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Co-producing a Toolkit for the Initial Assessment of Migrants’ Prior Non-formal and Informal Learning and Skills

Abstract

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a very diverse arena of practice, operating across the public, private and non-profit sectors. Informal RPL processes addressing formal, non-formal and informal learning and skills are seldom planned and performed. When the persons involved are migrants, their specific knowledge and experience is recognised to an even lesser extent.

This paper reports on an empirical experience, the work of the Synergies Project co-financed by the Erasmus + EU program. The project aimed to link the competences and validation-related needs of disadvantaged learners with the European and National Qualifications Frameworks. Civil servants, professionals and volunteers co-produced, in the form of meeting-based training activities followed by workshops, a Toolkit designed to train adult education professionals and volunteers.

Keywords: adult education, adult training, non-formal and informal education, RPL, migration.

Introduction

The validation and recognition of prior learning has become a widespread phenomenon since the European Union made requests to Member States to this effect in the 1990s. Public and private organisations have become interested in validation as a means of promoting equality and inclusion in education and training, creating a more flexible labour market and promoting integration and social cohesion. Several projects and pilots have been run at local and regional level, but they have not been stable enough to become widespread and recognised at a wider level. Furthermore, the slow pace of recognition of formal competences has overshadowed the process of recognition of non-formal, and above all informal, learning and skills. As a consequence, research has been focused on the practices and effects of validation of formal prior learning for individuals, groups, organizations and countries, and only a few studies have examined the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning and skills addressing migrants in particular (Bencivenga, 2018; Diedrich, 2013; Diedrich, Walter, & Czarniawska, 2011).

It is not uncommon for professionals and volunteers without formal qualifications to be involved in the first two phases of the process by which a competent
authority recognises learning outcomes based on set standards: identification (interviewing the person concerned to find out about their experiences) and documentation (making the individual’s experiences visible, for example through Europass, which was created for this purpose). These two phases provide a formal assessment of experiences, leading to a validation and later to a certification resulting in a partial or complete qualification.

When the persons involved are migrants, RPL processes addressing prior formal learning seldom address non-formal and informal learning and skills as well. Migrants’ specific knowledge and experience are recognised to an even lesser extent by professionals and volunteers working in the numerous organisations informally evaluating their competences and learning. This lack of attention is a matter of concern for the EU, for policy-makers and for organisational managers, as well as for the practitioners and volunteers themselves, who recognise the need to give value to non-formal and informal skills and knowledge to help migrants’ integration paths. Training courses could address these issues in order to help practitioners and volunteers acquire competences for identifying and documenting prior non-formal and informal learning and skills.

This paper reports on an empirical experience, the Synergies Project, co-financed by the Erasmus + EU program. The project aimed to link the competences and validation-related needs of disadvantaged learners with the European and National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF). One of the activities performed in the project was to create and test four localised versions of a Toolkit to train professionals and volunteers on how to validate disadvantaged learners’ competences and skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. This paper focuses on Italy, one of the four countries involved in the project, where the local Partner, the Alpha Association, chose to focus on migrants. In the following pages, I begin by outlining some of the existing research on RPL and migrants. I then describe the approach adopted in the Synergies project and describe the development of the Toolkit’s first draft, as well as issues observed when co-producing and pre-testing it in training sessions in preparation for a formal test. Finally, I reflect on some of the issues stemming from co-production practices, in particular how a bottom-up approach may shape organisations’ assessments of migrants’ non-formal and informal learning and skills.

**RPL and Migrants**

European regionalisation is considered to have encouraged more common approaches to migration policies (Joppke, 2007; Joppke & Morawska, 2003). Optimising migrants’ entire skillset, including non-formal and informal education and training, increases their awareness of their competences and helps guide them in their choices and employability. Some countries have other mechanisms beyond NQFs which influence RPL, such as national immigration policies, that
may differ according to national or regional immigration infrastructures and laws. In Italy immigration policies refer to the conditions and rights accorded to migrants (Hammar, 1985), therefore qualifications and competences are recognised once migrants are already in the country. Recently, RPL acquired in non-formal and informal contexts has been analysed at European level; some countries, including Italy, have shown a constant evolution in which regional subsystems and the involvement of different stakeholders favour on-going changes to the approach (Zanfrini, 2015).

