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VOLUME I

Politics, Citizenship, Diversity and Inclusion

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

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Title **Proceedings of the First International Conference of the Journal "Scuola Democratica" - Education and Post-Democracy VOLUME I Politics, Citizenship, Diversity and Inclusion**

This volume contains papers presented in the First International Conference of the Journal "Scuola Democratica" which took place at the University of Cagliari on 5-8 June 2019. The aim of the Conference was to bring together researchers, decision makers and educators from all around the world to investigate the concepts of "education" in a "post-democracy" era, the latter being a set of conditions under which scholars are called to face and counteract new forms of authoritarian democracy.

Populisms, racisms, discriminations and nationalisms have burst and spread on the international scene, translated and mobilized by sovereigntist political movements. Nourished by neo-liberalism and inflated by technocratic systems of governance these regressive forms of post-democracy are shaping historical challenges to the realms of education and culture: it is on this ground, and not only on the political and economic spheres, that decisive issues are at stake. These challenges are both tangible and intangible, and call into question the modern ideas of justice, equality and democracy, throughout four key dimensions of the educational function, all of which intersected by antinomies and uncertainties: ethical-political socialization, differences, inclusion, innovation.

The Conference has been an opportunity to present and discuss empirical and theoretical works from a variety of disciplines and fields covering education and thus promoting a trans- and inter-disciplinary discussion on urgent topics; to foster debates among experts and professionals; to diffuse research findings all over international scientific networks and practitioners' mainstreams; to launch further strategies and networking alliances on local, national and international scale; to provide a new space for

debate and evidences to educational policies. In this framework, more than 600 participants, including academics, educators, university students, had the opportunity to engage in a productive and fruitful dialogue based on researches, analyses and critics, most of which have been published in this volume in their full version.

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Premise

In the European space of liberal democracies, the post-economic crisis era has seen the appearance of populist movements, sometimes anti-democratic (to the extent that they deny citizenship rights, ethical-cultural differences, individual life choices), sometimes anti-scientific and anti-modernist. Those phenomena may erode democratic values and make the pluralistic context slip into the risky and ambiguous territories of post-democracy.

The democratization of basic and higher education stands as a solid defence against populist tendencies. Ethical-political socialization, acquisition and development of civic, social, citizenship and character skills may be a precious resource to hold democratic life on together. Democratic life, political participation and active citizenship needs to be rearticulated, reshaped and reinforced as fundamental educational pivots in our overchanging societies.

Throughout the world, there have been continuous attempts to reform education at all levels. With different causes that are deeply rooted in history, society, and culture, inequalities are difficult to eradicate. Nonetheless, although difficult, education is vital to society's movement forward. It should promote citizenship, identity, equality of opportunity and social inclusion, social cohesion as well as economic growth and employment. Unequal educational outcomes are attributed to several variables, including family of origin, gender, and social class. Achievement, earnings, health status, and political participation also contribute to educational inequality within Western countries as well as or deeper within other world countries. Diversity applies to a number of aspects of student identity, including race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age, and political and religious beliefs. Even if there are no official educational policies aiming at reproducing inequalities, teaching and learning practices are still unable to protect diversity and be effectively inclusive of student identities. This would imply giving thought to the attitudes, beliefs and expectations of students as individuals, and considering how these influences their approaches to learning and their interactions with teachers and with peers in the design of curricula, in the translation of curricula into day-to-day teaching and learning, and in the assessment of learning. Therefore, inequalities in educational opportunity, in educational access, in educational attainments are still the main dilemma nowadays. Several and differentiated tracks of research and conversation are packed into this stream in order to face the multidimensional dynamics of inclusion, integration, equal opportunities a diversity valorisation in both the educational spaces and knowledge society at large.

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Refugee Integration in the Swiss and Italian Labour Markets: Challenges, Governance and Future Perspectives

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Keywords: *Refugees; Labour market; Integration; Italy; Switzerland.*

Introduction

Italy and Switzerland are 'neighbours', yet extremely different under many viewpoints. In this article, we will describe the two contexts as it pertains to refugee integration in the labour market. It is important to say that a one-to-one comparison between refugee integration policies in the two countries is hard, if not impossible, due to the uneven starting points, the enormous differences in the structure of vocational education and training (VET) and further professional education, the characteristics of their labour markets. However, from the analysis of the different challenges and responses, this article aims to increase existing knowledge of the factors impacting successful work integration of refugees.

