

Teachers' beliefs about interculturalism in class PERMIT case preliminar research findings

abstract

Research about teachers' professionalism has driven attention in the last years. This is due probably to the fact that an increasing attention to teachers as key players in educational changing, linked to the new centrality of education and training as fundamental pieces of economical and social development. The discussion about teachers' professionalism started to delineate its own field within educational research from the 60's (and particularly 70's). Since then, tendencies have changed from objectivist models (through the observation of teachers at work) to consider their cognitive and metacognitive operation when planning their own work, to a complete introduction of their subjectivity as individuals deeply involved in creating their professional identity. The new perspectives of research on teachers' professionalism involve hence the exploration of experiences, beliefs, images and social representations of teaching and learning, connected to specific cultural contexts.

This article attempts to introduce a study on teachers' values, opinions and beliefs, about intercultural dialogue in class, as part of a preliminar research addressing further experimental teachers' training activities.

La ricerca sulla professionalità degli insegnanti ha guadagnato maggiore attenzione negli ultimi anni. Ciò è dovuto probabilmente al fatto che vi sia una crescente attenzione per gli insegnanti come attori principali nel cambiamento educativo, legato esso stesso alla nuova centralità dell'istruzione e della formazione come parte fondamentale dello sviluppo economico e sociale. La discussione sulla professionalità degli insegnanti ha iniziato a delineare un proprio campo di sviluppo nell'ambito della ricerca educativa degli anni '60 (e in particolare degli anni 70). Da allora, le tendenze sono cambiate dai modelli oggettivista (attraverso l'osservazione degli insegnanti durante il lavoro) verso la considerazione del funzionamento cognitivo e metacognitivo dell'insegnante al momento di pianificare il proprio lavoro, per una introduzione completa della loro soggettività come individui profondamente coinvolti nella creazione della propria identità professionale. Le nuove prospettive di ricerca sulla professionalità degli insegnanti comportano quindi l'esplorazione di esperienze, credenze, le immagini e le rappresentazioni sociali sull'insegnamento e l'apprendimento, collegati a specifici contesti culturali. Questo articolo tenta di introdurre uno studio sui 'valori, opinioni e concezioni sul dialogo interculturale in classe, come parte di una ricerca preliminare mirante all'orientamento di successive attività formative sperimentali degli insegnanti in servizio.

Key words: In-service teachers' education, teachers' beliefs, intercultural education.

*For a choice of pedagogy inevitably communicates
a conception of the learning process and the learner.
Pedagogy is never innocent.
It is a medium that carries its own message*
JEROME BRUNER, "The Culture of Education", 1996

1. Introduction

As Jerome Bruner pointed out within his important work "The culture of Education",

"...different approaches to learning and different forms of instruction – from imitation, to instruction, to discovery, to collaboration – reflect differing beliefs and assumptions about the learner – from actor, to knower, to private experienter, to collaborative thinker" (Bruner, 1996, p. 50).

He called this "a *folk pedagogy*", as the tendency of every teacher (and adult) to conceive the other's mind in a certain perspective: they are able of generating a "theory of mind". Therefore, Bruner, introduced four schematic conceptions about learning and teaching and its implications about the practice of teaching, namely¹: a) the conception of learning as imitation, that takes to the pedagogy of transmission; b) the conception of learning from didactic exposure, that takes to a pedagogy of demonstration; c) the conception of learning as the development of "intersubjective interchange", that takes to the pedagogy of participation and reflection; d) the conception of learning as management of "objective" knowledge, that takes to a pedagogy of "metalearning" in the sense of critical understandings of knowledge – distinguishing between personal knowledge, on the one side, and "what is taken to be known" by a culture or other, in Bruner's words –.

Bruner's claim about the need of considering *folk pedagogies* inside every educator, was made in the context of contesting the "anti-subjective behaviourism", through a perspective that would take into account the deep roots of teachers' effectiveness in intuitive theories about how the other minds work. In fact, Bruner opened a perspective of education as a "culture" where learning and teaching occur in context, and where meaning making processes shape the mind and the Self of the learners. This perspective would certainly bring out from behind its surface of "neutrality" of knowledge and the culture taught, in the sense that

"An official educational enterprise presumably cultivate beliefs, skills, and feelings in order to transmit and explicate its sponsoring culture's way of interpreting the natural and social worlds (...) it also plays a key role in helping the young construct and maintain a concept of Self. In carrying out that function, it inevitably courts risks by sponsoring, however implicitly, a certain version of the world. Or it runs the risk of offending some interests by openly examining views that might be

1 This is schematic and synthesized from the author explanations for the sake of simplicity with the aim of addressing the key concepts of this research.

taken as like the culture's canonically tabooed ones. That is the price of educating the young in societies whose canonical interpretations of the world are multivocal and ambiguous. But educational enterprise that fails to take the risks involved becomes stagnant and eventually alienating" (Bruner, op. cit., p. 15).

Let me now emphasize this perspective of a "learning and teaching culture": teachers and students are holders of experiences, representations, and beliefs, that they negotiate in the very moment of sharing an educational space. In that sense, the classroom (and also the extended system of the school) becomes a laboratory where microsocial changes can have place if a dialogic perspective is enacted (Wegerif, 2007). What do I mean by dialogic? It is that capacity of putting difference together, to construct the new meaning, through the tension between voices, stories, and cultures. In that sense, a *cultural context of learning* can be characterized more as a laboratory of micro-social change, than a stagnant and a alienating experience of transmission, to paraphrase Bruner.

But the key to feature a context of learning in that sense, is the capacity of recognition of the involved stakeholders of the own beliefs, values, and images populating their minds, as a *metarepresentational capacity*. Doubtless, from all engaged actors in the "culture of education", the teacher represents a crucial one, since he/she conduces groups of students within the educational experience. His/her capacity of mobilizing personal and professional resources and strategies are extremely important at the time of shaping an educational experience as merely transmission as well as dialogic space of creation and construction of new knowledge.

This applies particularly to the case of intercultural education: as it has emphasized in an author's previous work (Raffaghelli, 2009) teachers' intercultural sensitivity, as that personal dimension based on openness, curiosity, flexibility to interact with otherness linked to work with and through diversity in class, are the kernel of effective pedagogical practices. Effective practices that lead to a context of learning where inclusiveness and participation are the distinctive features of the experience, as part of the so called "intercultural education" – as discussed in chapter 2 –. These assumptions were considered in the exploration of teachers' beliefs about intercultural dialogue in class as well as teaching methods to tackle the question of diversity through the own subject taught within the research that I'm about to introduce, undertaken within the first phase of implementation of PERMIT project.

As we shall see later, the concepts introduced in this last paragraph are completely coherent with a whole line of research about teachers' professionalism, that I will also take into account to ground my position.

2. Teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning: a powerful research perspective

Research about teachers' professionalism has driven attention in the last years. This is due probably to the fact that an increasing attention to teachers as key players in educational changing, linked to the new centrality of education and training as fundamental pieces of economical and social development (European Commission, 2007, 2010). Coherently, this attention has been mainly focused on: a) teachers' education and teachers' effectiveness in class, considering the need of

introducing substantial innovations in class (use of new teaching methods, use of resources other than traditional text books and expositions, etc.) and curriculum; b) participating in re-engineering with regard to school organization and relationships among teachers; c) communicating with the outside world; d) linking practices in international learning communities (Margiotta, 2007).

One of the most important challenges that teachers have to overcome is, doubtless, the question of new constructivist approaches that put the learner at the center of educational process. This new vision takes the teacher to rethink completely its own role with regard to the students s/he is in charge to lead; in fact, the teacher is supposed to play the part of facilitator, stimulating autonomous processes of exploration of knowledge, responsible participation, and creativity. Traditional teaching techniques are not enough to address *new learning cultures*.

The discussion about teachers' professionalism started to delineate its own field within educational research from the 60's (and particularly 70's). Since then, tendencies have changed from objectivist models (through the observation of teachers at work) to consider their cognitive and metacognitive operation when planning their own work, to a complete introduction of their subjectivity as individuals deeply involved in creating their professional identity (Knowles, 1992; Kompf, Bond, Dworet, Boak, 1996; Bullough, 1997; Connelly, Clandinin, 1999; in Europe: Beijaard, Meijer, Verloop, 2004; Bolivar Botía, Fernández Cruz, Molina Ruiz, 2004; Lisimberti, 2007). The new perspectives of research on teachers' professionalism involve hence the exploration of experiences, beliefs, images and social representations of teaching and learning, connected to specific cultural contexts; this kind of research is frequently developed through the use of qualitative methods, intensely connected to fieldwork and activities of construction of meaning together with the same teacher, as action research (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006).

If in the 80's the research was focused on teachers' thinking and other cognitive processes, in the early 90's researchers were focused on beliefs, values and emotions, being the main hypothesis that those psychological processes, more implicit (like beliefs) or more explicit (like naïve theories of learning) could influence pedagogical practices (Pajares, 1992)

Therefore, exploring and discovering teachers' beliefs could help researchers to think about effective teachers' education models, that would impact on negative beliefs or outdated perceptions of learning in an attempt to accompany the teachers to reflectively deconstruct the same.

In fact, the TALIS research (Teaching and Learning International Survey, OECD)², affirms that

"Teachers' beliefs, practices and attitudes are important for understanding and improving educational processes. They are closely linked to teachers' strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life and to their general well-

- 2 The TALIS research examined a variety of beliefs, practices and attitudes which previous research has shown to be relevant to the improvement and effectiveness of schools. Using representative data from 23 countries, this chapter presents a cross-cultural comparative analysis of profiles, variations and interrelationships of these aspects as they shape teachers' working environment.

being, and they shape students' learning environment and influence student motivation and achievement. Furthermore they can be expected to mediate the effects of job-related policies – such as changes in curricula for teachers' initial education or professional development – on student learning (OECD-TALIS, 2009, p. 91).

TALIS examines teachers' beliefs, attitudes and practices and compares teachers, schools and countries, emphasizing that even when these dimensions do not explain directly student achievement or changes in achievement, student motivation or changes in motivation. To study professional competence the TALIS research draw on the several research trends about the issue of teachers' beliefs. In fact, recent research, for example, is focused on teachers' beliefs on the nature of knowledge. Knowledge can be, as conceived by teachers, simple or complex, acquired through an active process or by transmission, certain and well defined or characterized by uncertainty and the necessity of active exploration (Schommer, 1990; Hofer, 2000; Schraw e Olafson; 2008).