At the local level, other factors may influence RPL. For example, while an “inclusive” view of RPL underlines its potential as a tool for social and labour market integration (Jackson, 2011; Lerner & Menahem, 2003), a view focused on deficits may result in the migrant’s prior learning and competence being devalued (Guo, 2010; Guo & Andersson, 2006). This negative view may derive from misperceptions of an ontological and epistemological nature (Diedrich, 2013; Guo & Andersson, 2006). Aspin and Chapman (2000) have questioned the focus on rationality and considering knowledge as an entity with essential characteristics; the theory of situated knowledge has been proposed as a better way of ‘(a) examining how each of us moves back and forth between our own particular stories and the social production that is knowledge, and (b) challenging oppressive taxonomies of knowledge and the power relationships they enact’ (Michelson, 1996, p. 194). A situated learning perspective has therefore begun to be used to examine the validation of prior learning in specific contexts (Andersson & Fejes, 2010), allowing the methodologies to be customised to suit migrants too.

Migrants from less developed countries have knowledge that is often considered inferior, and the racialisation and genderisation of knowledge are particularly evident. The result is that particular occupations and particular countries are favoured by some immigration regimes (Grand & Szulkin, 2002; Guo & Shan, 2013; Williams, 2007). According to Andersson and Guo (2009), when validation consists mainly of a technocratic exercise and a governing tool, it is based on the use of excluding, normalising and dividing practices to obtain the desired selection results. However, Souto-Otero and Villalba Garcia (2015) describe the emergence of a new process - selective inclusion of immigrants through validation, rather than merely exclusion or inclusion – based on the division of migrants into two mutually excluding classes: highly skilled and non-highly skilled. Thus the same country, or system, may enact inclusive and exclusive practices depending on local and/or temporal necessities.

Other research (Shan & Fejes, 2015) has considered migrants’ skills and competencies as social and relational constructs capable of producing differences in their interactions with other social relations, but at the same time not challenging the power and practices of western countries. This perpetuates the hierarchical social order along axes of gender and race differences. The discriminatory effects of social inclusion practices have been analysed (Lodigiani
& Sarli, 2017), as has a vision of migrants as an instrumental workforce (Zanfrini, 2015), mainly when they lack formal learning or training.

Of particular interest when referring to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and skills is the notion of soft skills. Soft skills refer to the ‘abilities and traits that pertain to personality, attitude, and behaviour’ (Moss & Tilly, 1996, p. 253), including the ‘right’ look and the ‘right’ sound (Nickson, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2005). Particularly important in the service economy, in which women are often overrepresented, the attention on soft skills favours the commodification of personal characteristics such as emotions, attitudes and even the way women dress and use make-up (Shan, 2015). Hierarchical social orders are thus perpetuated along axes of social differences, such as gender and race, by skills that are constructed by a dominant segment of the population. The essentialisation of women’s work “seen as reflective of ‘natural’ talents or aptitudes” (Dunk, 1996, p. 105) is frequent; as a result jobs done primarily by women are considered less skilled than those done primarily by men (Leander, Phillips, & Taylor, 2010) and less attention may be placed on assessing these jobs, the skills for which are almost always acquired through informal training.

The Case Study

The Context

The Synergies project involved partners in Austria, Germany, Spain and Italy engaged in a process of consultative co-production between organisations which help disadvantaged people find a job or plan a training path in order to gain qualifications. This paper focuses on the Italian context and the information provided from now on will refer to this context only. The fourth intellectual output of the Synergies project led to the creation of a co-produced Toolkit for professionals and volunteers (although the Toolkit is aimed at volunteers and professionals, for political and strategic reasons, in Italy it is not yet possible for professionals to test or use it, at least not at official level). It can be modified and adapted for use in validating the competencies of disadvantaged learners, and consists of easy-to-use training material to help them identify prior formal, non-formal and informal learning.

