

# **13<sup>th</sup> International Metropolis Conference in Bonn, Germany**

Language of the host country:  
is that enough? Insights from Italy

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# Introduction

- **“Migrant children should be assured of a good knowledge of their mother tongue and indigenous culture,** for the mother tongue is one of the foundations of their development and is likely to facilitate the learning of other languages”

(Council of Europe, Record of the Proceedings of the Ad Hoc Conference on the Education of Migrants, Strasbourg, November 1974. /CME/IX (75) 7, p. 50).

# Introduction

- Directive 77/486/CEE provides that Member States should:
  - ensure free tuition in their territory, adapted to the specific needs of such [immigrant] children, in particular the teaching of an official language of the host State; and
  - promote **teaching of the mother tongue and culture of the country of origin**, in coordination with normal education, in cooperation with the Member State of origin.

# 8 key competences

- Communication in the **mother tongue**
- Communication in a **foreign language**
- Mathematical competences and basic competences in science and technology
- Digital competences
- Learning to learn
- Interpersonal, **intercultural** and social competences and civic competence
- Entrepreneurship
- **Cultural expression**

(Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2006: L394/13)

# Key competences

- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Initiative
- Problem-solving
- Risk assessment
- Decision-making
- Constructive management

(Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2006: L394/14)

# The European context and the Italian case

- Students whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds differ from those of the dominant group in this society **do not yet enjoy equal educational opportunities.** All minority students face special problems in school. In spite of the barriers, some groups of minority students do comparatively well in school (Gibson, 1987:262).

# The European context and the Italian case

- Children of immigrants belong to the disadvantaged people in our societies, which include not only immigrants but people with whatever kind of deprivation (Willke, 1975:357).

# The European context and the Italian case

- "The problems faced by schools with immigrant pupils arise **mainly from language difficulties** of pupils. It would, however, **be too much of a simplification to reduce all handicaps to this one source**. Transition from one culture to another often causes "culture shock", which makes adaption a difficult process."

# The European context and the Italian case

- " Bad housing, overworked or unemployed parents, parental difficulties and prejudices can all have a strong impact on a child's school work. If the society does not act promptly there is a danger that the bad initial situation may lead to a prolongation of the period of maladjustment, eventually putting the second generation among what we call "disadvantaged families" (Willke, 1975:361).

# The Italian case

- Increasing number of 'foreigners' as the permanent residents: from about 500,000 in 1992 to 2.4m in 2004.
- Children with non-Italian citizenship: from about 125,000 in 1996 to 501,000 in 2004.
- Great internal diversity within the immigrant group: over 170 nationalities, long/short term of stay in Italy, transit/permanent residence country.

## The Italian case

- Italy as EU member state provides schooling for every child, should promote intercultural education for all and should give the opportunity to learn mother tongue and culture of the country of origin.
- Intensive language tuition is organised at school or regional school office level, depending on the degree to which school is autonomous, so what happens in practice varies widely. In all cases, however, pupils attend the lessons concerned within the regular school timetable.

# The Italian case

- School autonomy plays crucial role in organization of the particular primary and secondary schools
- It is possible to teach language and culture of the country of origin but each school decides which language children can learn, if any.

# The Italian case

- The research carried out in two schools in Milan shows the difference in implementation of the formal rules in case of the immigrant children
  - Primary school in Via Giusti, Milan
  - Secondary vocational school in Parco Nord, Milan
- In both schools the presence of immigrant children is relatively high - at least few pupils in each class.
- Via Giusti is in the center of Chinese zone in Milan, while Parco Nord is in the suburbs.

# The Italian case- Via Giusti

- *Istituto Comprensivo di Scuola Elementare e Media Statale di Via Guisti.*
- Average presence of the immigrants 4-6/20-25 each class, (160/850)
- 2-3 of them do not speak Italian or even do not know the alphabet,
- Majority of them are Chinese but other ethnic minorities are represented at school.

# The Italian case- Via Giusti

- Integrated programme called '*Mosaico- una scuola per tutti*'
- Constant presence of the cultural and linguistic mediators at school
- Intense teaching of Italian language, possibility to learn Chinese (extra curriculum)
- Well established co-operation with local community
- Intercultural trips in the Chinese zone for all pupils

# The Italian case- Parco Nord

- Parco Nord- 92 immigrants in both technical and professional training, 35 of them in initial classes (605 of all pupils),
- Common project devoted to the immigrant's integration in progress- expected date of implementation- scholastic year of 2008/2009.

# The Italian case- Parco Nord

- Integrated programme for language teaching called *Elledue*, contain of the previously run projects
- The main part of the programme is devoted to teaching the language of the host country
- Help of the cultural and linguistic mediators is occasional
- No cultural activities with cultures of origin
- Immigrants treated as disabled

# Conclusions

- As Graziella Favaro (2008) says, **56% of all immigrants use Italian more often than the language of origin.**
  - 21,4% use mother tongue very rarely or almost never.
  - 35,7% use mother tongue occasionally.
  - 42,8% use mother tongue sometimes.

# Conclusions

- **32% of immigrants use both Italian and mother tongue** in their daily life (Immigrants from this group declare to use 40% of mother tongue and about 60% of Italian).
- Only **12% of all immigrant school population use mainly mother tongue** in communication.

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