Another important group of researchers have focused the nature of teaching methods. Measures of the effects of constructivist compared with "reception/-direct transmission" beliefs on teaching and learning, developed by Peterson et al. (1989) is a good example of this, followed by the works of Woolley & Wolley, 1999; Chan & Elliott, 2004. Lastly, other studies focus the influence of teachers' activities in promoting successive changes within professional activities that might lead them to reshape their own beliefs (Merinik et al. 2009).

According to this rich state of art, TALIS uses a domain-general version of two teaching and learning-related indices (constructivist and direct transmission) to cover teachers' beliefs and basic understanding of the nature of teaching and learning. The TALIS survey was structured hence basing on several research trends (for example the incidence of gender or geographical and cultural belonging and beliefs; it also considers the perspective of educational policy, to which is more relevant to look at the impact on teachers' beliefs, practices and attitudes of professional background factors such as type of training, certification and professional development, subject taught, employment status (part-time versus full-time) and length of tenure. It is important to note that any of these relationships can have different causal interpretations.

Therefore, TALIS research highlights the several dimensions of the study of teacher's beliefs, considering the interest of the focus for policy making, particularly regarding the quality of education. Nevertheless, being a cross-sectional study, TALIS can describe relationships of correlation among certain factors and beliefs, but it cannot disentangle causal direction. Some of the TALIS analyses can be considered merely exploratory, because so far there is little research, for example, on beliefs and practices specific to certain subjects.

Considering the state of art in Italy, where the topic has also been afforded in several reviews of literature aimed to justify teachers' education (Lisimberti, 2007; Semeraro, 2010). Both researchers emphasize the subjective perspective of research on teachers' effectiveness. But while Lisimberti have extensively reviewed Italian and international research trends about teachers' professional identity, the last work of Semeraro (2010) not only reviews international research background about teachers' beliefs ("concezioni degli insegnanti") but it also introduces an empirical field research about initial and in-service teachers' beliefs. Furthermore,

Semeraro and cols. contrast these results against a framework of competences of the ideal teacher, drawing on SSIS-VENETO Syllabus of teacher professional profile (Margiotta et al. 2003; 2006)³.

However, as it emerges from this first analysis of background, research about teachers' beliefs in the field of intercultural education has been treated scarcely. Therefore, it seems interesting to explore the relations among the exposition to other cultures (both formal and informal, autonomous) as part of the personal and professional story, and the introduction of an intercultural perspective to the pedagogical practices.

The PERMIT preliminar research work could thus address interesting research questions about teachers beliefs on intercultural education. This should lead to consider learning design for teachers' intercultural education; as well as the study of teachers' effectiveness with regard to the introduction of intercultural perspective to the own subject taught and teaching methods opened to diversity.

3. Exploring Teachers' beliefs and values regarding intercultural dialogue

The PERMIT project ("Promote Education and Reciprocal Understanding through Multicultural Integrated Teaching") aimed at contributing to fulfilling the objective of promoting the Civil Society Dialogue between the European Union and Turkey with specific focus on ensuring a better knowledge and understanding of Turkey within the European Union.

PERMIT's Scientific Committee elaborated a first working hypothesis in order to launch the process of intervention that would lead to reach the ambitious goal envisaged: *Intercultural awareness among researchers, teachers and students involved in the project (sample 10, 100, 800) is supposed to be low. The innovations in teaching methodologies and materials is expected to enhance researchers, teachers and students' awareness of cultural diversity and understanding.*

From this assumption, the research group worked on the conceptualisation of teachers' training as the kernel of teachers' as professionals able of dealing with the complexities of an intercultural education.

The departing assumption was that the student's response to the cultural *difference* (linguistic, ethnical, of values and attitudes, etc) co-existing in her/his living environment can be related to the teacher's reflection upon the own intercultural experiences and cultural identity. This also entails the capacity of the teacher of reflecting on the own beliefs when implementing methods and perspectives within teaching, for raising the student's self-awareness in the processes of learning, from a critical positioning about the cultural values inside the concepts and activities through the learning process.

On the contrary, the teachers' lack of capacity of understanding the own values and beliefs inside the own subject taught and the methods chosen to conduct

3 Several academics from the Universities composing the School of Teachers' Education of Veneto region, Italy worked jointly in this project. They were: Umberto Margiotta (director of SSIS-VENETO) Eugenio Bastianon (University of Venice); Luigina Passuello (University of Verona); Raffaella Semeraro and Carla Xodo (University of Padua).

learning processes may take the student to reshape the own beliefs, being conducted by the teacher up to the point that acculturation (adoption of a different culture) takes place through the prism of the teacher's cultural experience. Thus the teacher's reflection upon the teaching process can be influenced by his/her attitude towards cultural embeddedness of subjects taught (particularly art, languages and humanities, but also sciences), as well as in his/her relations with foreign students. As unaware process, this has heavy implications about both teaching and learning: such a situation may give rise to stereotypes of cultural traits or values related several elements and concepts within the subject taught, as well as in the choice of teaching methods, or when thinking about the assessment criteria and expected learning outcomes. Instead of that, dispositives and tools that enact self-reflection of cultural experience can prove to be constructive with regard to the teachers professional identity and his/her engagement as protagonist of micro-social experimentation to deal with crucial problems within the own socio-cultural context. To this regard, self-assessment tools to analyze the intercultural competence, as proposed by University of Primorska (Cok, 1999, 2009) could be considered in line with the above introduced perspective.

To enact a process of training and influencing the intercultural values, opinions and beliefs of teachers involved in the PERMIT experience, as "authentic" environments of intercultural learning, the research group decided to start from collecting some information about teachers' beliefs and practices with regard to the intercultural education.

This information was going to be used in further activities (mainly first awareness sessions) with PERMIT teachers-experimenters.

Nevertheless, the following results are of interest in itself to think about the several teachers' beliefs on intercultural dialogue and education.

Due to the nature of organization of the study, we will only present Italian group's results. The methodological issues have already been discussed and schematized in the chapter 7.

3.1. Introducing the Study

The Study was conducted from January 2009 to March 2009. A questionnaire developed by PERMIT research group (with researchers from Yildiz, Primorska and CIRDFa, Ca' Foscari) was disposed in electronic form by UNIVIRTUAL LAB, giving access to teachers and students from the schools selected to participate on PERMIT experimentation process (fig. 1).

Before administration, teachers' trainers had a meeting with Italian research group in order to be trained to the administration and areas explored by questionnaire. Following this phase, a letter was sent to Heads of schools informing and asking approval for the administration with at least 4 classes of the selected Institutes.

Given this context of work, **17 teachers and 208 students** completed the questionnaire in Italy, using school labs to administrate open online questionnaires, followed by trained teachers.

Data analysis was undertaken by the CIRDFa research, under the coordination of Prof. Roberto Melchiori.

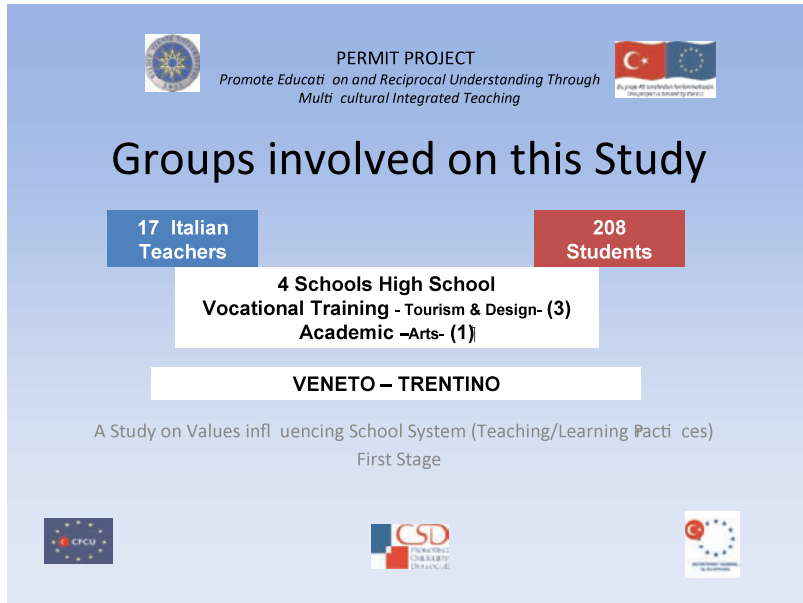


Figure 1 – Groups involved on the Study

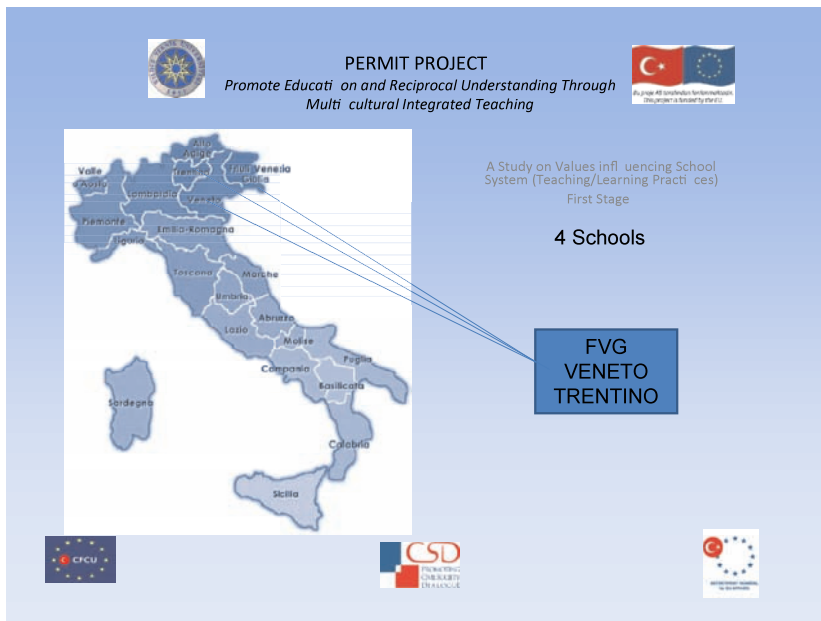


Figure 2 – The studied groups within the Italian context

3.2. Teachers' Profiles

The teachers involved in the present study are representative of general characteristics of Italian teaching boards in Veneto Region: they are mainly middle aged (with 84,7% of teachers over 40 years old), and women (71,4%). Consistently, they have rather long experience on teaching (mode 16-20 years).

As we may see, in our group, the teachers that show longer experience are all coming from the fields of Humanities (History, Philosophy, Economics, Political Sciences) whereas teachers coming from the field of Sciences (Math, Chemistry, Physics) declared less years on teaching.