In 2008, Italy and other EU Member States embarked on the process of referencing their national qualifications (those issued by the State, Regions and Public Administration) to the European Qualification Framework (EQF). To date, Italy still lacks a NQF, and complexity remains both in terms of legislation and institutions: competences are split between national and regional level both for education and vocational training (Bencivenga, 2018, p. 8). The aim in Italy was to create a Toolkit for professionals and volunteers to help them recognise the prior learning of people with the status of "migrants". In the context of the Synergy project, the term "migrant" is based on the definition from the EMN-
European Migration Report Glossary on Asylum and Migration: “a person who leaves their country or region of origin to live in another”; this relates to “any type of movement, whatever its length, composition and causes”. Since the Synergies project is aimed at people whose qualifications and competencies acquired in non-formal and informal contexts are difficult to document, here the term "migrants" does not include highly-qualified migrants and may include those who have moved in an irregular manner. However, given the type of organisations observed during the proposal, and their activities in the field, all the migrants benefitting from their services must have a regular status (the minimum level is a residence permit). The initial assessment can be carried out by each organisation once the person involved has obtained at least a temporary regular status.

Firstly, the project aimed to provide opportunities for the diversity of practices to be embraced and incorporated into the co-production process, as migrants can follow a variety of paths and do not follow a rigid scheme. Some of them will refer only to NGOs, while others will move from informal NGO assessments to the more formal public and private organisations. Younger migrants following formal learning and training paths will most often use public and private services only. Thus, the concrete practices and rationales related to the co-production of the Toolkit respect the need for flexibility seen in different organisations offering similar but not identical services. Secondly, the absence of stable networks of organisations dealing with RPL results in a lack of coordination and data exchange among professionals and volunteers. The Toolkit should help create a context in which organisations can share their knowledge and approaches, building informal networks that offer better services to migrants and, hopefully, encourage the transition towards stable networks. In this sense, the co-production of the Synergies Toolkit contributes to the literature on small case studies on consultative co-production in practice (Galloway & Edwards, 2017; Godding, Kreft, & Read, 2008).

**The Project**

The Synergies project was conducted over the course of 2016–2018. Fundamental to the Toolkit’s development was the involvement of organisations which assess and recognise the formal learning and skills of disadvantaged people in the four partner countries at different levels. Each partner chose a specific disadvantaged group: the Italian partner, the ALPHA Association, selected organisations working with migrants. In particular, the project assumed that non-formal and informal skills and knowledge of disadvantaged groups are not yet fully analysed during the assessment, evaluation and, in some cases, recognition of prior learning and training.

Following a review of the literature, in the project’s first phase 24 stakeholders from 21 different organisations were interviewed: people working for organisations supporting migrants and other disadvantaged groups; people
working for public labour market offices; professionals working in VET; and representatives of public organisations (at municipal, regional and national level) involved in employment and professional training. Following these interviews, ethnographic observation made it possible to study interactions and interviews as well as informal conversations with professionals and volunteers, and to attend the organisations' internal meetings (Bencivenga, 2018). These activities made it possible to collect data, to understand the interactions among organisations and how they perform their assessments, and also to establish official contacts at local and regional levels. Preparatory meetings were held in order to co-construct the Toolkit, followed by sessions in which the Toolkit was tested.

The initial results revealed that almost all of the interviews carried out by public, private and NGO organisations took account of non-formal and informal learning, although neither the forms they used nor the advice they offered took a formal approach to these aspects. The pathway suggested by the project and confirmed in its initial phase therefore exposed the extent to which many professionals and volunteers were already dealing with non-formal and informal learning and skills; this pointed towards a formal training pathway (the Toolkit) which includes a formalisation of these aspects. The purpose of the second phase was to explore and start to build routes for recognising migrants' non-formal and informal skills and competences. This was done by creating a Toolkit incorporating existing, as yet unutilised, tools for recording non-formal and informal competencies, and tools developed after observing assessments conducted by public, private and non-profit organisations dealing with migrants.

