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Educational Expectations of Migrant Students in Italy: Second-class Destiny or Integration's Opportunity?

Veronica Riccardi - Patrizia Giannantoni

Giuseppina Le Rose*

*Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Educativo di Istruzione e Formazione
(INVALSI) (Italy)*

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veronica.riccardi@invalsi.it

patrizia.giannantoni@invalsi.it

giuseppina.lerose@invalsi.it

ASPETTATIVE IN AMBITO EDUCATIVO DEGLI STUDENTI MIGRANTI IN ITALIA: DESTINO DI SECONDA CLASSE O OPPORTUNITÀ DI INTEGRAZIONE?

ABSTRACT

School choices are a complex and important step that characterizes the path of any student. This moment of transition is particularly crucial for foreign students, for whom it represents also a measure of their integration. The aim of this work is to verify if the Italian intercultural model is ensuring equal opportunities for immigrant students and if

* This article is the output of a joint work of the three authors. Nonetheless, V. Riccardi contributes substantially to section 2 («School choices and expectations for the future») and section 5 («The feet on the ground and the head in the clouds: the future seen through the eyes of foreign students»); P. Giannantoni contributes substantially to section 3 («Data and methodology») and section 4 («Expectations of students with migratory background in Italy»); section 1 («Foreign students in the Italian school system: dimensions and characteristics of a growing phenomenon») have been mostly developed by G. Le Rose. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect anyhow the view of INVALSI.

foreign students are able to progress through the educational system on par with other Italian peers. Our purpose, more specifically, is to verify if foreign students have the same aspiration for the future than the Italian ones, investigating the role and the weight of some important background factors such as gender, socio-economic status and learning abilities. We used census data coming from INVALSI (Italian National Institute for the Evaluation of Educational System) of grade 10 in the academic year 2016/2017. The key variable of this study relies on the question about educational expectation («What is the highest degree you expect to obtain?»), analyzed according with student's origin (native/migrant), keeping into account also the age of arrival in Italy for students born abroad.

Keywords: Educational expectations; Integration; INVALSI data; Migration background; School choice.

1. FOREIGN STUDENTS IN THE ITALIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM: DIMENSIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF A GROWING PHENOMENON

Geographical mobility is a phenomenon that has always accompanied the history of humanity. However, it is in the «global society», based on the interdependence of the various geographical areas, that international migrations have become an important factor in the transformation of society (Zanfrini, 2016). Migrations are changing, significantly and irremediably, the demographic profile of the origin societies and the destination societies (Sayad, 2002), especially those characterized by a situation of aging and demographic decline, like many countries in Europe including Italy. Migration is therefore a challenge, both for those who leave and for people in the host countries, in political terms (for example the acquisition of citizenship), in economic terms (migrants have sometimes been considered as an important resource and sometimes as a problem and an obstacle to access to the work of the natives) and in cultural terms (diversity can be seen as a threat or as a resource for social cohesion) (Cesareo, 2015).

In this context, the school, together with other social institutions, has to play a leading role in the process of integration of immigrants and their children. In fact, one of the most important aspects for the success of the migratory process is the social success of young children of immigrants (Crul & Vermeulen, 2003; Barban *et al.*, 2008). It is also in the school that the foundations are laid to guarantee equal opportunities for future citizens, both native and foreign.

In Italy, the presence of immigrant students, in the last twenty years, has become a structural phenomenon.

It is worth to remark that, in the Italian context, «immigrant students» is a very broad expression because it includes children with different biographical experiences and various situations (new arrived children, migrant children, children with an immigrant background of second or third generation). At least since the early 2000s, in Italian schools, there has been a steady increase of students with foreign citizenship, along with an opposite, already mentioned, downward trend in the number of Italian students because of a demographic downturn (low birth rate).

The presence of students with non-Italian citizenship, found to a limited extent in the '80s, recorded a consistent increase in the subsequent 90s with the influx of over 100 thousand students. It is, however, in the first decade of the two thousand and up to the school year 2012/2013 that the numbers become noticeable with the entry of almost 670 thousand students with non-Italian citizenship over the years from 2000/2001 to 2012/2013. Recent years are characterized by a marked slowdown in growth with an increase of only 39 thousand units from 2013/2014 to 2016/2017. The steady decline of students with Italian citizenship, which decreased over the last five years by almost 241 thousand, nevertheless continues to increase the incidence of migrant students on the total, from 9.2% to 9.4% (Fig. 1). Students with non-Italian citizenship are one of the few dynamic factors of the Italian school system (MIUR, 2018).