Research findings suggest that effective integration policies benefit not only immigrants, but also the receiving society. Countries with inclusive integration policies tend to be better places for everyone to live in (European Commission, 2016). However, the capacity to manage effective integration policies depends very much on the possibility to govern migration flows and to avoid massive increases over a short time span concentrated in a few territorial areas (European Parliament, 2017).

Despite the fact that refugees generally have higher chances of becoming citizens of the host country compared to other migrants, they remain one of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market, being more likely than native-born to have low pay and irregular jobs (European Parliament, 2016, 2017; European Commission, 2016; Desiderio, 2016). The crisis and the terroristic attacks have increased prejudices and reinforced discriminations. The lack of coordination between integration agencies and employment services, the negative attitudes of some employers, and the legal/administrative obstacles to legal employment often push refugees and asylum seekers into the shadow economy, where they can be at risk of exploitation and abuse (European Parliament, 2017).

Integration policies remain primarily a national competence. There is a lack of comparative information on policies and practices across European states and it is difficult to assess the specific labour market conditions of asylum seekers and refugees, because most of the available data does not distinguish refugees from other immigrants. Studies consider migrants in general, without focusing on the entry channel and, hence, ignoring an important layer of integration complexity. Instead, there is strong empirical evidence that the entrance channel impacts the integration path (European Parliament, 2016). According to EUROSTAT data, the labour market integration of refugees is in general much slower compared to the other migrants and, in the short-run, refugees are likely to present worse employment conditions than economic immigrants (European Parliament, 2017; Desiderio, 2016). While the latter tend to choose their destination to maximize employment opportunities, refugees tend to secure

personal safety, and thus they may arrive in countries and regions with few employment opportunities.

1. Italy and Switzerland: so close, and yet so far

Table 1 draws a synthetic comparison between Italy and Switzerland, highlighting the main differences as it pertains to the arrival of refugees.

TABLE. 1. *Key information (2018)*

	Italy	*Switzerland*
Number of refugees	189,243	104,037
Asylum seekers	105,624	14,797
TOTAL incl. IDPs and stateless persons	295,599	118,883
Percentage of population	0.5	1.4
Main countries of origin	Nigeria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Gambia, Ivory Coast.	Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Sri Lanka.
Migration history	Emigration country in the 20th century, recently become a 'second choice' or 'transit' immigration country.	Immigration country with long experience in managing inflows.
Role in the recent European 'refugee crisis'	Main entry point in the Mediterranean, peak of arrivals in 2016 – mid 2017. Transit country. Most policy and economic efforts for first reception.	Destination country. Policy and economic efforts targeted to integration programs.
Political situation	From mid 2018, the new right-wing government has taken a clear stance against immigration.	Restrictive asylum policies, rigorous application of the Dublin agreement, relative low acceptance of refugee status for asylum seekers.
Labor market	High unemployment rates; large size of the informal economy; still struggling to recover from the 2009 global crisis.	High absorption rate for those with working permit.
PES and VET system	Generally inefficient and underdeveloped. Wide territorial differences in the quality, quantity and variety of services offered.	Dual VET system is well developed, with a specific preparatory program for refugees. PES is transparent, permeable and widely used.

source: authors (Statistics are from UNHCR, year 2018)

1.1. Italy

While the absolute number of refugees and asylum seekers in Italy is the third in the EU, the incidence on the total population is aligned with the average. Italy received the peak of arrivals during 2016 and the first half of 2017 (European Parliament, 2017). However, as we gain more distance from the high number of migrants trying to come to the European Union since 2015, the number of people arriving has drastically decreased. Therefore, the Italian government could put more efforts towards integration policies that treat migration with a sense of normalcy, not as an emergency, and ensure the well-being of those who have already arrived. While Italy in the previous years has implemented measures to establish an effective system of laws, regulations and institutions to foster integration, some of which can be evaluated positively, in the more recent past it has drastically changed its route.