**Developing the Prototype**

Deciding on the Toolkit’s contents involved identifying what is currently being done by the organisations observed, including understanding their criticism of the existing recording tools for formal assessment schemes (i.e. the EUROPASS, ECVET systems). Once identified, the above mentioned aspects were compared to check similarities in how the organisations adopt, modify or create tools or approaches. The interviews with experts conducted in the previous phase helped identify competencies that were deemed important for the Toolkit. These included training professionals and volunteers on how to interact with migrants who do have not yet mastered the local language or addressing the topic of the soft skills acquired by people living in other cultures. In this sense, it was important to involve migrants who carry out assessment activities for NGOs, since they add an "external" perspective on the Italian cultural and social aspects related to training and working issues.

Alongside the other activities, reflections were developed on the Index for inclusion (http://www.csie.org.uk/resources/inclusion-index-explained.shtml), a set of materials originally created to guide schools through a process of inclusive school development. The Index can be used to support the processes involved in developing learning and participation for all and reducing all exclusionary
pressures (Braunsteiner & Mariano-Lapidus, 2017; Higham & Booth, 2018). The Index helps build supportive communities and foster high achievement for all staff and students and has been adapted and used as a basis for reflective activities within the Synergies project. The concept of inclusive education, initially focused on schools, has been extended to a variety of organisations, and the holistic approach of inclusion has been considered important to permeate the whole working experience of staff, migrants, their families and the community. The wider view of an inclusive approach to assessment and training activities must be ensured, according to the Index, by addressing the three major intertwined dimensions of the educational experience: organisation cultures, policies and practices (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). A preliminary exercise done by the Italian Partners’ experts consisted of adapting sections of the Index to the specific contexts addressed in Synergies, and preparing a set of checklists to be used as a basis for self-evaluation and debate. The adaptation was checked and modified based on the advice of a stakeholders’ subgroup interviewed in the first phase of the project.

Further meetings with the organisations working at local and regional level led to a consensus on what a professional or volunteer needs to know, understand and do to gather information on non-formal and informal learning acquired by people who come from different cultures to their own. Interviewing people from across all levels of the organisations (operators, supervisors, managers) revealed what training was feasible. For example, for political reasons, it is not currently possible to run structured training pathways involving those working in the public, private and non-profit sectors. While this created a limitation, since it was not possible to introduce a structured training pathway, it brought an advantage: only an organisation like ALPHA, which operates separately from associations working in the local area, could have attracted the interest and active participation of organisations who do not share a common working practice or common training pathways. The result was a list of ten practical activities associated with the practice of assessing non-formal and informal competences and knowledge, with a focus on migrants (Table.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Premises: The Index for inclusion: shaping the organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity #1 Creating inclusive cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity #2 Promoting inclusive organisation policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity #3 Developing inclusive organisation practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First part: creating a common ground</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity #4 Legislative and conceptual background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second part: strategies for implementation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity #5, #6 and #7 Europass CV, ProfilPass, Youthpass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity #8 Techniques to help conversation with persons not fluent in the local language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity #9 How to test adults’ practical competences (the case of caregivers, home workers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity #10 Transversal competencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The Toolkit table of contents
Although it is not possible to detail each activity, it is important to say something about Activity n. 9. While all the other activities proposed in the Toolkit can be applied to any context with a minimum of adaptation, Activity #9 is specific for the target group chosen by the organisations involved in Italy, since women looking for a job in the care and homework sectors represent a significant group of clients. The next step was to create a draft for the Synergies Toolkit, including annexes and suggested reading. To do this, professionals and volunteers were asked to contribute their experience, while experts from the ALPHA association and other organisations assembled the contents and integrated the Toolkit with their competences.