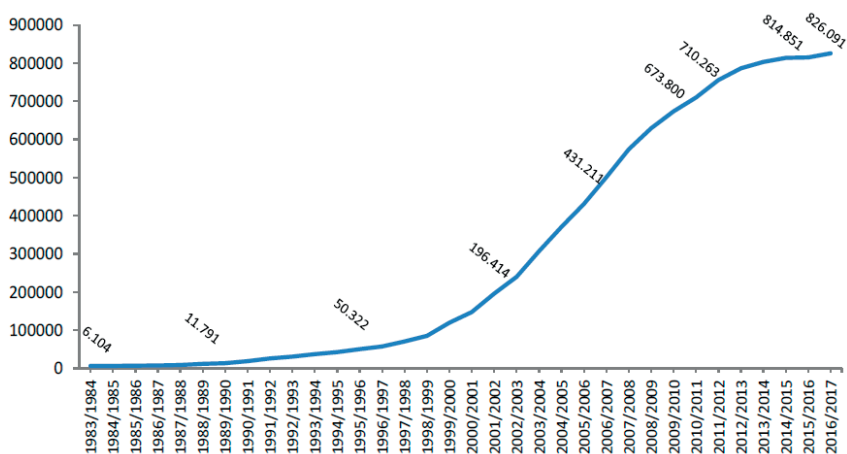


Figure 1. – Students with non-Italian citizenship in Italy (absolute values) – school years 1983/1984 - 2016/2017. Source: MIUR, 2018.

In the school year 2016/2017, there are about 826 thousand students of migratory origin in Italian schools, with an increase of over 11 thousand units compared to the school year 2015/2016 (+1.38%). The increase is slightly higher for males (+5.994; +1.41%) compared to females (+5.246; 1.34%) which together represent 48% of students with not Italian citizenship (MIUR, 2018).

Over all, there are over 200 nationalities among non-Italian students. This is due to the geographical position of Italy, located «one step» from North Africa and the Balkan and Eastern Europe, and to the easily permeable borders, which have favored various mechanisms for the arrival – more or less regular – of immigrants from all over the world (Bonifazi, 2007; Barban *et al.*, 2008; Colombo & Sciortino, 2008). Despite this, the great majority of migrant students comes from a small group of countries. In the school year 2016/2017 about 560 thousand students, almost 70% of the total, have citizenship referable to 10 countries (*Tab. 1-2*). Some of these, like Romania, Albania, Morocco, represent countries with a long tradition of emigration flows to Italy (MIUR, 2018).

Table 1. – Students with non-Italian citizenship for the first 10 countries of origin (absolute values and percentages) – school year 2016/2017. Source: MIUR, 2018.

| COUNTRY OF ORIGIN | ABSOLUTE VALUE | FOR 100 FOREIGN STUDENTS |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Romania | 158.428 | 19.2 |
| Albania | 112.171 | 13.6 |
| Morocco | 102.121 | 12.4 |
| China | 49.514 | 6.0 |
| Philippines | 26.962 | 3.3 |
| India | 25.851 | 3.1 |
| Moldova | 25.308 | 3.1 |
| Ukraine | 19.956 | 2.4 |
| Pakistan | 19.934 | 2.4 |
| Egypt | 19.925 | 2.4 |
| <i>Total sub</i> | 560.170 | 67.8 |
| Other countries | 265.921 | 32.2 |
| <i>Total</i> | 826.091 | 100.0 |

Table 2. – Students with non-Italian citizenship for the first 10 countries of origin and school level (absolute values) – school year 2016/2017. Source: MIUR, 2018.

| COUNTRY OF ORIGIN | NURSERY SCHOOL (from 3 from 6 years) | PRIMARY EDUCATION (from 6 to 11 years) | LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION (from 11 to 14 years) | UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION (from 15 up to 19 years) | TOTAL |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|---------|
| Romania | 32.319 | 58.189 | 31.754 | 36.166 | 158.428 |
| Albania | 23.641 | 40.217 | 22.549 | 25.764 | 112.171 |
| Morocco | 23.815 | 41.387 | 18.820 | 18.099 | 102.121 |
| China | 9.330 | 18.900 | 12.143 | 9.141 | 49.514 |
| Philippines | 4.051 | 8.608 | 6.416 | 7.887 | 26.962 |
| India | 5.700 | 10.624 | 4.548 | 4.979 | 25.851 |
| Moldova | 4.552 | 7.974 | 4.929 | 7.853 | 25.308 |
| Ukraine | 3.004 | 6.312 | 4.028 | 6.612 | 19.956 |
| Pakistan | 3.740 | 8.375 | 4.160 | 3.659 | 19.934 |
| Egypt | 4.443 | 7.929 | 4.008 | 3.545 | 19.925 |
| Other countries | 50.225 | 93.607 | 54.131 | 67.958 | 265.921 |
| <i>Total of students with non-Italian citizenship</i> | 164.820 | 302.122 | 167.486 | 191.663 | 826.091 |