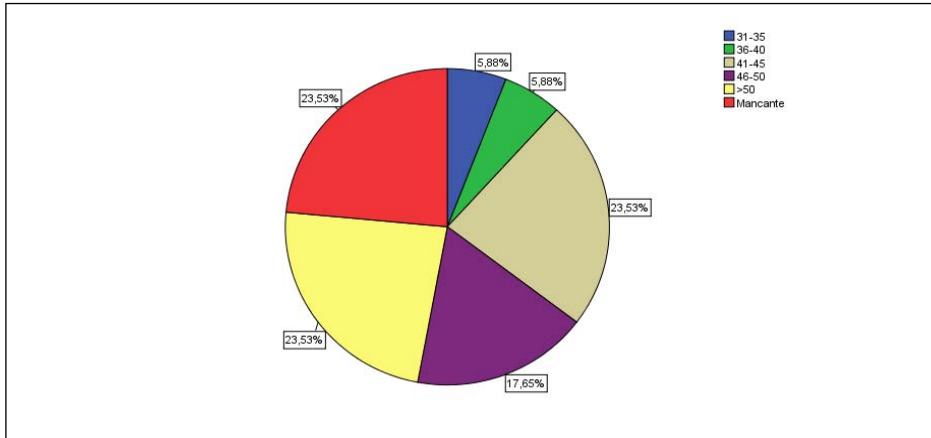
This fact could be associated with an only recent openness of scientific areas to participate in interdisciplinary teams and projects about transversal competencies.

Another important issue is the fact that the bigger part of teachers are originals from Veneto Region (Padua, Venice, Verona, Pieve di Soligo, with a cumulative percentage of 47.1%; the following group is, in any case, is original from the north part of Italy (Trento and Genova, 17,7). The rest, come from the south part of Italy (11,8%), and from Wien (5,9). Being all Italians and from the north part of Italy, and mainly from the same geographic area where the school is placed, could generate a pedagogic discourse which is aligned with official positions in matters of immigration. It's hard to imagine having teachers that have the same social status than their own students; and in the case these teachers have the sensibility to treat the problems of immigration, they experience the problem of otherness from the point of view of dominant class.

Nevertheless, other data confirm the hypothesis of cultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity of the teachers engaged in this study (mainly because they have accepted voluntarily to complete the questionnaire, and this is the first indicator of an interest in intercultural issues). It is possible (and to be confirmed) that these teachers are innovators, but in any case experience an important resistance from the institutional level (head and other colleagues) that could create professional crisis and difficulties in implementing projects of intercultural education. Qualitative approaches to study organizational realities within schools with regard to this problem could bring new light.

| | | Age | | | |
|---------|---------|-------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| | | Frequencies | Percentage | Valid Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
| Valid | 31-35 | 1 | 5,9 | 7,7 | 7,7 |
| | 36-40 | 1 | 5,9 | 7,7 | 15,4 |
| | 41-45 | 4 | 23,5 | 30,8 | 46,2 |
| | 46-50 | 3 | 17,6 | 23,1 | 69,2 |
| | >50 | 4 | 23,5 | 30,8 | 100,0 |
| | Total | 13 | 76,5 | 100,0 | |
| Missing | Missing | 4 | 23,5 | | |
| | Total | 17 | 100,0 | | |

Table 3 – Teachers' Age



Graphic 4 – Teachers' Age

Gender

| | | Frequencies | Percentage | Valid Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|---------|--------|-------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | male | 4 | 23,5 | 28,6 | 28,6 |
| | female | 10 | 58,8 | 71,4 | 100,0 |
| | Total | 14 | 82,4 | 100,0 | |
| Missing | | 3 | 17,6 | | |
| | Total | 17 | 100,0 | | |

Table 5 Teachers' Gender

| | Frequency | Percentage | Valid Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | 3 | 17,6 | 17,6 | 17,6 |
| Bari | 2 | 11,8 | 11,8 | 29,4 |
| Genova | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 35,3 |
| Padova | 4 | 23,5 | 23,5 | 58,8 |
| Pieve di soligo | 2 | 11,8 | 11,8 | 70,6 |
| Trento | 2 | 11,8 | 11,8 | 82,4 |
| Venice | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 88,2 |
| Verona | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 94,1 |
| Vienna | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 100,0 |
| Totale | 17 | 100,0 | 100 | |

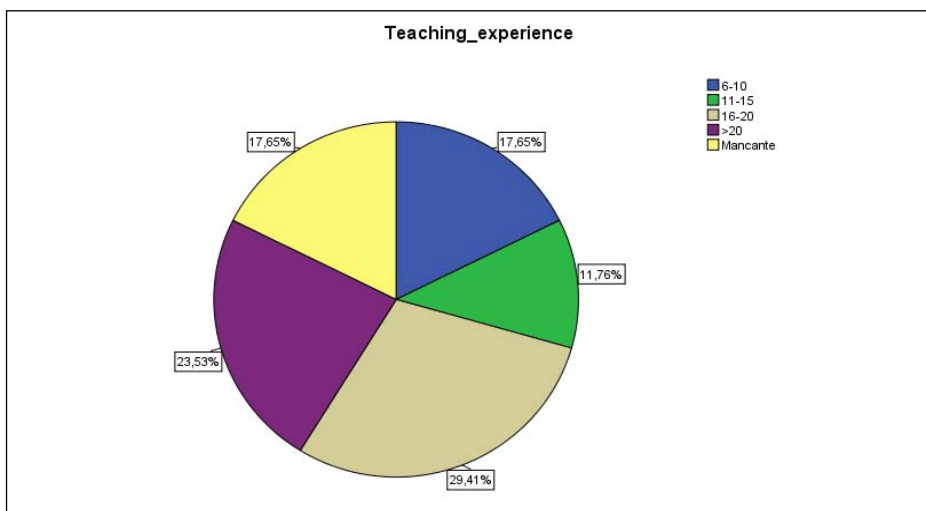
Table 6 – Place_of_Birth

| | | Frequency | Percentage | Valid Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|---------|---------------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | Mathematics | 1 | 5,9 | 7,1 | 7,1 |
| | Physics | 2 | 11,8 | 14,3 | 21,4 |
| | Chemistry | 1 | 5,9 | 7,1 | 28,6 |
| | Foreign Language: English | 4 | 23,5 | 28,6 | 57,1 |
| | History/Philosophy | 2 | 11,8 | 14,3 | 71,4 |
| | Civics/Political Sciences | 2 | 11,8 | 14,3 | 85,7 |
| | Economy | 1 | 5,9 | 7,1 | 92,9 |
| | Other | 1 | 5,9 | 7,1 | 100,0 |
| | Total | 14 | 82,4 | 100,0 | |
| Missing | Missing | 3 | 17,6 | | |
| | Total | 17 | 100,0 | | |

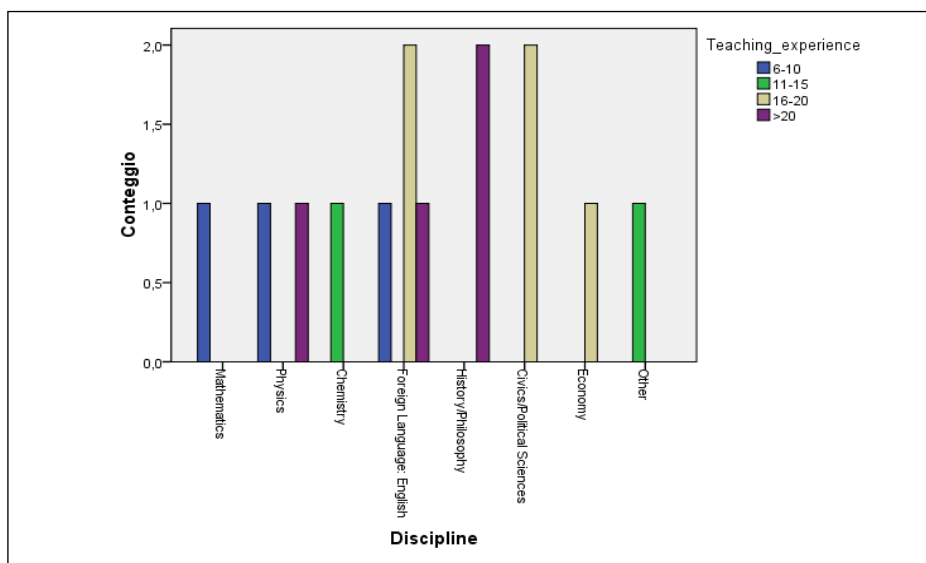
Table 7 – Subject Taught

| | | Frequencies | Percentage | Valid Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|---------|---------------------|-------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | 6-10 | 3 | 17,6 | 21,4 | 21,4 |
| | 11-15 | 2 | 11,8 | 14,3 | 35,7 |
| | 16-20 | 5 | 29,4 | 35,7 | 71,4 |
| | >20 | 4 | 23,5 | 28,6 | 100,0 |
| | Totale | 14 | 82,4 | 100,0 | |
| Missing | Mancante di sistema | 3 | 17,6 | | |
| | Totale | 17 | 100,0 | | |

Table 8 – Teaching_experience



Graphic 9 – Teaching_experience



Graphic 10 – Teaching experience

3.3. The teachers' linguistic competence

In this section, information about Mother tongue, vehicular language, working language, and other languages spoken were presented.

The assumption is that "...student's response to other languages and cultures forming part of his/her living environment can be related to the teacher's reflection upon teaching methods and their own discipline taught; this can be, in time, regarded as a result of the method for raising the student's self-awareness in the processes of learning the subject taught where cultural awareness can be shaped as part of transversal competences. It may happen that the student's self-reflection is guided by the teacher up to the point that acculturation (adoption of a different culture) takes place through the prism of the teacher's cultural experience. Thus the teacher's reflection upon the teaching process can be influenced by his/her attitude towards the target culture, which can be too subjective. Such a situation may give rise to stereotypes of cultural traits or values related to the nation speaking the language taught, which eventually works to the disadvantage of the student. Self-reflection upon and self-assessment of cultural experience can prove to be much more constructive from the educational point of view, owing to the fact that self-reflection and the acquisition of primary cultural experience allows for the authenticity of the cognitions acquired and the possibility to exert an active influence on the process of the formation of the student's personality..." (L. Çok, Permit Assessment of Units, 2nd Residential Seminars, Koper)

So through the study of languages, it is introduced a first dimension of teachers' cultural identity, that is later deepened in the section "Contacts with other Cultures" and "Values, Opinions and Attitudes".