The diversity of values, contexts and practices observed at the local level during the first phase was considered an important aspect not to be lost in the process. The Toolkit was therefore created with a bottom up-approach, while the experts and stakeholders involved in its creation also brought on board approaches and strategies officially recognised at international level. Two practical sessions enabled us to test the Toolkit in practice, trying out the activities and reflecting on them. The participants were given the draft Toolkit and supporting documents one week before the sessions. The sessions were attended by experts, stakeholders, professionals and volunteers who do not usually work together, as there is still no formal RPL network in the context analysed. As a result, the sessions enabled participants to utilise the materials under development, and to exchange different points of view; time for discussion was also included. At the end of the sessions, participants discussed a list of questions, and raised issues and problems that shaped the final Toolkit. Two authors and an expert from the ALPHA association both took on the dual role of tutor and researcher during the sessions.

The sessions were announced when the organisations involved were first contacted (a year and a half earlier), and recruitment took place through voluntary participation in the sessions and related activities. In this sense, the co-construction of the Toolkit began with the initial contact with the organisations and individuals, and the interviews and ethnographic observations were explained and justified by the intent to create a Toolkit. Fourteen volunteers from five organisations across the private and voluntary sectors participated in the activities. Each session lasted for five hours, with a two-hour plenary meeting afterwards to encourage discussion. During the sessions data were collected in a variety of forms, gathering written observations made by the participants, and recording comments and notes which were discussed with the participants at the end of the sessions. Evaluation forms were provided afterwards, and participants were asked to send them back one week later. The evaluation forms were a significant source: some insights emerged after the participants made a global reflection on the experience and were able to observe their daily activities through different lenses, provided by the exchanges with others during the session. Participants commented and critiqued the materials, and this consultative co-production fed directly into the further development of
the Synergies Toolkit. Two formal workshops are currently being planned, during which the Toolkit will be formally tested with professionals and volunteers not previously involved in the Project.

**Analysis and conclusion**

Diedrich (2013) has observed how little attention has been paid to how the validation of prior learning is enacted in practice. When validation is not yet formally organised, as in the case of the case study observed, a bottom-up approach engaging local practitioners means that the sample is always small and not necessarily representative of the relevant community at a wider level. When networks are not structured, the initial assessment may vary according to the type of organisation (public or private, profit or non-profit), its mission and vision and the level of formality it is bound to. It has been shown (Bencivenga, 2018) that volunteers often base their activities on job shadowing and personal beliefs; as a consequence, achieving representativity is a real challenge. The Alpha Association’s approach was to allow an exchange of competences among organisations working in different contexts and with different aims, all of them assessing migrants. A two-way transfer was activated, attempting to incorporate professionals’ and volunteers’ understandings of assessing non-formal and informal learning and training into the existing tools available at national and international level (such as the Europass tools). At the same time, attempts were made to formalise training on less formal but relevant aspects, such as the difficulties in interacting with migrants who are not fluent in the country's language or in assessing practical competencies.

This was an attempt to respect the variety of approaches, also influenced by each organisation's mission and vision, but at the same time to add more structured tools. This very small project cannot offer general conclusions and recommendations on how migrants' non-formal and informal learning and training can be identified and assessed by public and private organisations and NGOs. However, what emerged from the experience of creating the Toolkit was that the macro level (the tools suggested by the EU, and the recommendations provided at international level) is not deemed relevant by the professionals and volunteers working in direct contact with migrants. They feel that migrants' urgent needs cannot be addressed by tools which are too abstract, and too far from local realities and real training and job opportunities. The choice to use locally developed tools has negative consequences, as this hinders the possibility of creating a consistent information path that will “follow” migrants in their search for better living and working conditions. Moreover, the lack of a local network creates numerous “first assessments” that shape migrants' interests and availability, and even their perception of their knowledge and competences (Bencivenga, 2018).
Once professionals and volunteers discover the possibility of using formal tools to record migrants' non-formal and informal learning, they also become aware of their potential in facilitating assessments in other languages and creating a record that will even follow the individual to other countries. The co-construction of the Toolkit allowed the transfer of more practical competences, for example interacting with people who have not mastered the local language and to strategies for assessing their competences as homeworkers or caregivers. In this case the competences were transferred from NGOs to personnel working for public and private organisations, more focused on the bureaucratic aspects of the assessment.