Having little pre-existing experience in the reception and integration of refugees, and difficult socioeconomic and employment conditions, the country has

struggled to manage the inflow. Being a transit country, its main policy investments focused on reception rather than integration measures, while the high short-term costs for the reception of asylum seekers might not be balanced by long-term returns from investment, as most of the asylum seekers tend to move to other destinations.

The political costs of the refugee crisis have also been high. The topic of refugees is highly prominent in media campaigns and in the political debate, with a rise of negative public attitudes towards the reception of asylum seekers, and migrants in general (European Parliament, 2017).

1.2. Switzerland

Switzerland has traditionally been an immigration country and has over 100 years of experience. About 30% of young adults have one or two parents from abroad. Therefore, the country has a lot of experience with integrating groups of foreign people into the society, including into the labour market. The percentage of asylum applications is at the moment 1.4 in relation to the population living in the country (8.5 million, 8.7 million estimated by the end of 2019) (BFS, 2019). The so called protection rate – the relation between the number of official acknowledgements as refugee or provisionally accepted persons and all categories of asylum applications – is high with 60.5% in the year 2018 (SEM, 2019).

Institutions and procedures are in place to support the integration process, especially in terms of labour market integration. In order to manage the influx of refugees various procedural steps need to be taken to which are different Visa statuses attached. The distribution and administration of these processes is mainly managed by the Swiss cantons, whereby agreements to support each other and finding a fair allocation for all are in place. A lot of different aspects need to be taken care of, such as how to cope with heterogeneity in the classroom and at work, the recognition of prior learning and prior education, special education and support for those in need or alphabetization (Schneider et al., 2014).

2. Integration of refugees into the labour market

2.1. Italy: from SPRAR to SIPROIMI

The activities concerning integration of refugees in the job market are mainly implemented at the local level. The so-called SPRAR system, established by law 189/2002 and recently re-named SIPROIMI by law 132/2018, implemented by municipalities with the support of NGOs, offers accommodation and food, health assistance, legal and psychological support, language courses, pre-integration support to labour market access, VET programs, and traineeships to beneficiaries of international protection. Measures have also been taken to facilitate the participation of refugees in tertiary education, through the activation of protocols with universities and the provision of scholarships and tax/tuition exemptions (Ministero dell'Interno, 2017).

The positive results of these programs can be explained by their being tailored both to the needs of the receiving municipalities and those of the refugees. In order to start a project, the local administration has to support it both from a political and from a 'practical' viewpoint. The project is then tailored to the needs of the participants and hires human resources who possess the necessary skills. Local institutions and NGOs participate directly offering their services. The centres are small and located within towns and villages, so that the beneficiaries live at close contact with the locals. This way, the integration project ends up

supporting the local economy, while fostering mutual knowledge and understanding (European Parliament, 2017; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016)

According to the data of the Italian Ministry of Interior, in 2017 the SPRAR system operated in 103 Provinces/Metropolitan cities and 659 towns: as a matter of fact, the strength of the system lies in it being deeply rooted in the territory. In the same year, it employed 1,428 full time operators and 7,050 part time operators: cultural mediators, educators, administrative assistants, psychologists, legal counsellors and tutors; 3,300 agreements were signed with schools, vocational training institutions, cultural and sport associations, firms and volunteer organizations, creating a wide network of institutions and impacting positively on the hosting territories, a crucial element for the effectiveness of any integration project.

As far as work integration is concerned, in 2017 more than 40% of the people hosted could leave the centre thanks to the positive results of their socio-professional integration project. In the same year, 22,452 beneficiaries attended language courses and 8,042 earned a certificate recognized at the regional or national level; 7,589 people attended a vocational training course, 6,962 engaged in a traineeship that in 1,344 cases turned into a work opportunity. Overall, 4,124 people found a job (Ministero dell'Interno, 2017).