This analysis, in time, should be helpful to understand the teachers' capacity – and openness – to reflect on their own cultural identity influencing teaching practices

| | Frequencies | Percentage | Valid Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|---------|-------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | 3 | 17,6 | 17,6 | 17,6 |
| German | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 23,5 |
| Italian | 13 | 76,5 | 76,5 | 100 |
| total | 17 | 100,0 | 100,0 | |

Table 11 – Mother_Tongue

| | Frequencies | Percentage | Valid Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|---------|-------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | 3 | 17,6 | 17,6 | 17,6 |
| English | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 23,5 |
| Italian | 13 | 76,5 | 76,5 | 100,0 |
| total | 17 | 100,0 | 100,0 | |

Table 12 – Instruction_Language

| | Frequencies | Percentage | Valid Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | 3 | 17,6 | 17,6 | 17,6 |
| English, German, Chinese | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 23,5 |
| English | 4 | 23,5 | 23,5 | 47,1 |
| English French | 2 | 11,8 | 11,8 | 58,8 |
| English Russian German | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 64,7 |
| English, French | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 70,6 |
| english, french, spanish, russian | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 76,5 |
| English, Spanish | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 82,4 |
| French | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 88,2 |
| English, French, German | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 94,1 |
| Russian, Spanish. Italian | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 100,0 |
| total | 17 | 100,0 | 100,0 | |

Table 13 – Foreign_Language

The results obtained with regard to the question of languages, show a group that, even if it is not multicultural from the point of view of their origins (mainly Italians, Italian mother tongue and language of instruction) are keen on learning/using of foreign languages, with the third part of teachers knowing several languages – 29,5% –, mainly European but also, non-European. In fact, a good part of the group is able, in any case, of speaking at least another foreign language, a condition that is indicating a minimal openness and knowledge of other cultures. This last assumption must be considered carefully if we bear in mind that almost the half of teachers that have completed the questionnaire are Language teachers.

3.4. Teaching Methods

This section of the questionnaire was devoted to study the channels/modalities chosen by which the teacher communicates with his/her students, and therefore, deliver curriculum, building on the bases that the act of teaching is mainly an act of communicating “culture” (in the complete sense of communication, not only verbal) – Margiotta, 1997 –.

The teacher, hence, delivers curriculum through the use of activities and tools that can be more or less participative, that could allow the expression of the students’ selves, or instead of that, that can alienate them, forcing the student to recall and repeat a “vertical pedagogic discourse” (Bernstein, 1996), which in time can be defined as ethnocentric (there’s one Culture to be learnt: those delivered at school).

Within Permit experimentation, we have considered that more participative – horizontal discourse – could address the introduction of intercultural reflection, leading to the setting of learning situations where “complex intercultural identities” can be developed. As stated before, it’s not only about introducing “intercultural topics” within an enlarged curriculum, but mainly about teaching practices that generated an atmosphere of participation, inclusion, equity, among teachers and students (Minello & Raffaghelli, this volume). The main assumption here, that we recall, is that traditional methods like lecture and use of textbooks are closer to an ethnocentric approach, where prevails the teacher discourse, that in time brings to the classroom an “official”, centralized discourse. Whereas methods that allow participation (workgroup, discussions) students’ activity (laboratories, fieldwork, project work), and interaction with enlarged contexts of learning (use of technologies) will allow an ethnorelative focus of topics treated in class, helping students – and also teachers – to reflect on cultural values and hence acquire levels of intercultural sensitivity.

Teaching Methods implemented in class. This questionnaire’s area explored the teaching methods adopted in class as expressed by teachers aiming to depict the current practices in class. Lecture should be considered a traditional method where teachers expose a topic, having complete control of discourse and over the group dynamic. It can be pointed out that teachers can afford a topic in a participatory way, making students to feel involved into a discourse. Other methods, can be regarded as more interactive, generating the possibility of expression of diversity. It can be argued, on the contrary, that those methods can be superficial and ideologically driven towards the direction the teacher wants to impose. The best formula is, doubtless, the use of a variety of teaching methods that guides students from knowledge to understanding, and from understanding to putting to practice, and transferring to real life, seeing the significance of a determinate issue as part of their intercultural competence (see Raffaghelli, Melchiorri, Minello, this volume).

As we can see, the teachers in this group use a variety of methods, but lecture prevails (64,7% of teachers use rather often and often this method). The other methods are used mainly “sometimes” (35,3% of cases for group work, project work, lab activities, pair works); groupwork shows more dispersion, with a consistent part of teachers that use it “rarely” (23,5%); but another group uses it “rather often” (23,5%). Almost the same situation applies for project work. We can see that, with regard to lab activities, that the situation seems to be defined by a

scarce opportunity of using laboratories, since the teachers indicate that condition as “rarely” (29,4%) and sometimes (35,3%); this situation is probably due to the cost and bureaucratic problems linked to taking the class outside of the classroom/school.

Generally, the situation seems to show a trend of change with regard to teaching methods, towards more open, participatory approach; this trend is surely to be linked to well motivated teachers, that could act isolated, within a yet very traditional system, which couldn't be interested in this “new” activities; moreover, the institution it could also offer resistance and reluctance to innovation.

| | never | rarely | Some times | Rather often | Always |
|-------------------------|-------|--------|------------|--------------|--------|
| a) lectures | 5,9 | 0 | 11,8 | 35,3 | 29,4 |
| b) group work | 0 | 23,5 | 35,3 | 23,5 | 0 |
| c) project work | 5,9 | 17,6 | 35,3 | 23,5 | 05,9 |
| d) lab activities | 5,9 | 29,4 | 35,3 | 11,8 | 0 |
| e) pair work | 11,8 | 11,8 | 35,7 | 23,5 | 5,9 |
| f) self-guided work | 0 | 23,5 | 5,9 | 35,3 | 5,9 |
| g) other (specify)..... | | | | | |

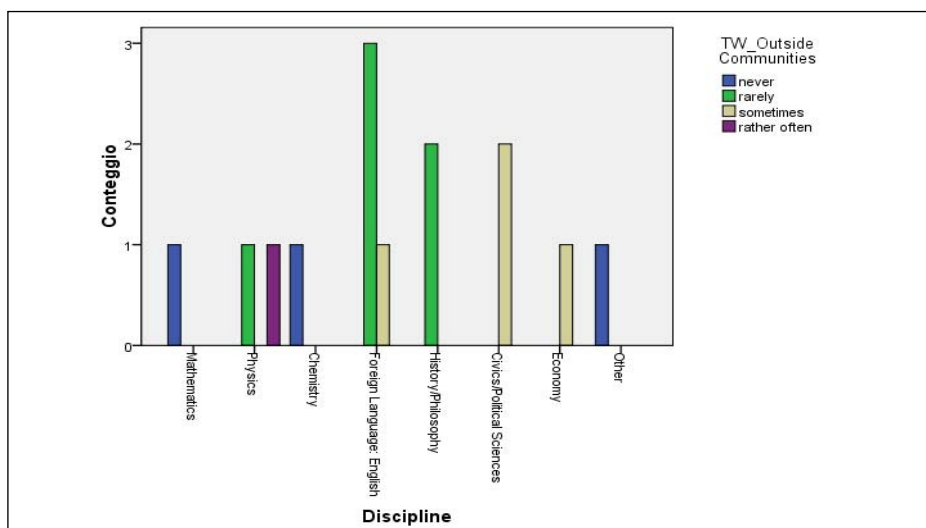
Table 14 - What teaching method/s do you use when you teach?

Teachers’ working methods. *Professional Learning Communities of Teachers*, based upon the construct “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), have been defined as places for teacher learning; in that sense, a community can become a mediator of teachers’ responses to their professional intervention, seen in terms of quality, efficacy, innovation, satisfaction (Midoro, 2005). In this sense, particular attention have been paid in the last years to the importance of interdisciplinary interaction in order to promote “cross-borders” teaching, opening the “boxes” of disciplines, as requested by E. Morin for a better education. Characteristics of the communities of practice, including their relative strength and openness (to learning), influence the degree to which teachers work out negotiated and thoughtful responses to new schooling system demands (Margiotta, 2007, op. cit). In an intercultural vision, group-working means negotiation of senses of practices and enlargement of the “discipline-centered” approach. Being flexible, in the end, is an important dimension of an intercultural reflection.

In this section, the questionnaire attempted to explore this issue, asking about contacts with other teachers in order to solve working problems. The issue about legitimating peripheral participation, which is the main aspect of Lave & Wenger's model, is clearly incompletely raised through only one question. In spite of this, this question demonstrated to be This last is only sensitive to the openness of participant teachers to keep in contact with colleagues as basic dimension of further engagement in professional learning communities of teachers.

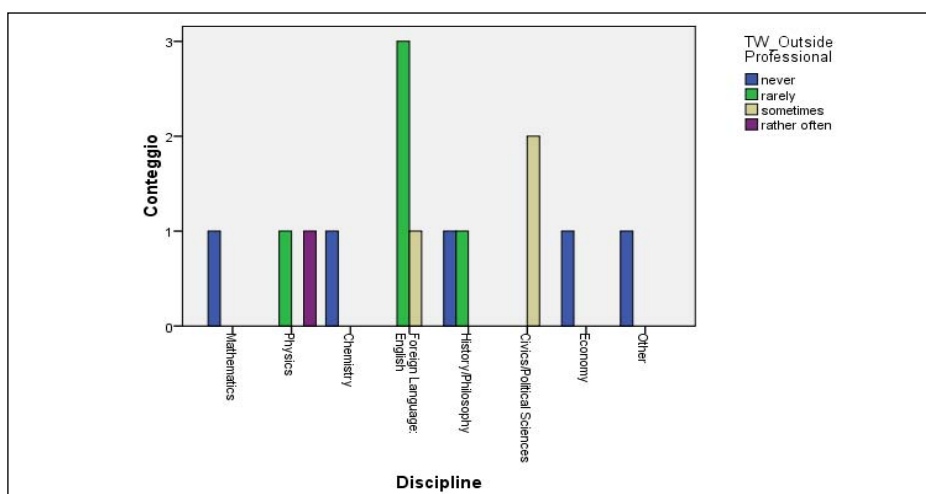
| | never | rarely | Some times | Rather often | Always |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|------------|--------------|--------|
| a) teachers of other subjects | 0 | 23,5 | 41,2 | 11,8 | 5,9 |
| b) outside communities | 17,6 | 35,3 | 23,5 | 5,9 | 0 |
| c) outside professionals | 29,4 | 29,4 | 17,6 | 5,9 | 0 |

Table 15 – How often do you work in team with teachers of other subjects or outside professionals?