In the different school levels, the incidence of second generation students over the total number of students with migration background is of 85.3% in nursery school, of 73.4% in primary school, reaches 53.2% in secondary school of first grade. Only in secondary school students of migratory origin born in Italy represent a minority of 27%. It is easy to predict that in a few years, even in this level of education, the majority of students with non-Italian citizenship will be young people born in Italy (MIUR, 2018).

In the European context, Italy has some remarkable peculiarities:

- the presence of foreign pupils in the educational system has not a strong consolidated history;
- it is characterized by a big degree of ethnic heterogeneity and a lower concentration of national groups in local contexts (Chaloff & Queirolo Palmas, 2006);
- it is characterized by a widespread and growing presence of second generation foreigners (Santagati, 2016).

Facing this situation, the Italian School System reacted with the Intercultural Education. This term has a very broad meaning, across the different country, but, in Italy, «intercultural education» means the integration of diversity in an educational system which is structurally inclusive.

The Italian way to Intercultural Education has two trajectories:

- promotes welcoming habits for all pupils, both Italian and non-Italian, to encourage the education of the future citizens of the world;
- identifies teaching strategies suitable for encouraging the inclusion of foreign students in Italian schools (reception, teaching of the Italian L2, enhancement of the language and culture of origin, intercultural activities).

These trajectories are really important to guarantee everyone a full chance of educational success and the free choice to develop their talents and interests.

2. SCHOOL CHOICES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In Italy, at the age of 14, all students, after completion of lower secondary education, face the choice between four different school branches (lyceum, technical education, vocational education and IeFP)¹. This choice, that is mandatory because boys and girls have to go to school until 16 years old (10 years of education) (Benadusi & Niceforo, 2010), is crucial for students future life, as the type of education acquired affects skills development (van de Werfhorst & Mijs, 2010), higher education participation (Checchi & Flabbi, 2006), occupational attainment (Dustmann, 2004; Bol & van de Werfhorst, 2013) and, indirectly, also other life dimensions such as civic participation (Terwel, 2005; Azzolini & Vergolini, 2014).

School choices are, without any doubt, a crucial and complex step, that characterizes the path of any student. These moments of transition are very important for all the teenagers, because on these choices lay the foundations for future work and life perspectives; however, school choices are particularly crucial for foreign students, for whom these represent also a measure of their integration in a foreign country. In this choice, there is

¹ The first three branches offer general curricula, last five years and allow students who successfully complete a final state exam (*esame di maturità*) to access tertiary education. The fourth option (IeFP) is organized at regional level and consists in vocational training courses that last from two to four years. These vocational training centres are closely linked to the labour market needs and allow students to fulfil their compulsory education, but they do not allow direct transition to the university (Azzolini & Vergolini, 2014).

an attitude diametrically opposed between «migration background» and «native». Pupils with non-Italian citizenship opt mainly for a technical-professional path. In particular, by looking at the 191.663 foreign students enrolled in upper secondary education, we can see that they opt mainly for a technical-professional school (Barban & White, 2011; Mantovani, 2011) (*Tab. 3*).

Table 3. – Students with non-Italian citizenship for type of upper secondary school (absolute values and percentages) – school year 2016/2017. Source: MIUR, 2018.

| TYPE OF UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL | ABSOLUTE VALUE | FOR 100 STUDENTS |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Lyceum | 53.240 | 4.1 |
| Technical school | 71.877 | 8.5 |
| Vocational school | 66.546 | 12.5 |

This sort of «educational segregation» (Colombo & Santagati, 2010), also confirmed by school marks (INVALSI, 2018), negative outcomes (Favaro, 2014), risk of dropout (Checchi, 2010; Santagati, 2016), lead them a rapid entry into the labor market (Bertolini, Lalla, & Pagliacci, 2015).

Clearly, some «internal» factors have an impact on the choice of high school for children with migration background, such as the age of arrival in Italy, the social capital of the family and its expectations, the school/class attended especially in terms of the per group. Furthermore, teacher expectations and recommendations play an important role, because they shape the image that students have about of themselves and of their own scholastic abilities (Queirolo Palmas, 2006). In particular, teacher recommendations are strictly correlated to student's parental education (Checchi, 2008) and they may discriminate against immigrants, by counseling families to enroll their children in short-term educational tracks (Kristen & Granato, 2007).

