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Research paper

Inclusive social networks and inclusive schools for disabled children of migrant families[☆]



Réseaux sociaux inclusifs et écoles inclusives pour enfants handicapés de familles migrantes

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ABSTRACT

This research project (carried out between March 2008 and November 2010) aims to investigate the relationship between migrant disabled students and the Italian school system. It was commissioned by the City of Bologna – Department of Education and Anti-discrimination Policies – which aimed to adopt guidelines and tools to facilitate the inclusion of migrant disabled students aged 0–14. The scale of the migratory phenomenon and impact on the education and health systems of the host countries have given rise to new organizational, social and cultural problems; schools and education services play a key role in facilitating the process of inclusion, not only by offering appropriate responses to the cultural transformations, but also by fostering cultural exchange and dialogue among youths and educating them on global coexistence. Schools are the best environments for meeting the needs of families by making them feel welcome; this is confirmed by teachers themselves, who however seek greater support from local services, also in terms of the involvement and participation of migrant families (with the presence of cultural mediators). Here, we focus on: a

[☆] The research project was promoted by the City of Bologna, in collaboration with the Faculty of Education and the Department of Educational Sciences of the University of Bologna; it was funded by the City of Bologna, which assigned the project to three researchers. The research project was coordinated by Roberta Caldin, Professor of Special Education – Faculty of Education – University of Bologna.

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presentation of the concluding stages of the research, educational commitments and a summary of the research team's draft guidelines aimed at increasing the quality of the processes of inclusion of disabled children of migrant families.

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R É S U M É

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Cette recherche (menée de mars 2008 à novembre 2010) vise à enquêter sur la relation entre les enfants migrants handicapés et le système scolaire italien. Elle a été commandée par la ville de Bologne – département des politiques d'éducation et antidiscriminatoires – qui souhaitait adopter des guides et des outils pour faciliter l'inclusion des enfants migrants handicapés, âgés de 0 à 14 ans. L'importance du phénomène migratoire et l'impact sur les systèmes éducatifs et sanitaires des pays d'accueil posent de nouveaux problèmes organisationnels, sociaux et culturels. Les services scolaires et éducatifs ont un rôle clé pour faciliter le processus d'inclusion, non seulement parce qu'ils offrent des réponses appropriées aux transformations culturelles, mais aussi parce qu'ils favorisent l'échange culturel et le dialogue chez les jeunes et les éduquent à la coexistence. Les écoles constituent les meilleurs environnements pour répondre aux besoins des familles en leur permettant de se sentir accueillies, ce qui est confirmé par les enseignants eux-mêmes qui, toutefois, demandent plus de soutien aux services locaux et aussi l'engagement et la participation des familles migrantes (avec la présence de médiateurs culturels). Dans cet article, nous mettons l'accent sur la présentation des étapes finales de la recherche, sur les engagements éducatifs et nous présentons une synthèse des propositions de guides élaborés par le groupe de recherche, afin d'améliorer la qualité des processus d'inclusion des enfants handicapés de familles migrantes.

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1. Introduction

The research *Students with disabilities, children of migrants*¹, promoted by the City of Bologna in conjunction with the University of Bologna, aims to explore the situation of migrant families with disabled children aged 0–14.

According to the most recent [Caritas/Migrantes \(2008, 2010, 2011\)](#), Emilia Romagna is one of Italian regions with the highest percentage of students who are children of migrants, with a significant increase in primary and middle schools, where the percentage of migrant students often exceeds 13%. In the Bologna area alone, there are citizens of 142 different countries, bearing witness to the fact that both incoming and outgoing migratory flows are no longer limited to a few areas, but rather constitute a worldwide phenomenon, common to every continent. Moreover, the migratory phenomenon is unfolding in a period of crisis, strongly influenced by the process of globalization, which deeply affects the host countries and has made them 'fragile' from a social, cultural and economic standpoint.

This exploratory research project is one of the first of its kind in Italy and Europe, if we consider the specific Italian context which guarantees inclusion of pupils with disabilities in schools; it is an

¹ The project began at the start of the academic year 2008–2009 and the research and organisational aspects were defined in late February 2009; the project ended with a meeting that presented the results of the research, held in Bologna on 29 October 2010.

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