Graphic 16 – Frequency of collaboration with teachers from other professional communities

As we may see, contact with other colleagues is not usual: teachers state that only “sometimes” (41,2%) and “rarely” (23,5%) they contact other colleagues, within the same school, of other disciplines, in order to work together. The same trend emerges for contacts with teachers of other “communities of practices” (58,8%, aggregating “sometimes” and “rarely”), and with professionals – not teachers – from the outside world (58,8%, aggregating “never” and “rarely”). This issue depicts a situation where the teachers are working mainly isolated, with the consequences for the students of seeing partial implementation of new ideas, instead of well integrated, coherent, new teaching practices, were intercultural teaching methods and issues have certainly an important place. The bivaried (Contacts & Discipline) analysis introduced through the graphics is also consistent with this information.



Graphic 17 – Frequency of collaboration with other professionals

Introducing New technologies within teaching practices to address intercultural issues. This questionnaire's area, was aimed to study the level of introduction of ICT's within teaching practices, building on the assumption discussed on our research framework, that the "digital natives" are conforming a third culture, through the use of Internet, which seems to be an excellent way of opening a vision to new/other cultures.

There's also consistent data that shows that the implementation of online learning approaches promotes autonomous study, responsibility for learning processes, and, depending of the model of e-learning adopted, better interaction and collective participation (Pallof & Pratt, 1999).

In fact, it's important to remember that students' have considered ICT's crucial to reach other cultures, through direct communication with young people of other parts of the world.

The results here show a situation of increasing use of ICT's, yet still not consistent. The fact that a third part of teachers (35,3) uses "rather often" technologies, is encouraging, with regard to a regular implementation. Unfortunately, the next step, which is the use of "blended" approaches were distance learning is implemented, are not so positive, with a 47,1% that uses this approach "never" and "rarely".

Contacting students by email was considered as a very outdated modality to reach the student in online spaces; since there are several platforms that allow asynchronous communication among teacher and students, the use of mail is unnecessary. The data here show that teachers do not use this method consistently.

| | never | rarely | Some times | Rat her often | Always |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------|------------|------------------|--------|
| a) use of ICT in class | 11,8 | 11,8 | 17,6 | 35,3 | 5,9 |
| b) use of e-learning approaches | 35,3 | 11,8 | 17,6 | 17,6 | 0 |
| c) contacting students by e-mail | 23,5 | 35,3 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 11,8 |

Table 18 – How often do you include ICT (information and computer technology) in your lessons

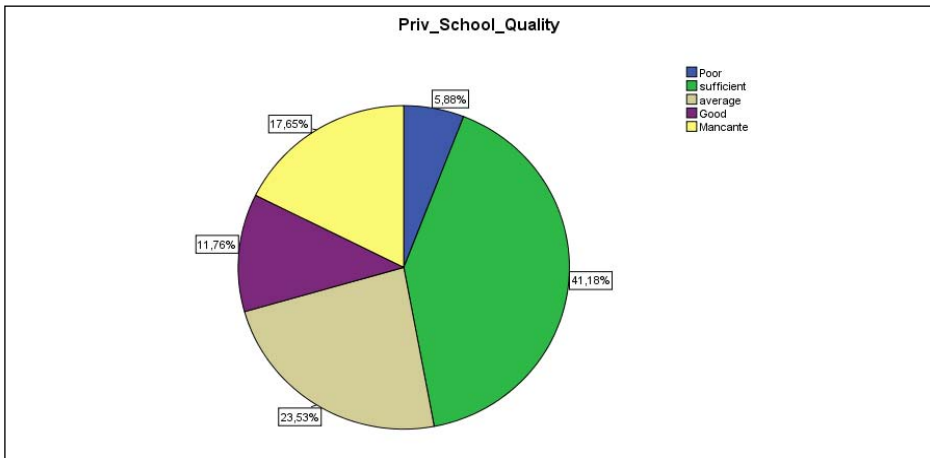
Quality of School. The quality of School, as perceived by teachers, can be an important factor of positive/negative representations and beliefs of the own professional capacity. In this sense, the teacher finds him/herself as part of a system that works properly, or s/he feels isolation and even mobbing as a daily dramatic situation in her/ his professional practice.

The problem of public/private schools is, in any case, complex, since depending from the model of development adopted, public system is perceived as a hub of excellence, or as a container poor people to have access at a basic education that can be in time seen as system of "indoctrination" .

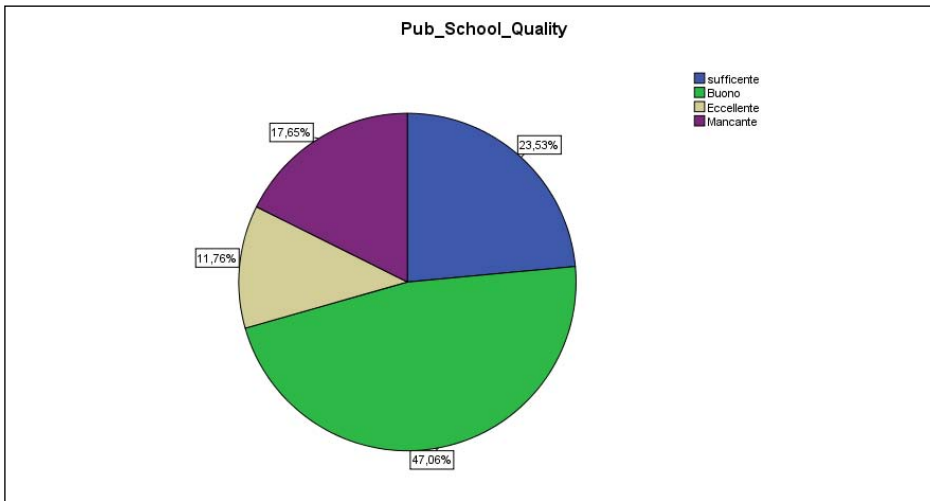
Generally, Italian teachers, engaged within the public system, declared that the public school is a good environment to work. In fact, this representation is consistent with the welfare state in Italy, that have promoted public school in a well developed, central bureaucratic system; even if in the latest years important changes have been pushed by the introduction of autonomy's law⁴, the public school is still envisaged as the better way to deliver basic education.

4 We should consider here that this research was implemented during 2009, prior to the commotion of the "Gelmini's Reform" which made schools literally blow under the pressure

The counterpart of this situation is that Italian system could be considered elitist and centralized, presenting problems for social inclusion, participation of local population on the institutional identity, with consequences of drop-out of students of low social status; and the isolation of potential dialogue with institutions towards a strategy of local development (integration with market labour). As a corollary, intercultural perspective of teaching and learning is still fragmentary, introduced with some difficult, since curriculum delivered is too rigidly imposed to local populations. Nevertheless creativity and willingness of teachers are pushing against the system with best-practices that are creating the ground for new systematic approaches to intercultural education (Minello & Raffaghelli, this volume).



Graphic 19 – Quality perceived of Private School Services



Graphic 20 – Quality perceived of Private School Services

of downsizing (in budgetary and personnel terms) with the following pressure to remaining teachers.

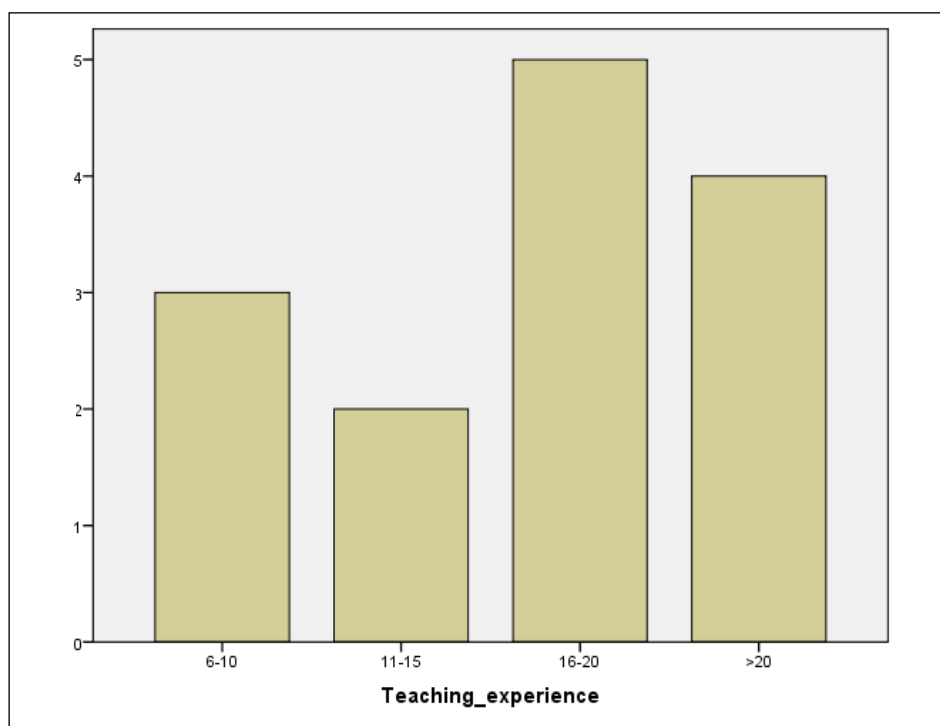
3.5. Contact with other Cultures

This section of the questionnaire explored the experiences of teachers' contact with other cultural realities and people, through a) real contact in situation of tourism, b) contact on the online environments — — — this last dimension was explored in order to compare it with the experience of their own students, that showed to be keen on the use of technologies and well entered on the social Web⁵

Travel Abroad per Years and Teaching Experience

| | Frequency | Percentage | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|---------------|-----------|------------|---------|--------------|
| Valid yes | 14 | 82,4 | 100,0 | 100,0 |
| Missed Missed | 3 | 17,6 | | |
| total | 17 | 100,0 | | |