Many European initiatives aimed at migrants’ RPL are currently based on projects. While consolidated networks are seldom produced (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010), the systems are often rapidly disconnected after the project ends (Diedrich, 2013). This has raised questions on post-project sustainability, particularly the lack of links to the education system (e.g. following up validation with further training) (Souto-Otero & Villalba-Garcia, 2015). The path followed in the Synergies project is subject to a number of local variables, and this is an obvious limitation, but it promotes a bottom-up approach, respectful of the work done by organisations in a specific area, which do not yet collaborate at formal level. The co-construction of a Toolkit that integrates local organisations’ assessment techniques has the potential (subject to additional testing) to offer migrants a more comprehensive observation of their prior informal and non-formal learning and skills in view of further training, assessment, and potential recognition.

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**References**


A Critical Examination of Anti-racism Initiatives Taking Place with Young Adult and Adult Association Football Fans in Contemporary Scotland (2019)

Abstract

This paper offers an introduction to anti-racism initiatives currently taking place with young adult and adult association football fans in Scotland. Considering the current socio-political context nationally and within Scottish association football, the authors assess how to build effective anti-racism interventions and the appropriateness of utilising association football as an educational tool. Chronicling contemporary practice through a case study of anti-racism educational charity Show Racism the Red Card, the authors examine new media and equalities campaigns, before acknowledging the range of contemporary initiatives utilising the popularity of the sport when engaging young adult and adult learners in Scotland.

Introduction

This paper offers a preliminary critical examination of anti-racism initiatives taking place with young adult and adult association football fans in contemporary Scotland. It is designed to serve as a preface and introduction to the diverse range of anti-racism initiatives seeking to utilise the popularity of association football as an educational intervention tool for challenging forms of discrimination, prejudice, hatred, and bias within modern Scotland. We therefore open by situating our approach to this research topic in terms of researcher positionality and reflexivity; and by acknowledging the relationship each author has to the field of anti-racism football-themed education and in particular to the anti-racism football charity Show Racism the Red Card. Informed by Allport (1954), McBride (2015) and data from the 2011 Scottish census (National Records of Scotland, 2016), we offer insight into the demographic context of contemporary Scottish society, followed by a portrait of racism in modern Scotland both in broader society and specifically within Scottish association football. A subsequent case study profiles Show Racism the Red Card by acknowledging existing research on the organisation from Kingett et al. (2017). In doing so, we illustrate what Clark et al. (2018; p.118) describe as an ‘intersectional approach to unpacking power, privilege and justice’, and establish a working definition for creating effective and meaningful anti-racism initiatives in the form of educational interventions. We close by considering the importance of robust measures to determine the impact and effectiveness of both...
educational interventions and media interventions in promoting equality and diversity within a Scottish context.

**Researcher Reflexivity, Methodological Approach, and Purposes of the Paper**

Breen (2007) noted that ‘it is becoming increasingly important for social and behavioural researchers to clarify their personal motivation for their research, especially for those utilising qualitative methodologies that require reflexivity’. Arguably operating as what Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) term ‘insider-researcher[s]’ and therefore ‘intimately engaged with [our] research domain’ (Breen [2007]), we start by addressing DeLyser (2001), Gerrish (1997), and Hewitt-Taylor’s (2002) unease that ‘familiarity can lead to a loss of ‘objectivity’ causing the researchers to ‘inadvertently mak[e] erroneous assumptions based on […] prior knowledge and/or experience’. Both authors, have professional histories with the anti-racism football-focused charity Show Racism the Red Card, and in particular their Scottish division currently based in Glasgow. We consider anti-racism education practitioners and activists as an example of what Collins (2015; p.15) describes as ‘frontline actors for solving social problems that are clearly linked to complex social inequalities [working in context providing] a social location that predisposes them to respond to intersectionality as critical praxis’.