Also the functioning of each single school is essential because they have a key role in enhancing and strengthening the cultural background of non-Italian children, through the official curriculum and the hidden curriculum. The school, in fact, is the most important educational agency that can be an instrument of social justice with the aim of bringing everyone to the same results, giving more help to those who are disadvantaged by the starting conditions (Rawls, 2009). It supposed to promote social integration among children of different background, guaranteeing a diverse environment that reduces social distances among individuals (Heyneman, 2003).

Over and above these factors, we have, obviously, expectations of foreign students for their future. They are a strong predictor of educational attainment and they reflect self-perceptions and influence attitudes toward school. Facing the future, it is easy to feel involved in conflicting feelings (expectation, curiosity, fear, doubts, etc.) and the ability to develop or not a life project depends largely on the feeling of being able to overcome doubts/difficulties that can be encountered during the path. The construction of an own life project implies an estimate of one's own abilities and characteristics to be able to measure the possibilities of completing the project of life conceived. Foreign young people, like the Italian ones, live this delicate moment of planning of their future with hopes and uncertainties but for the former the choice it is further complicated by virtue of the already mentioned factors.

The existing literature about migrant students in Italy largely focuses on school attainment, with few studies examining educational attitude and school expectations (Azzolini, 2011). However, literature has also shown that school expectations and school attainment are strongly related. In Italy, migrant students present a string disadvantage in both the aspects of education (attainment and expectations). Concerning attainment, in contrast with a global trend that sees the II generation children reaching better school attainment than native students, Italy remain according to OCSE data (PISA Test), one of the few countries were II generation migrants have a negative gap compared to Italians. This inequality persists in educational expectations, with immigrant students disproportionately concentrated in vocational schools in secondary education (Minello & Barban, 2012).

Furthermore, and more importantly, school expectations are a measure of social integration of migrants. A school that promotes inclusion should enable migrant children think about their future the same way Italians do. In this perspective, our study intends to provide more evidence about the magnitude of the gap in expectations between migrant and Italian students, and also to contribute to a clearer understanding of social, economic and cultural factors that promote or hinder the «equality in expectations».

The aim of this work is to verify whether the Italian intercultural model is succeeding in ensuring equal opportunities to students with migration background compared to natives, and whether the former are able to progress through the educational system on par with other Italian peers. Operatively we analyzed the expectation for the future of children of immigrants, investigating the role and the weight of some important background factors such as age at arrival (migration generation), typology of secondary school attended, socio economic status and school performance.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

We make use of data coming from annual census survey carried out by INVALSI (Italian National Institute for the Evaluation of Educational System) about education achievement. All students of grade 10 in the academic year 2016/2017 are included in the analysis, with information concerning their migratory origin, socio-economic status (ESCS), parents' characteristics, marks in Italian and Mathematics given by teachers (from INVALSI student Questionnaire) and score obtained at INVALSI test (from INVALSI Italian and Mathematics datasets). From INVALSI student Questionnaire we also have a set of information about attitude towards school and academic expectations for the future. The question assessing expectations for the future, which is the key variable of this research, is elaborated in the INVALSI Questionnaire as follows: «What is the highest degree you expect to obtain?». We collapsed the answers into three categories: degree lower than diploma (No degree), high school diploma (Diploma), university degree or higher (University). It is worth underlying that upper secondary school starts at grade 9 and ends at grade 13; thus, students in grade 10 responding «no degree» are expressing the willingness of drop out from the study cycle they are currently attending and represent a very weak segment of population, with a clear school disadvantage.

In this research migratory background has been defined based on three variables: country of birth of parents, country of birth of the student and age at arrival in Italy, when the student was born abroad with migrant parents. We decided not to split the migrant students in first and second generations, but to consider more gradual classes. Students whose parents are born in Italy are considered natives, wherever their personal place of birth; differently students with both parents born abroad are considered in different «migrant groups» according to their age at arrival in Italy: born in Italy, arrived at age lower than 3; arrived at 4-9 years; 10-12 years; older than 12. Based on these categories we studied academic expectations, and particularly the propensity to attend university, by migrant groups.

We decided to stratify typology of secondary school (lyceum, technical schools and vocational schools) to investigate whether the effect of migration background could be differentiated by typology of school.

We found that the trend was perfectly reversed in vocational school compared to lyceums, i.e. students with migration background have higher propensity to attend university.

