the addition of a strong shortage of experts in the field, necessary to manage the relationship between family and school.

At the same time, communication barriers are not only concerned with language, but also they are linked to the different ways of perceive disability and different actions against it or to improve it (FISH, 2013). Although the Triennial Plan of the Educational Offer is an important instrument for the inclusion of young migrants with disabilities, according to Chieppa (2019), it is a tool that very often does not keep the velocity of social change in terms of migration. In fact, it does not give the right importance to intercultural education and the implementation of different languages in a multicultural perspective, leaving aside the organizational part relating to the reception and testing of new educational tools.

School is and should be the privileged place for inclusion and interculturality, valuing the individual and the completely educational society, with the aim of providing the necessary tools for the creation of educational and emotional bonds, necessary for the good growth of the person. Equally indispensable is the action of the teacher, who acts as a mediator between the migrant and school stage in its entirety, valuing differences in an environment that arouses acceptance and trust (Pennazio *et al.*, 2015). For this reason, the importance of a dialogue, of an active listening and of the encounter with others lays the foundations for inclusion and for an inclusive action aimed at success. Everything must be built together, between educator and students, between migrant, host countries, to make sure that no one feels alone, and that everyone has the opportunity to express himself at his best.

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