It is our belief that this initial research paper - a desk-based critical examination informed by years of professional practice in both the design and implementation of anti-racism educational interventions - may serve as an initial step towards further research into current effectiveness and future potential of utilising association football as an educational tool in anti-racism initiatives. By constructing a critical analysis which assesses contemporary anti-racism football-centred educational practice from a practitioner-researcher perspective - understanding that this may constitute ‘insider’ positionality (Breen 2007, Bonner & Tolhurst 2002) - we will be better positioned to expand upon this early work by conducting participant focus groups, one-to-one interviews, and impact assessment evaluations regarding the effectiveness of anti-racism initiatives taking place with young adults and adult association football fans in contemporary Scotland.

**Census Data and Racism in Contemporary Scotland**

*(i) Scotland’s Domestic Population*

At the onset, it is essential to understand the domestic context in which anti-racism initiatives seeking to utilise the popularity of association football take place. Scotland currently boasts a population of around 5,404,700 (National
Records of Scotland, 2016). This is projected to rise by around 1% every five years (National Records of Scotland, 2017). However, understanding that the U.K.’s secession from the European Union will likely impact migration and consequently change this percentage, a 0.6% surge between June 2015 and June 2016 suggests a more rapid population increase in the short term (National Records of Scotland, 2017). In 2011, the percentage of White British citizens (‘British’ defined as Scottish, English, Northern Irish, or Welsh) in Scotland stood at 91.8%, compared to an average of 81.9% for the whole of the U.K. (National Records of Scotland, 2016). The same census suggests that within the population in Scotland, 83% were born domestically. The Office for National Statistics (2015) found that the largest non-UK born communities came from Poland (circa 76,000), India (circa 26,000), Germany (circa 19,000), Pakistan (circa 18,000), and the Republic of Ireland (circa 20,000). The accumulated data on self-ascribed ethnicity found that 2.66% of the Scottish population identified as Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British communities, 2.66% Black, Black Scottish or Black British, 0.18% Arab, and 0.09% ‘any other ethnic group’ (National Records of Scotland, 2016). It is worth noting that, in what can be understood as both inclusive linguistic discourse and as a form of ‘othering’ (Davidson et al. 2018), the Scottish Government has come to term those that migrate to Scotland, including refugee and asylum seeker populations, as ‘New Scots’ (see for example ‘New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities’ [Scottish Government, 2013]).

(ii) Language of Identity and Race

The last two decades have witnessed major political developments at local, national, and European level with the U.K. Almost twenty years on from formation of the Scottish Parliament through The Scotland Act 1998, the election of the first majority government (formed by the Scottish National Party in 2011), the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum, and the 2016 ‘Brexit’ vote are seen by many as having fundamentally altered the political landscape in Scotland (see e.g. Macwhirter, 2016). During this period, heated arguments at domestic and U.K. level have occurred regarding forms of 'ethnic' and 'civic' nationalism, primarily in relation to the Scottish National Party and the independence movement (Liinpää [2018]). In their edited volume No Problem Here (2018), Davidson et al. suggested that the 'relatively little public discussion [over] structuring power of racism in Scotland' has resulted in a ‘silence [frequently] interpreted as an indication of its absence by much of the Scottish elite'. The authors state that this has 'help[ed] to consolidate a now powerful myth that there is 'no problem here'.

Davidson et al.’s (2018) work, along with publications by Devine (2012) and Hirsch (2018), have sought to combat this 'unwillingness to confirm the legacies of empire and racism' in Scotland and the U.K., and to reject the suggestion that issues of racism stem exclusively from 'a reactionary British / English establishment'. Indeed, Davidson et al. (2018) suggest that accepting the race-
blind 'dominant story [...] that Scots are in some sense different from the English - more egalitarian, more likely to place an emphasis on collectivism over individualism and on government intervention over self-reliance', is akin to 'intellectual dishonesty'. However, though acknowledging that 'such elite rhetoric is welcome [...] when contrasted to what is unfolding today across large parts of Europe in relation to the refugee crisis', Davidson et al. (2018) argue that to perpetuate this re-imagined vision of Scotland by adhering to a secular and inclusive national narrative is to deny the 'lived reality of radicalised minorities in Scotland.' Similarly, Meer (2018) had suggested that 'race-making is stitched into the fabric of national identities' - rather than existing as 'truly Scottish' in their own right ('unhyphenated Scots'), he suggested that Asian-Scots, Black Scots, Arab-Scots, and African-Scots, remain 'seen as somehow not quite Scottish'.