A better understanding of this phenomenon was reached by means of a multivariate logistic regression to predict a University degree, performed only on students in vocational schools: in this model we could observe

the effect of having a migratory background on school expectations net from other possible confounding factors. We included as controlling variables: gender, school retention (regular or repeating), school performance (mark in Italian given by teachers the previous semester of school or score at INVALSI test) and socio-economic status measured by means on the index ESCS.

On the base of the hypothesis that attending vocational school has a different meaning between native and migrant students we eventually compared the different «weight» that secondary school chosen has on academic expectations among Italians and among children of immigrants in two parallel models (with the same variables) compared.

4. EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS WITH MIGRATORY BACKGROUND IN ITALY

The distribution of students of grade 10 according to their migratory background is illustrated in *Table 4*. Considered altogether children of immigrants represent 8.7% of all the students in grade 10 and among them 4% are second generations.

Table 4. – Students in grade 10 by origin. Absolute and percent values, 2017.

| ORIGIN | N OF STUDENTS | PERCENTAGE |
|---------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Native | 359.592 | 91.3 |
| Migration - Born in Italy | 15.610 | 4.0 |
| Migration - arrived <3 | 4.983 | 1.3 |
| Migration - arrived 4-9 | 8.507 | 2.2 |
| Migration - arrived 10-12 | 3.087 | 0.8 |
| Migration - arrived >12 | 2.093 | 0.5 |
| <i>Total</i> | 393.872 | 100.0 |

Looking at expectations according to migratory group (*Fig. 2*) we can immediately observe a negative gradient of university expectations according to the increasing age at arrival in Italy. More than a half of natives (55%) expect to reach a university (or higher) degree, whereas only 30% of students arrived older than 12 in Italy have comparable expectations. By contrast the proportion of those aspiring to secondary diploma is prevalent among students with migratory background. Alarmingly, a non-negligible

proportion (over 10%) of students arrived in Italy older than 10 years old do not even expect to conclude secondary school.

In the Italian school system, a first factor potentially influencing the expectations at age 15 (grade 10 of school) is the typology of school already chosen: the propensity to university is remarkable higher for students attending lyceum and extremely low for students in vocational schools. We hypothesized that school expectations of these students could simply reflect inequalities that have already taken place in the distribution of school choices already made.

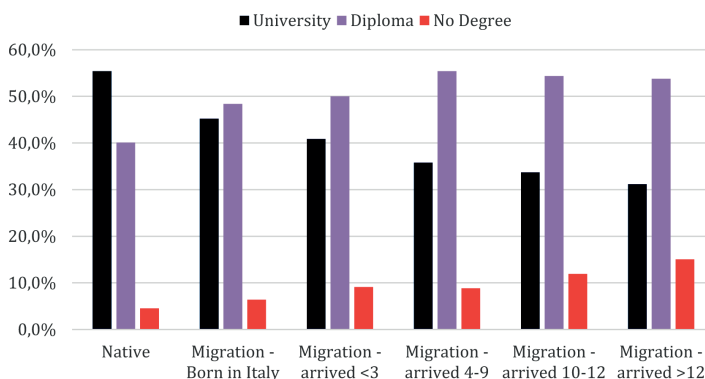


Figure 2. – Educational expectations by migratory group. Percent values, 2017.

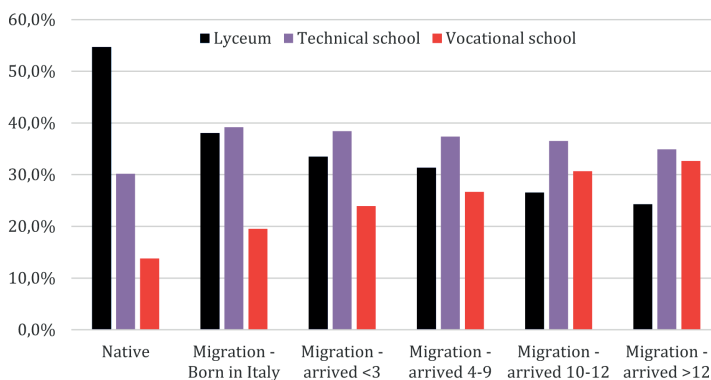


Figure 3. – Typology of higher secondary school chosen by migratory group. Percent values, 2017.

