Chapter 4

FOREIGN PRESENCE ON ITALIAN SCHOOL DESKS

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, at a global level, there were changes that regard the migration process and which led to a stable foreign presence within the classrooms, so much so that it became a structural component of the population.

From this evidence, several stakeholders highlighted issues and found possible solutions to respond to the needs of these students. For this purpose, in Italy, attention was paid on practices and experiences to improve social cohesion (Ministry of Education, University and Research, 2006; 2014; 2017; European Commission, 2016).

The contribute focuses the attention on the foreign presence in the Italian school system. The interest for the foreign presence at school is justified by following considerations: i) school is a place, as well as the family (Setsuo, 1980), for building bonds and identities because students spend a lot of their time here (Willems & Bosma, 2006; Tupper et al., 2008); ii) at school, students compare themselves to the others and come into contact with several cultures; iii) in this way, it's encouraged the meeting and the integration among individuals from different backgrounds.

In the literature on this theme, often, the studies focus the attention on tertiary education, international students and their mobility. It is considered necessary to keep separate the two fields of interest, the school on one side and the tertiary education on the other since each of the two is characterized by the presence of peculiarities. For this reason, in this paper, the attention is focused only on school. Moreover, this choice was made because it is considered that with respect to the international mobility of students, little attention is given to the foreign presence at school, although this place is one of the most privileged for the meeting and integration between different cultures, as previously specified.

İn particular, the aims of this study are two: first, observe the evolution of the foreign students in last ten school years (from 2007-2008 to 2017-2018), through

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over time of foreign students in Italian school system. This increase is in line with what happens within the population in broader terms: the general increase in the presence of foreigners in the national territory. Faced with this evidence it is therefore plausible to increase the number of foreigners in all areas of social life, first of all the school.

The increase did not take place equally across the whole country, in fact we noticed that there are some areas and some regions more involved in this pheno-menon. In this regard it would be interesting to investigate in greater detail this unequal presence of foreign students.

About grades of school, according to the hypothesis, the highest percentages would be registered in Kindergarden and in Primary school, but the evidences show that this is confirmed only for the second type of school. This result could be linked to the fact that births from foreign parents have increased in recent years with the consequence that these children acquire Italian citizenship.

Distinguishing public and private school, foreign family prefer the first one. This evidence could be due to the resources in economic and social terms available to these families, but it is a topic that deserves more attention.

In conclusion, these evidences are considered as input to focus the attention on a current theme. In fact, taking up what Cogan and Derricott (2000) suggested, if citizenship characteristics include individual and collective responsibilities for members of a global society, as working productively with others, understanding and embracing diversity, working towards and defending human rights, being stewards of the environment, engaging in non-violent conflict resolution, and thinking critically, these skills can be acquired at school by comparing different cultures. So, from this point of view, foreign students can be considered a valuable resource.

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