While the integration programs described above under the previous law used to be available also for asylum seekers, recently the Law 132/2018, known as *Decreto Salvini* from the name of the Minister of Interior who promoted it, decided to limit them only to recognized beneficiaries of international protection, reducing the budget and the potential of the whole system. Asylum seekers will have to stay in first reception or extraordinary reception centres, large 'containers' that cater only to primary needs and are often unable to guarantee any quality. Moreover, while previously the SPRAR projects were funded with 35€ pro die/per capita, now the government is offering from 26.50€ to 21.50€, a sum that is discouraging many providers from participating in the competitions.

Examining the Decree's contents, one can observe that it is based on a presumed emergency situation. Yet, in 2017 there was a significant drop in the number of arrivals in Italy in comparison with the previous two years, a trend that continued into 2018 when there was a reduction of more than 80% compared with 2017 and of over 90% compared with 2016. There seems to be no emergency to justify the drastic change of route. Rather, immigration is being used as a scapegoat for the purpose of creating political consensus. The decision to reserve access to the system managed by local authorities just for those who are already entitled to international protection may produce perverse effects on the integration process. Being eligible for reception in SIPROIMI only after formal status recognition means remaining in first-reception or extraordinary reception centres for a long time, creating the premises for situations of marginality and alienation (Corsi, 2019).

2.2. Switzerland: limited labour market integration with qualification requirements

Since 2014 the integration support in Switzerland is taking place at cantonal level (KIP Phase I: 2014 - 2017). However, there are substituted programs and projects at national level financed by the federation as well. All of them aim at the development of quality assurance instruments and instruments to control effects, to test innovative projects and new solutions and to close gaps within the existing offers and programs. The Federal Office for Migration (BFM, 2014) supported 103 projects. In 2013 and 2014 the federation and cantons together invested about 112.5 million Swiss Francs (approximately 103.5 million €) in eight support areas, integration into the labour market being one of them. Also,

for the KIP phase II from 2018 - 2021 several pilot projects and programs have been defined which are of national importance (see website BFM / SEM).

On the basis of the federal law for vocational education and training that came into effect in 2004 in connection with the *Berufsbildungsverordnung* (BBV) five pathways have been identified to enable adults to acquire a recognized vocational education and training (VET) certificate. The target group comprises adults, refugees and provisionally accepted persons, who have not attended more than the primary school, but who would be granted access to transitional programs at cantonal level that target a consecutive access to VET.

An apprenticeship, that combines school-based and workplace learning can be started up to an age of 24 years. Often refugees lack language skills as well as education and cultural knowledge necessary for starting an apprenticeship. The *Intergrationsvorlehre* – a program that prepares young adults for an apprenticeship has therefore been implemented. Many companies have started to offer this program and if possible, transfer the participants into regular apprenticeships afterwards. Other measures for the integration include job shadowing and job rotation to enable refugees to gain insights into workplaces. Next to preparing for job tasks and the world of work, vocational training provides a socialization into a community of workers in which cultural skills and knowledge about Switzerland can be acquired. Here, refugees have contacts to locals and learn with them and from them. Especially behavioural aspects are highly important during this time. Employers often so not have much time to teach them, but expect refugees to comply, such as being punctual, work in well-kept cloth, being polite and honest, acting with a service orientation towards customers, take initiative and ask questions in decisive moments.

Refugees with asylum status and provisionally accepted refugees have free access to the labour market in their canton. Wage and work conditions apply as to any other worker. Therefore, each employment requires an approval. The number of vocations that are open for application varies between the cantons. Generally, the local workforce is protected in terms of having primary access to the labour market. Although, registration, acknowledgment and integration procedures are established and function well, the number of refugees being employed at the labour market has been judged by the OECD as to low and not satisfactory (Liebig et al., 2012). Reasons for the lack of integration are manifold. Besides structural obstacles, a lack of self-competence, stamina, learning abilities hinders ones forthcoming. Also, managing multiple burdens with caring for family members, language learning, managing a household, taking care of health issues and balancing all of this with work is a challenge.

Switzerland, therefore, developed various measures to help refugees to enter the labour market, since this is the primary goal when accepting people to stay temporarily. On average the quote of employment increases in the first three years after processing an asylum application to about 20 percent, but 10 years later only 25% of the provisionally accepted persons are in employment. This is different for those who are recognized refugees where the employment rate amounts to about 48% (KEK-CDC Consultants; B.S.S, 2014). These quotas are relatively low in comparison to other persons with a foreign status living in Switzerland (79 percent) and the number of Swiss persons at an age between 25 and 54 (88 percent).