Table 5. – *Typology of high school chosen and educational expectations by migratory group, 2017.*

| MIGRATION BACKGROUND | TYPOLOGY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL | | | ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS | | | DIFFERENCE % University minus % Lyceum |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|--------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------|---|
| | Professional | Technical | Lyceum | No Diploma | Secondary School Diploma | University | |
| Italian | 30.6% | 14.0% | 55.4% | 4.2% | 39.8% | 56.0% | 0.6% |
| Child of Imm. born in Italy | 40.5% | 20.2% | 39.3% | 5.6% | 48.1% | 46.3% | 7.0% |
| Child of Imm. arrived age <3 | 40.1% | 24.9% | 35.0% | 7.9% | 49.8% | 42.3% | 7.3% |
| Child of Imm. arrived age 4-9 | 39.2% | 27.9% | 32.9% | 7.3% | 55.6% | 37.1% | 4.2% |
| Child of Imm. arrived age 10-12 | 38.9% | 32.7% | 28.3% | 10.5% | 54.4% | 35.1% | 6.8% |
| Child of Imm. arrived age >12 | 38.0% | 35.5% | 26.4% | 12.7% | 54.1% | 33.2% | 6.8% |

Note: Last column in Table 5 represents the «excess of university expectations»: the percentage of students expecting a university degree NOT coming from lyceum. It is a conservative estimation, because it is based on the assumption that all students from lyceum expect a university degree. If this is not verified, the «excess of university expectations» will be even higher.

Table 6. – *Educational expectations by origin in vocational schools only, 2017.*

| ORIGIN | EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| | No Diploma | Secondary Diploma | University |
| Italian | 11.7% | 74.5% | 13.9% |
| Child of Imm. born in Italy | 11.2% | 68.3% | 20.5% |
| Child of Imm. arrived age <3 | 16.0% | 64.8% | 19.2% |
| Child of Imm. arrived age 4-9 | 14.9% | 68.7% | 16.4% |
| Child of Imm. arrived age 10-12 | 19.7% | 63.7% | 16.6% |
| Child of Imm. arrived age >12 | 20.9% | 61.2% | 17.9% |

The distribution of students in different types of high school according to their migratory background shows very marked disparities: the choice of lyceum seems a prerogative of Italians, while all students with immigrant parents choose primarily a technical or vocational institute. However, as the comparison of *Figure 2* with *Figure 3* shows, the disparity between Italians and children of immigrants is much sharper for the choice of the high school than for future educational expectations.

This would indicate that there is no deterministic association between high school attended and expectations: obviously there is a strong link between the choice of lyceum and the inclination towards university (about 80% of lyceum students are projected towards university), by contrast the choice of technical/vocational schools is preferred by migrant students orientated to a more timely insertion in the labor market. Inequalities in terms of high school chosen, however, are not reflected in comparable inequalities in the expectations for future studies; this seems to indicate that a part of students of migrant origin, who attends a vocational school maintains however higher expectations than would be expected with respect to their school choice.

To check this hypothesis, we have observed for each migratory group both the percentage of students in the different high school typology and the percentage with different expectations of study (*Tab. 5*).

For Italians the percentages of students attending lyceums and that of students expecting a university degree are almost perfectly overlapping. The estimate proportion (always calculated on INVALSI data) of lyceum students who want to achieve a university degree is around 80%. We can say that for Italians the choice of lyceum as secondary school is for most of the cases a path that also marks future choices towards university.

For all other categories of students with migration history, the percentage of students who aim for the university degree is higher than those attending lyceum, confirming that for non-Italian students the choice of secondary school other than lyceum does not determine a leveling down of the expectations. To deepen this aspect, we have therefore observed the propensity towards the tertiary education of students with different migration history, stratified by type of high school attended (lyceum, technical, vocational) to understand where we could find those students that, despite choosing technical/vocational school aim at university.

Results, shown in *Table 6*, represent the educational expectations of students in vocational institutes. By looking at last columns (University Degree) it appears that the usual trend for which foreign students have lower expectations of Italians is completely reversed: Italian students show

the lowest percentage for university expectations (13.9%), while children of immigrants show percentages ranging from 16.4% to 20.5% corresponding to second generation students.

We decided to gain a better understanding of this result through an analysis with statistical models, to study more specifically the positive effect of migration origin towards University expectations into vocational school, controlling for possible confounding factors.

We have therefore built a logistic model for students in vocational schools only, where we predict the University expectation as a dichotomous variable (yes/no) with explanatory variables introduced gradually in nested models. We looked at the impact on academic expectations of migration background (model 1), and then migration background controlled for personal characteristics (gender and grade retention) in model 2, we then added the socio economic index (model 3) and finally the teacher evaluation of the students by means of mark in Italian gained in the previous semester (model 4).