Table 21 – Travel_Abroad



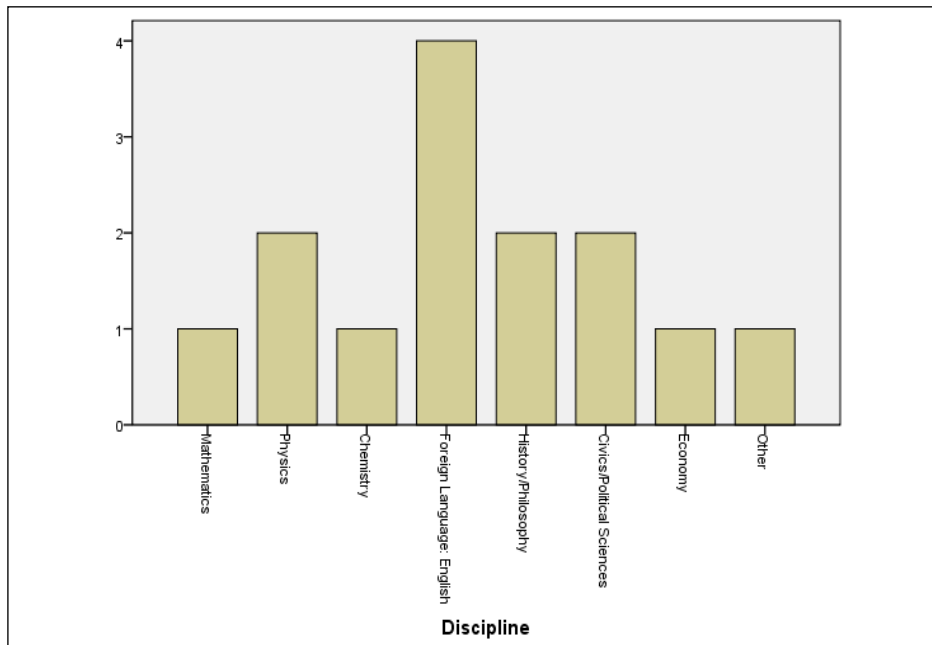
Graphic 22 – Teaching Experience (in years)

5 See Raffaghelli, chapter 10, this book.

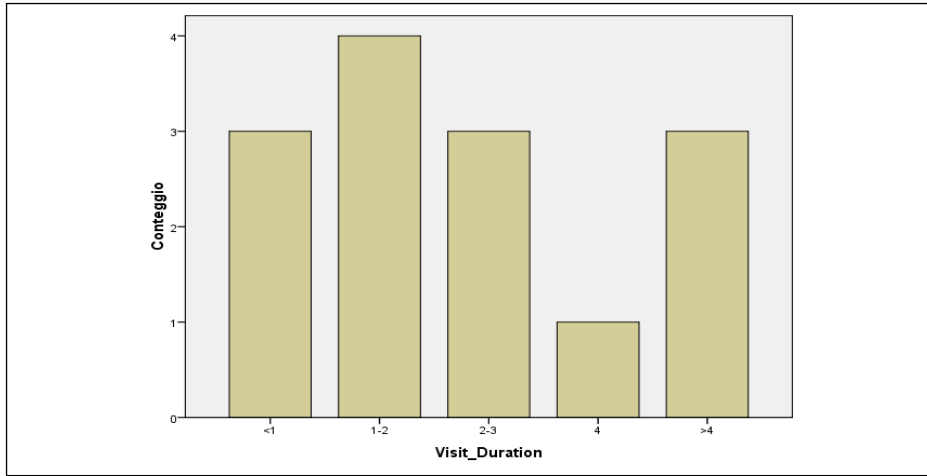
Teachers had in every case experiences of contact with other cultures abroad. We can see that teachers are actively engaged in contact with other cultures both through tourism and other kind of professional activities abroad.

When we take a look to the teachers' subject taught, we can see that the "traveller teachers" are mainly those coming from the field of languages. This is consistent with the development of their own education as languages teachers, but it is also a sign of openness given by the research/training method of their specific disciplinary field, that could in time lead to a more intercultural conception of teaching.

Even if the duration of the stay can be considered mainly short (1 to 2 weeks), there is at least a third of teachers that spent more than 4 weeks abroad, which could assure good levels of contact with other different cultural backgrounds.



Graphic 23 – Subject Taught



Graphic 24 – Experience abroad lasting

Travel Abroad Motivations

| Travel Abroad Motivations | Yes | No | Missing |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|---------|
| a) Tourism | 82,4% | 0% | 17,6% |
| b) Students' Exchange | 41,2% | 41,2% | 17,6% |
| c) School Excursion | 58,8% | 23,5% | 17,6% |
| d) Work | 41,2% | 41,2% | 17,6% |
| f) Visit Relatives | 23,5% | 58,8% | 17,6% |

Table 25 – Travel abroad Motivations

Visited Countries

| | Frequency | Percentage | Valid Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | 3 | 17,6 | 17,6 | 17,6 |
| Belice, Costa Rica, Croatia, | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 23,5 |
| Canada | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 29,4 |
| Denmark | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 35,3 |
| England | 3 | 17,6 | 17,6 | 52,9 |
| Europe (England, France, Germany)+Turkey | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 58,8 |
| France | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 64,7 |
| Netherlands | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 70,6 |
| Russia | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 76,5 |
| UK, France, Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Croatia, Slovenia, Turkey | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 82,4 |
| UK, Ireland, USA | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 88,2 |
| USA | 2 | 11,8 | 11,8 | 100,0 |
| total | 17 | 100,0 | 100,0 | |

Table 26 – Visited_Country (First Choice)

| | Frequenza | Percentuale | Percentuale valida | Percentuale cumulata |
|--|-----------|-------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Valid | 4 | 23,5 | 23,5 | 23,5 |
| Canada | 2 | 11,8 | 11,8 | 35,3 |
| china | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 41,2 |
| Cuba, El Salvador, GB, Germany, | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 47,1 |
| France | 2 | 11,8 | 11,8 | 58,8 |
| France, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Croatia, | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 64,7 |
| Great Britain | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 70,6 |
| Scotland | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 76,5 |
| Spain | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 82,4 |
| USA | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 88,2 |
| USA (Florida, California, NY) | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 94,1 |
| Venezuela | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 100,0 |
| total | 17 | 100,0 | 100,0 | |

Table 27 – Visited_Country (Second Choice)

| | Frequenza | Percentuale | Percentuale valida | Percentuale cumulata |
|---|-----------|-------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Valid | 5 | 29,4 | 29,4 | 29,4 |
| Cuba, Argentina | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 35,3 |
| France | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 41,2 |
| Greece, Romania, Slovak, Switzerland, | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 47,1 |
| Guatemala | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 52,9 |
| Iceland, The Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 58,8 |
| Kenya | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 64,7 |
| Portugal | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 70,6 |
| Turkey | 2 | 11,8 | 11,8 | 82,4 |
| U.K. | 2 | 11,8 | 11,8 | 94,1 |
| Usa | 1 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 100,0 |
| total | 17 | 100,0 | 100,0 | |

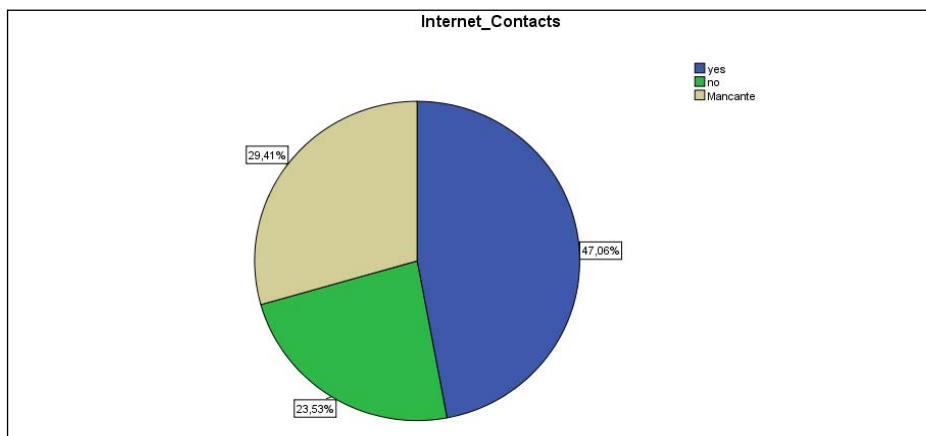
Table 28 – Visited_Country (Third Choice)

As we can see, general choices about countries visited are frequently related with cultures that are, in a certain extent, closer to the teachers' one. We could affirm that teachers are moving mainly to Western Countries, with few exceptions going to Third countries (different from Canada, USA, or Australia)

In that sense we could estimate that even if teachers have had a good approach to realities other than the own, those realities could be considered also from an ethnocentric point of view: countries and cultures were *it's easy to feel we are at home*.

Online “Intercultural Contacts”

Contacts on the net are significant: we can assert that a good part of teachers involved in this study are engaged in using technologies of social Web; in fact, in a 47% of cases there is or there has been contacts of other countries with the use of internet.



Graphic 29 – Contact on the Internet

Contact with peers from another country via the Internet – Qualitative Analysis

“I have sometimes e contacts with the english teacher of a dutch school. I met her during a students exchange”
“With my cousin in Russia, it is a recent way of communicate”
“I was mixing with teacher for 2 weeks.”
“regarding history of mathematics for a couple of years”
“SEVERAL NATIONALITIES FOR YEARLY PROJECT WORK”
“FRIENDS , MY GIRL FRIEND FOR A LONG TIME”
“Teachers for school personal school projects, e-twinning or comenius projects”

Two factors emerge from this statements: a) that in 7/17 (hence, a consistent gorup) use online tools and environments to communicate to other people, which might come from different cultural reality. They use it in order to keep updated and “fresh” professional and personal relationships; b) it is important to them, in any case, to use technologies to give continuity to educational projects and projects of collaboration across frontiers in order to introduce innovation into the classrooms.

Type of intercultural contacts

"Visiting different countries I could meet locals and foreign tourists as well. My partner works for a multinational company and I have many occasions to interact with persons of other cultures" "Some of my students come from China, Pakistan, ecc"

"Friendship, studies, work, neighborhood, family"

"Parents"

"I have had contacts for Comenius 2"

"Yes, I have but only with turistic guides"

"The most other culture I met was in Turkey. I was there for a comenius project so I was half tourist half guest"

"SEVERAL CONTACTS FOR FRIENDSHIP AND WORK"

"AS A FRIENDS AND RELATIVES"

"Friends"

In this case none significant information is added by teachers' opinions, different from quantitative data. Anyway, it comes out that intercultural contacts are not, once again, of a high level of exposition to other cultures. In fact, they generally happen into the context of family and friendships in other countries, within social networks of confidence. In some cases, they declare to have had contacts through the job, or in any case, in a controlled environment offered by tourism.