3. Factors impacting refugee work integration

3.1. Positive factors

The experiences of Italy and Switzerland suggest that is crucial to make the integration of refugees an opportunity also for the hosting society and economy. This limits the risks of an 'us versus them' rhetoric and makes everybody feel part of a common development project (European Commission, 2016). When this mechanism works, refugee integration becomes a win-win game and integration policies have an educational value, demonstrating that a multicultural society is not only possible, but also desirable.

It is also crucial for integration projects to be located in villages, towns and cities, and not far away from them. In this way, both the immigrants and the locals have chances to know each other, language learning can be enhanced by practice and the integration in the job market can be facilitated through individualized programs and mentoring for both the employer and the employee. In countries like Italy, with a large informal economy, this strategy reduces the risks for refugees to be attracted and then 'trapped' into it. The network created by a well-managed integration project introduces the refugee gradually into the local society and economy, increasing the probability of successful long lasting integration.

In addition, if refugees have successfully acquired an apprenticeship diploma, they are eligible to work as qualified workers in their profession. This not only provides them with a steady income and makes individuals self-reliable, it also is the pathway to being a well-integrated member in the society. Often co-workers help with the various issues and challenges that refugees face when trying to understand the new culture and new behavioural expectations. For the society the benefit is that refugees can work in fields with a high need for employees and that refugees can bring their knowledge and skills to enhance work or stimulate new approaches to work. The cultural exchange between refugees and their colleagues contributes to the development of inter-cultural competence and helps when workers go abroad or cope with international individuals as customers or colleagues.

3.2. Obstacles and risks

Integration into the labour market is not an easy and straightforward endeavour. The following challenges occur for VET institutions and individuals.

a) Risk of discrimination

The risk of discrimination in the social and occupational integration of persons with a migrant background should not be underestimated, especially among employers who have little or no experience with such employees and whose market and customer relationships are regionally oriented (Scherr et al., 2015). A perceived 'lack of training ability' among refugees promotes an inter alia 'culturalizing' perspective and might contribute to a social selection in decisions about admission to education and thus to discrimination of young people with a migrant background (Hormel, 2016). Although a large proportion of refugees need to be recruited, because there is a workforce demand, even those who are adequately qualified often find it difficult to find gainful employment. There is also a hierarchy of recruitment preferences, with companies and organizations initially actively recruiting workers through the free movement of persons within the EU/EFTA. This also reduces the opportunities for refugees to find employment.

b) Recognition procedures

Many of the refugees currently arriving in Europe have no documentation to prove their qualifications. In these cases, the examination of competencies often becomes very time-consuming. First, the procurement responsibility for documents that show previously acquired qualifications, lies with the refugees. If these are available, they must be translated and checked. Various recognition

procedures are currently being tested (KEK-CDC Consultants, 2011). If recognition on the basis of appropriate documents is not possible, existing competences must be recorded and assessed using complementary methods (such as interviews, questionnaires, tests, observations in work assignments).

c) New training design required

The heterogeneity of the refugees and their experiences require not only new perspectives and patterns of action, which can be an enrichment for the working world, but also an openness of all workers for joint learning. For education and training, especially in the workplace, this means a broader understanding of work and experiential knowledge as well as methods on how this can be made visible and usable for the work process. On-the-job learning must normally be supported during the introductory phase, e.g. mentoring programs, but this requires extra staff capacity.

Conclusions

Overall, both countries invest in integration programs. While in Italy there is less of a coordinated effort among the institutions, probably also due to the fact that refugees still try to move to other countries, Switzerland has a comprehensive infrastructure in place for those who have been accepted into the country. Despite many challenges for both the administration in the receiving countries and the refugees themselves, a successful labour market integration is to their benefit. Experiences have shown that an early preparation for vocational education and training in connection with the recognition of prior learning serves an early socialization in the world of work. If this is achieved, much of the support needed among refugees throughout the integration is than provided by co-workers.

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