Logistic model (*Tab. 7*) confirms what already highlighted in *Table 6*: in vocational institutes there is a higher propensity to university of students with migratory history compared to Italians, without a clear gradient with age at arrival. In fact, university propension is 63% higher for migration students born in Italy, but it is also extremely high (+45%) for migrant students arrived older than 12 years of age. Although we controlled for possible confounding factors such as gender, socio-economic status and school performance (regularity of study and mark in Italian), it persists a greater propensity of immigrant children, regardless of age of arrival, towards the university (about 70% higher for those born in Italy and students arrived within 3 years, as well as those who arrived after 12 years).

The other variables have instead expected trends: greater probability of choosing the University for those who have more resources (ESCS), better school performance and for girls.

It is worth noting that all coefficients associated with migration background increase passing from model 1 to model 4, indicating that, net from the effect of gender and school/economic disadvantage the propensity to university for migrant students is even more pronounced.

Finally, to have a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon, we have also built two parallel models, one for Italian students only and one for the children of immigrants, in which we considered all students (lyceum, technical and professional) and the same variables to look to «what matters» as a whole for Italians and for the children of immigrants in the choice of long-term school objectives.

Table 7. – Nested logistic models to predict University expectations, 2017.

| | MODEL 1 | | MODEL 2 | | MODEL 3 | | MODEL 4 | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------|------------|-------|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | OR | SIGN. | OR | SIGN. | OR | SIGN. | OR | SIGN. |
| <i>Migration background</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Native (Italian) | <i>ref</i> | | <i>ref</i> | | <i>ref</i> | | <i>ref</i> | |
| Migration - born in Italy | 1.63 | *** | 1.62 | *** | 1.75 | *** | 1.76 | *** |
| Migration - arrived age <3 | 1.51 | *** | 1.52 | *** | 1.66 | *** | 1.70 | *** |
| Migration - arrived age 4-9 | 1.23 | ** | 1.21 | *** | 1.32 | *** | 1.29 | *** |
| Migration - arrived age 10-12 | 1.25 | * | 1.26 | * | 1.35 | ** | 1.38 | ** |
| Migration - arrived age >12 | 1.45 | *** | 1.45 | *** | 1.57 | *** | 1.69 | *** |
| <i>Gender</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Male | | | <i>ref</i> | | <i>ref</i> | | <i>ref</i> | |
| Female | | | 2.31 | *** | 2.43 | *** | 2.13 | *** |
| <i>Grade retention</i> | | | | | | | | |
| No | | | <i>ref</i> | | <i>ref</i> | | <i>ref</i> | |
| Yes | | | 0.94 | * | 0.94 | * | 1.01 | n.s. |
| <i>Socio-economic status (ESCS)</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Low level | | | | | <i>ref</i> | | <i>ref</i> | |
| Medium-Low | | | | | 1.28 | *** | 1.23 | *** |
| Medium-High | | | | | 1.67 | *** | 1.58 | *** |
| High | | | | | 2.74 | *** | 2.54 | *** |
| <i>Mark in Italian</i> | | | | | | | | |
| (continuous variable) | | | | | | | 1.41 | *** |

Particular attention has obviously been paid to the comparison of different impact of the high school chosen on expectations of study between Italians and children of immigrants.

Aware that in the Italian context, the subpopulation of migrants encompasses very different and varied realities in terms of country of origin, in these models we have also included the variable «language spoken at home» for students with migration history as a proxy of the student's home country.

These results (not shown) confirm what has been observed so far: the expectations of grade 10 students are more affected by the type of high school chosen for Italians than for children of immigrants (attending lyceum increases the inclination to university 6 times for Italians and 4 for foreigners, on the contrary, the choice of professional school reduces the propensity to look at a tertiary education of about 70% for Italians, while

it does not get to halve the propensity of foreigners, cutting only of about 48%). This result remains valid also by checking for the main confounding variables, including the country of origin.

5. THE FEET ON THE GROUND AND THE HEAD IN THE CLOUDS: THE FUTURE SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

Our study suggests that the types of secondary schools chosen by children of immigrant is not necessarily a reinforcement of social immobility. Young foreigners, in fact, have a distinct inclination towards investment in education and training: even if the data confirm their general orientation towards professionalization, primarily aimed to assure the possibility to find a «good job», this does not weaken the investment in education. Work, in this perspective, is seen as a positive and welcome opportunity to earn money, to gain a first taste of economic independence from the family and a complement to educational experiences (Colombo & Santagati, 2010; Briceag *et al.*, 2013; Lagomarsino & Ravecca, 2014). These young people, on one side, appear aware that they are connected to their parents' history of migration but, on the other side, have the desire to realize the aspiration of a different job or career, independently from the conditions and constraints of ethnic and family background.