Graphic 30 – Perceptions on the Intercultural Experiences (Positive/Negative)

In general the teachers' statement that they are quite or completely satisfied from intercultural contacts, can be considered as pervasive, both regarding real or online contacts. Even if we affirmed that the teachers have mainly developed contacts with closer cultures, we can say that there is a very good openness and curiosity to establish intercultural contacts, which in turn can move to opportunities of intercultural dialogue.

3.6. Considerations on Values, Beliefs, Opinions about Intercultural Dialogue

This section was specifically devoted to raise information about values, beliefs and opinions about intercultural dialogue, in order to depict the teachers' beliefs on the same among the teachers and students involved into the study.

The guiding assumption here was that, given a particular kind of values, beliefs and opinions, the attitudes – and therefore, actions – would be more or less oriented to interact with otherness.

In your view the essence of a dialogue with other cultures means....

| | strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| a) a way of life | | | | | |
| b) tolerance | 11,8 | 0 | 5,9 | 23,5 | 29,4 |
| c) patience | 5,9 | 5,9 | 35,3 | 11,8 | 5,9 |
| d) empathy | 5,9 | 0 | 17,6 | 17,6 | 29,4 |
| e) flexibility | 0 | 5,9 | 5,9 | 29,4 | 29,4 |
| f) interest | 0 | 0 | 11,8 | 5,9 | 52,9 |
| g) curiosity | 5,9 | 0 | 5,9 | 0 | 58,8 |
| h) involvement | 5,9 | 5,9 | 11,8 | 17,6 | 29,4 |
| i) openness towards others | 0 | 0 | 11,8 | 17,6 | 41,2 |
| j) knowledge of others | 0 | 5,9 | 11,8 | 17,6 | 35,3 |
| k) withholding judgment of others | 0 | 11,8 | 35,3 | 5,9 | 5,9 |
| l) difficult | 5,9 | 5,9 | 47,1 | 11,8 | 0 |
| m) It is impossible to find common ground with people from some cultures | 35,3 | 11,8 | 17,6 | 5,9 | 0 |
| n) Religions distance peoples. | 17,6 | 11,8 | 23,5 | 5,9 | 11,8 |
| o) other (specify) | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Table 31 – Meaning of dialogue among cultures according to the teachers' beliefs

We can appreciate through frequencies' analysis, that interest, curiosity and openness towards others, are the first statements that find a good level of agreement. Thus, teachers retain these dimensions crucial to define the "essence of intercultural dialogue". Considering Benet's model, this could be regarded as an important step towards the ethnocentric approach: the capacity, in first place, of lay down own conceptions in order to explore otherness, as a children, with curiosity, withholding opinion. Nevertheless, definitions implying a more strong commitment with otherness, such involvement and patience, are left, very cautiously, in a second place. Tolerance –a dimension of intercultural dialogue that have been declared as part of rather "ethnocentric" approach, seems to gain an important place within the opinion, yet less important that the first mentioned dimensions.

Another interesting information is the dispersion of opinion with regard to the role played by religions. However the balance goes to a negative opinion with regard to the statement "Religions distance peoples". And an important third part of teachers strongly disagreeing with the assumption that would preclude any kind of dialogue: "it's impossible to find a common ground with other cultures".

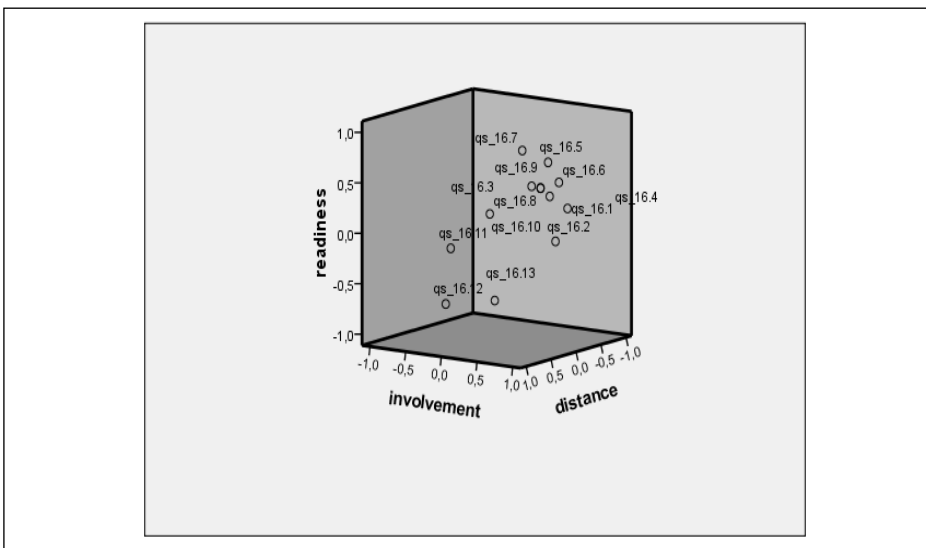
The above mentioned results seems to show that there's a very positive position (at least declared) with regard to exploring and experiencing intercultural dialogue. It is necessary to say that here emerges some images of "utopia" about the possibilities of dialogue, and also an alignment with official discourses that

promote “diversity”. The practice, in everyday life, could be completely different, and the section “teaching methods” is demonstrating that there is still a long way to go before achieving a good intercultural awareness, further transferred to the real world.

| | Component | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Dialogue_Essence_Tolerance | .924 | ,276 | -,098 |
| Dialogue_Essence_Patience | .885 | -,027 | ,088 |
| Dialogue_Essence_Empaty | ,699 | ,532 | ,300 |
| Dialogue_Essence_Flexibility | .867 | ,431 | ,177 |
| Dialogue_Essence_Interest | ,577 | .683 | -,203 |
| Dialogue_Essence_Curiosity | ,812 | ,525 | -,086 |
| Dialogue_Essence_Involvement | ,378 | .815 | ,030 |
| Dialogue_Essence_Openness | .754 | ,504 | ,200 |
| Dialogue_Essence_Knowledge | .754 | ,504 | ,200 |
| DE_Judgement_Withholding | ,433 | ,297 | .758 |
| Dialogue_Essence_Difficult | ,009 | -,062 | .935 |
| DE_Impossible_Common_Ground | -,299 | -,693 | .596 |
| DE_Religion_Divisions | -,110 | -,743 | -,116 |

Method of Extraction: Analysis of Main Components
 Rotation Method: Varimax with normalization of Kaiser.
 a. Rotation has reached convergence criteria in 5 iteration.

Table 32 – Matrix of Components Rotated / Meaning of Dialogue among cultures



Graphic 33 – Factor Analysis / Teachers- Beliefs on Intercultural Dialogue

A factor analysis revealed the presence of three interesting groups of dimensions, that we defined as follows:

- **Readiness**, that groups tolerance, patience, flexibility, openness and knowledge
- **Involvement**, that groups involvement and interest,
- **Distance**, that groups “withholding judgement”, “impossible find common ground”, and difficult of dialogue.

Considerations on Values, Beliefs, Opinions, about intercultural dialogue: Qualitative Analysis

During my classes intercultural issues are tackled...

*“lot of my students come from foreign countries with different religion and different culture
when I find it interesting for my topic”
“it is part of my educator’s duty”*

This question could generate an important information not because of it has been raised as answer, but of the lack of answers. In fact, just 3/17 teachers have answered that it’s important to treat intercultural issues in class considering them important for the motivations observed above.

Topics already tackled

*“Culture and costumes (school organization, food, clothing, teen agers’ rights)”
“prejudices, stereotypes, migration, multilingual education, comparison of legends, traditions, festivities, social”
“cultural and religious differences”
“Valori di tolleranza, uguaglianza diversità, come previsto dalla Costituzione”
“ 1)the different views in the cultures. 2)P.A.C.E.”
“when i speak about history of mathematics: i.e. greek contribution to logic through geometry”
“ arabic contribution to Italian algebra”
“knowledge of cultural traditions of English speaking countries”
“ relationships with other cultures to use a foreign”
“school curricula, heritage, manuscript books, protest songs, current art exhibitions ...”*

This variety of statements highlight an undefined representation of “intercultural teaching” among teachers involved. In fact, it seems that this representation is evolving through daily pedagogical practices. But the diversity of practices is another factor resulting from the several disciplinary’s point of view regarding the field of knowledge of the subject taught. Therefore, one conclusion could be that an intercultural approach must be created taking into account the subject taught.

Intercultural topics that should/could actually be included in high school curricula within your country

"I think that it could be very interesting to include a module about religions. By my experience I think that sometimes what we see so different has the same background."

"all of them, I think. It's a question of time for it."

"Conoscenza dell'altro Conoscenza delle diverse religioni"

"The different right; European right; European citizens."

"Lawfulness, education of citizens."

"Comparative religion, comparative history"

"Viewpoints of other cultures on religion, life and habits, duties and rights anthropology art, heritage, current topics from the news"

However, from these answers emerge that it does exist a vision of pedagogical practices addressing intercultural education; hence the problem created by tensions among cultural diversity is recognized, as well as the several modalities to solve it.

The importance given to the theme of religions coincides with results from another question within students' questionnaires, about flexibility of issues that shapes intercultural identity. This answer also underline the assumption that religion is as a factor of rigidity that interferes with intercultural dialogue. Clearly, this is an issue where future interventions should focus as priority.

