

The measurement of social integration among the pupils in different Italian regional contexts

Antonella Guarneri, Luisa Natale, Giulia Rivellini, Maura Simone, Laura Terzera

Extended Abstract

Background and aim

The experience of the countries with a long history of migratory inflows indicates that obtaining high integration level is possible not so much in the first as in the second and later generations.

Given that, in Italy, the migratory phenomenon is a fairly recent event (the heaviest immigration flows have occurred in the past 20 years) a numerically considerable presence of the second generation is as much a “recent” event. Some exemplified data: resident foreign minors accounted for less than 3% of total resident minors in 2003 and increased to 6.6% in 2007; while 6,000 children were born to foreign parents in 1992, these had risen to 51,000 in 2005; the minors joined parents living in Italy rose from about 3,000 in the early 1980s to 40,000 in 2006. In addition to this trend also the characteristics of immigrant parents with children in Italy (among those more relevant are: age and duration of stay, Blangiardo and Farina, 2006) tell us that a photo of the minors with foreign origin hits an important subgroup of second generations.

In this study our attention is on first-grade secondary (junior) school kids living in the two most significant regions for the presence of immigrants: Lombardy, in the North, and Latium in the Centre of Italy.

Taking into account the different regional scenarios, in this contribution we would like to supply an empirical measurement of social integration by individualization of the ways with which the foreign origin pre-adolescents (kids aged 11 and more) live the socialization with peers, that is a fundamental aspect (the friendship) of the kind/level of integration.

On the one side, the knowledge of the existence and of the strength of the friendship with both the Italians and the foreigners shows the so-called “friendship strategy”; on the other, the social integration also depend on the Italian peer attitude. Among the pre-adolescents the school is the privileged place where the friendships rise and grow up, but it is not the only place i.e. the sporting places are as much useful to the friendship.

The individualization of social marginalization, ethnic isolation and pre-adolescents’ characteristics with these social profiles can be useful to understand if these situations are only transient (i.e. depend on the socialisation) or concerning a specific “type” of foreign origin kids that needs of integration school policies.

Data and methods

The data are gathered from ITAGEN2 (an Italian sample survey on children of immigrants and their Italian schoolmates, carried out in 2006) on the first-grade secondary schools with a foreign presence of higher than 10%. Here we consider in particular the Lombardy and the Latium samples¹. In this contribution our attention is on children with at least a parent coming from countries with high emigration levels (“CHEL”), that is, from those countries that make up more than 95% of Italian immigrants.

¹ For Lombardy the total of interviews is over 17,000 (Gilardoni, 2008) whereas for Latium is 2,138.

To analyse the “sociality” we take into account different factors:

1. To have Italian and/or foreign friends
2. To see friends outside the school
3. To have friends within the class
4. Importance given to making friends with classmates
5. Reciprocity of classmates friendship
6. Popularity within the class
7. Involvement in a team (basketball, football, etc.).
8. Daily hours spent in front of TV/Playstation.

With respect to the first two points we built an indicator following the Berry (2001) model that shows the existence and the strength of the friendship with both the Italians and the foreigners, that is, the so-called “friendship” strategy (Paterno and Terzera, 2008). Four profiles arise:

- “integrated”, by which we mean they have both Italian and foreign friends (whom they also see outside school);
- “assimilated”, see solely Italian friends;
- “separates”, those who say they have prevalently foreign friends;
- “marginalised”, i.e., those who say they have few or no friends, either Italian or foreign.

Regarding the points 3, 5 and 6, the data on closed friendship networks have been collected asking pupils to indicate persons (belonging to the class) with whom they have a good friendship relation. These data allow us, through the tool of social network analysis, to detect which type of relations do they have with their classmates. We can therefore identify two specific traits in the existing relations:

- a. “expansiveness”, which expresses the level of “opening” towards classmates
- b. “popularity”, which expresses the relational “success” level of the generic “node” (student)

At the recent EPC in Barcelona we presented more detailed results regarding the network analysis (Rivellini G., Terzera L.). In this study the application of a cluster analysis will allow us to detect the main friendship profiles and the kids’ characteristics with these kind of profiles. Using network and multivariate analysis, we supply an empirical measurement of social integration by individualization of the ways with which the foreign origin pre-adolescents live the socialization with peers.

Preliminary results

Preliminary descriptive analyses on the above factors showed someone common features:

- a. strong correlation between the importance attributed to school friends (a factor linked to being placed in a lower class) and popularity/expansiveness: the more the pupil falls behind in school, the less importance he gives to making friends with their classmates. This result leads to better investigate the effect of Italian consolidated strategy of newcomer integration in its schools (a foreign pupil just arrived often is over-age with respect to the expected age for the attended grade);
- b. gender is a discriminating factor: the girls are the most isolated because they result less popular and expansive than boys;
- c. performance in school is another discriminating factor: those who do well academically, grow in both expansiveness and popularity;
- d. a key role is played by socialisation: the friendships grow and are consolidated the longer the kids spend in the host society. By this, we stress that we do not mean an exclusion of friendships with the foreigners, but, on the contrary, an intensification of those with the

Italians; in addition the kids who are born in Italy or arrived before entering the school score almost identically in the popularity and expansiveness stakes.

Through the cluster analysis we intend to detect the critical factors in the social integration process for the pre-adolescents living in the most multicultural Italian regions putting special emphasis on the different models most likely linked to the proper characteristics of Italian regions in terms of foreign presence and multicultural policies.

References

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