School choices of foreign students can be influenced by the opinion of teachers not reflecting their true expectations and desires. Many teachers, in fact, seem to feed the belief that their scholastic path is somehow already marked. Through their advice, they seem to accept the idea that linguistic, social and economic gaps can't be recovered within the lyceum kind of school because of the selection processes that characterize this type of school (Romito, 2016). Some studies have demonstrated, for example, the existence of a correlation between recommendations from the teachers and level of education of the parents of the students (Checchi, 2008). Teachers can believe that the subjects living a condition of economic vulnerability could be more profitable from taking up shorter school paths. From this point of view, if teachers practice a sort of social closure which, in fact, favors categories that have greater economic and social resources in access to long school courses, it is motivated, by a paternalistic attitude to protect subjects deemed more «at risk».

On the other side, we have to consider also that parents may not properly know the peculiarities of the different types of school (Ricucci,

2012) and it is possible for them to follow more than for natives' families, the teachers' advice. In fact, sometimes parents encounter difficulties to identify the different types of school and, above all, to grasp the subtle and sometimes implicit differences between the levels of preparation offered by the various schools (Lagomarsino & Ravecca, 2014). Families with a good knowledge of the education system have the cultural capital necessary to reject the point of view of the school, if contrary to own. Families who have a poor knowledge of education system are considered less competent on educational issues and express their symbolic vulnerability by doing their own scholastic point of view. The trajectories of Italian students are, instead, more stable than those of the foreign ones, probably because they are aware of the «hidden structure» of the Italian educational system and so are their parents and teachers.

Using the words of Maddalena Colombo and Mariagrazia Santagati (2010), we can really consider children of immigrant as:

- a «strategic generation», whose project is developed on the basis of available resources and life conditions, but who are also challenging preordained patterns and destinies and developing unusual strategies towards inclusion;
- a «transitional generation», who is facing the difficult shift from the familial immigration project to a consolidation in the country of arrival. The results achieved by this generation, in terms of social inclusion, will undoubtedly determine the condition of future generations.

For the generation of immigrant parents, migration implied mainly the problem of reception and acceptance in the host country. For the generation of children and teenagers, migration implies the capacity of facing the several challenges related to the construction of an autonomous life project, consonant with family expectations but also in accord with a multiplicity of new values, conditions, opportunities, desires and expectations (Colombo & Santagati, 2010). The condition of young foreigners, therefore, is a negotiation between the past (the experience of migration, the family background, the personal experience) and their future and it is the responsibility of the whole school community (pupils, teachers, managers, parents, stakeholders, etc.) to make sure that these young people can grow and develop their own abilities like the Italians peers. As Piero Calamandrei (1889-1956) said, «transforming subjects into citizens is a miracle that only the school can do» and the freedom to cultivate any desire and the possibility of obtaining any kind of study, even the highest ones, are two prerequisites for this miracle to take place. Children with migration background demonstrated, in our study, to have *the feet on the ground*, with their orientation towards professionalization in the choice of the secondary school, and *the head in the clouds*, with their desires to invest in education and nurture expectations toward the future.

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RIASSUNTO

Le scelte scolastiche sono un momento decisivo e complesso che caratterizza il percorso di ogni studente. Questo momento di transizione è particolarmente cruciale per gli studenti stranieri, per i quali rappresenta anche una misura della loro integrazione. Lo scopo di questo lavoro è verificare se il modello interculturale italiano sta garantendo pari opportunità agli studenti stranieri e se questi ultimi sono in grado di progredire attraverso il sistema educativo alla pari dei colleghi italiani. Il nostro scopo, in particolare, è verificare se gli studenti stranieri hanno la stessa aspirazione per il futuro rispetto a quelli italiani, indagando sul ruolo e il peso di alcuni importanti fattori di fondo come il genere, il livello socio-economico e le capacità di apprendimento. Abbiamo utilizzato i dati censuari dell'INVALSI (Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Educativo di istruzione e di formazione) di grado 10 (classe seconda della scuola secondaria di II grado) nell'anno scolastico 2016/2017. La variabile chiave di questo studio si basa su una domanda relativa alle aspettative di studio («Qual è il titolo di studio più alto che ti aspetti di ottenere?»), analizzata in base all'origine dello studente (nativo/straniero), tenendo in considerazione anche l'eventuale età di arrivo in Italia.

Parole chiave: Aspettative di studio; Background migratorio; Dati INVALSI; Integrazione; Scelte scolastiche.

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