Readiness to tackling topics related to intercultural education in your class or would you rather take part in further training

"I'm not interested in"

"I consider myself ready, but I would take part in training, if I had the possibility, because there is surely much to learn"

"I'd rather take part in further training in order to deal with these issues"

"Mi piacerebbe seguire un corso di formazione: secondo me non ho una preparazione adeguata"

"I'm not ready, I need take part in training"

"not really ready, just interested"

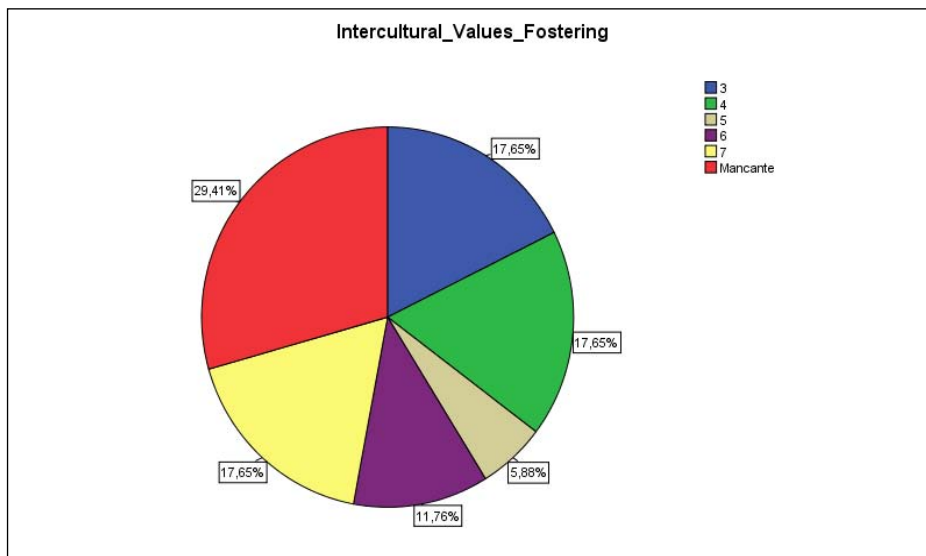
"Further training is always a benefit"

"Yes"

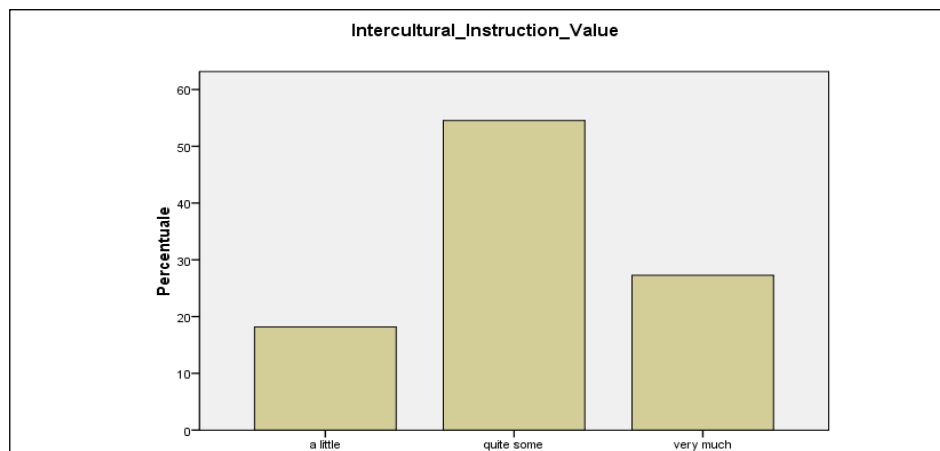
From brief answers in this area, it comes out that teachers assign strong importance to the issue of teachers' education on intercultural dialogue and teaching methods. Nevertheless, teachers seems to show lack of clearness about what kind of training could satisfy this education needed. Furthermore, this could be pointing out further the importance given to intercultural phenomenon in class, as a "runaway" object of activity (Engestrom, 2009) that requires careful exploration.

In your view are intercultural values fostered in schools today?
(Rank your assessment, please.)

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|------|------|-----|------|------|---|---|-----|
| no | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | yes |
| 0 | 0 | 17,6 | 17,6 | 5,9 | 11,8 | 17,6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |



Graphic 34 – Teachers’ Opinion about focus on intercultural values at School



Graphic 35 – Teachers’ Opinion about value of intercultural Issues within general Instruction

Values to be transmitted to the young generations

tolerance
 flexibility, openness towards others, interest
 Respect of others, within the respect for human right permits it, but taking position against discriminating traditions/uses wherever.
 Curiosity about the knowledges of other cultures and there way to represent reality
 tolerance towards "the other"
 Conoscenza delle diverse culture, per comprenderle fino in fondo
 tollerance, empaty, curiosity, respect.
 Solidarity, lawfulness, justice
 curiosity for different solutions to common problems understanding of the reasons which allow other cultures to accept behaviours which we don't approve
 respect, understanding of different behaviors, communication, peace
 yes
 Intercultural values are already present in school text books of all subjects (literature, religion, philosophy, maths, languages ...) They should only be used/emphasized

These brief comments could be related to three factors that explain them, that we can connect to Bennet's scale of "*Intercultural Sensibility*" (Bennet, 1986, 1993)

- **Tolerance** (that refers to an ethnocentric state in transition towards a more ethnorelative position –from *minimization to acceptance*)
- **Knowledge/Curiosity** (That can be linked to a middle ethnorelative state – adaptation –)
- **Solidarity/Respect/Understanding** (that can be linked to an advanced ethnorelative state –Integration-)

Fostering intercultural values in school

long lasting cultural exchange of students and teachers
 For example to let immigrants bring to school their languages and there traditions, to create interest and discussion on differences and similitude, to analyze together the different representations that cultures create of the reality and the cultural val stimulate pupils to make friends with foreign students
 There is an group that is incharge of receiving foreigners, since their number is continuously raising. But there isn't any project to diffund intercultural values at school
 Meeting with Institutes and direct experience
 lectures to teachers and debates among teachers
 Authentic exchanges with peers
 As above

The call for bigger contact with immigrates, is clearly addressed in this expressions, instead of seen interculturalism through international contacts (travelling to foreign countries). This demonstrates that there is plenty of awareness about the increasing phenomenon of the phenomena of domestic multiculturalism, and about the necessity of revisit curriculum, didactics, school

organization in order to tackle the problem. Teachers gave also strong importance to exchanging practices and working models within interdisciplinary teachers' groups.

The questionnaires' impact on teachers

*they are part of every reflexion on inter cultural education
it is interesting
Si, perchè dobbiamo creare una società fondata sulle diverse comunità e questo
deve partire dalla scuola
I have had the opportunity to think about this subject.
they make me think about a subject which I don't necessary have to reason about
in terms of teaching.
In part because they don't go deeper into analyzing how intercultural issues
should be presented to teachers and students
they can stimulate awareness*

Final Remarks

The questionnaire have stimulated reflection on the theme of intercultural dialogue among participating teachers. The only case in which more precision was asked is that of exploration of the concept of "interculturalism", consistently with data previously commented.

4. Conclusions

Teachers, both at the stage of initial training and throughout their professional life, interpret processes of teaching through the filter of previous and ongoing knowledge and beliefs. These elements characterize the own personal and professional experience, that in time determinates the eventual changes of pedagogical practices as dynamic processes.

Knowledge (both conceptual and practical) as emerged from the first part of this survey, is the base of meaning making processes. Teachers' curiosity and openness, in that sense, are clearly driven by the previous experience, which under the light of reflection can also show the limitations that previous positive or negative experiences can play in the future life.

Beliefs are implicit, interwoven with knowledge, and are nurtured by a constellation of emotions as well as narrative memory (the sense attributed to facts and sensations in previous life) They also encompass implicit knowledge, as ideologies and ideals (Goodson, 1997).

It's crucial to understand values, beliefs and ideals of a teacher, and support reflection of the teacher on them, before inducing him/her to an experience of training.

As this research shows, many of the beliefs about contact with otherness, and also strategies to introduce an intercultural perspective to teaching, were rooted on stereotypes (i.e. "intercultural is beautiful", considering the "folkloric"

representation of foreigners); but also, the important exposure of teachers to diversity in previous professional and personal life; as far as of diversity in class, made them to be ready and curious to deepen their competences about strategies to introduce an intercultural perspective of teaching and learning.

Trainers and policy makers need to be aware that teachers' multiple contexts of reference in his/her life, in terms of socio historical and cultural dimensions, distinguish the process of participation to innovation, as well as the effective perception of it. We could represent this conception as follows:

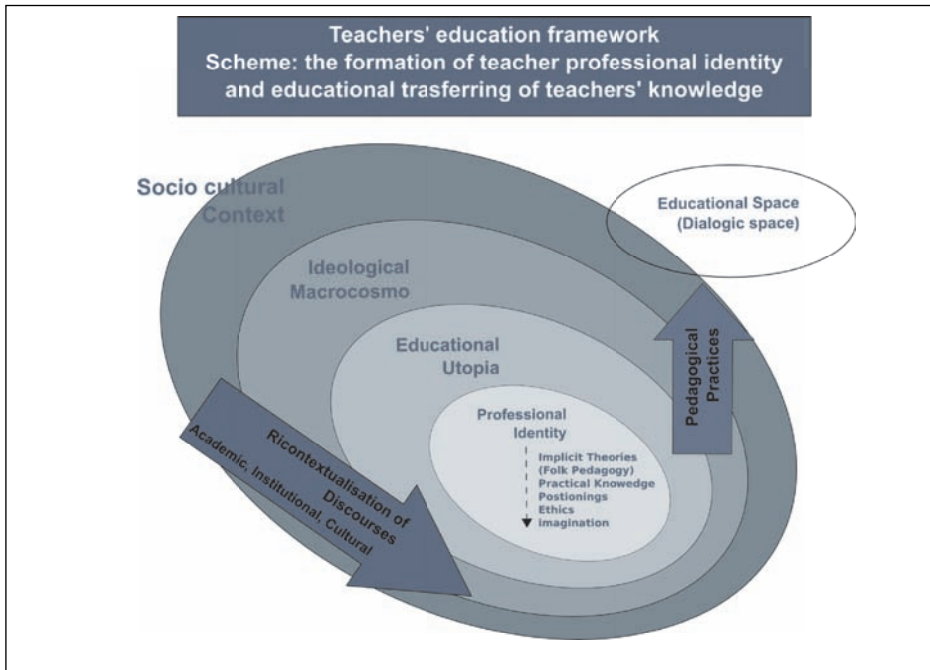


Figure 36 – Teachers' Professional Identity formation

The presence of otherness directly within the groups the teacher is asked to lead (in a more complex conception of teaching, if we take into account the learner centered perspective) implies the presence of values, practices, and beliefs that can be more or less dissonant with that of the teacher. Therefore he/she needs to be aware of the own values, in order to deconstruct naïve perspectives and to use, in all of its potential – the own experiences as “foreigner” with regard to the values of majority. This would also be a key element in order to open dialogue in very conflictive situations. Moreover, this should prompt the teacher to revisit the fundamentals of the own subject taught, being able of introducing the own subject on the light of several perspectives, that enact processes of participation on deconstructing and reconstructing new meanings of knowledge.

The effort here has been to show how teachers' beliefs regarded stereotypes (i.e., the importance given to “tolerance” which might be the expression of yet ethnocentric approach), in a changing scenery with the increasing and conflictive

presence of diversity in class. But also, the openness of teachers participating to this study (probably best performers and innovators), to be the protagonists of a new education where intercultural dialogue is crucial.

With these premises, we are now prepared to understand the training strategy later adopted within PERMIT project.

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