Specifically in terms of the experiences of Scotland’s minority populations, Meer (2018) observed a lack of consistency amongst research methodologies involved in 'quantitatively measur[ing] experiences of discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity. He therefore conducted his own study - 'a cross-sectional survey of 502 Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people in Scotland, concluding that many 'BAME groups in Scotland have firmly established themselves in Scottish society' and consequently 'feel a strong attachment to it'. However, his research also suggested an under-reporting of discrimination and race-related hate crime amongst domestic minority populations. Within Meer’s (2018) research, a higher percentage of men (33.7%) stated that they had experienced discrimination within the last five years than women (28.4%), and whilst 35% of respondents believed that 'discrimination is a widespread problem in Scotland', around 42% felt that 'other people would perceive discrimination to be a problem in Scotland'. Those that reported as having experienced discrimination cited 'ethnicity' (82%) and religion (42%) as the primary factor, yet despite understanding the abuse they had received to be of a discriminatory nature, 60% of respondents stated they 'did not report it to any kind of authority'. Despite this, 82% 'insist[ed] they would encourage a friend or family [member] to make a formal complaint if they had experienced discrimination'.

**Racism Within Scottish Association Football**

Though non-white Scots have always been a minority population in Scotland, recorded incidents of racism in professional and semi-professional association football can be considered a modern phenomenon. In March 1881, Andrew Watson, a black British Guiana-born, privately educated, amateur association football player captained a Scottish national men’s side in a 5-1 victory over England. Brown (2014) chronicled that, at the time, national press outlets were more concerned with the unusual colour of Watson’s boots than that of his skin. In April 2017, Celtic Football Club and former England youth international Scott
Sinclair was subjected to monkey gestures from an opposition fan after scoring against city rivals Rangers Football Club. Days later, Sinclair was again targeted - this time by a parent addressing Sinclair posting a photograph to Twitter of her daughter at Edinburgh Zoo with a mural of monkeys (Gray, 2017).

In the one-hundred-and-thirty-six years between Watson and Sinclair, Indian-born ex-Celtic midfielder Paul Wilson endured racial slurs (mid-1970s); bananas were thrown at winger Mark Walters by opposition and home supporters alike (1988); and Motherwell FC Chairman John Boyle issued a public apology to St Johnstone Football Club and Trinidad & Tobago international striker Jason Scotland (2007) for the racially-charged chants Scotland was subjected to during a Scottish Cup tie. In 2014, Celtic FC’s Aleksandar Tonev received a seven match ban following an incident with Aberdeen Football Club’s Shay Logan (BBC, 2014). That same year, Jordan Tapping was subjected to monkey chants whilst playing away in Peterhead for East Stirling Football Club. During the 2017/2018 season, Clyde Football Club’s Ally Love was served a five game ban by the SFA following allegations of racist comments against Annan Athletic Football’s Rabin Omar (BBC, 2018). Despite persistent evidence to the contrary, former football manager Alex Smith was quoted by McLean (2016) as stating “I don’t believe there is a problem in this country at all. Today, more than ever, there are players coming through of different ethnicities. There are opportunities for everyone in Scottish football” Despite Smith’s perception, incidents of a racist or sectarian nature have regularly occurred in professional, Junior, and amateur association football, online and in-person, involving football players, fans, and wider society.

**Why Use Association Football in Anti-Racism Initiatives?**

In noting the frequency of racist incidents in Scottish association football, attention turns to the utility of sport in designing and implementing anti-racism educational initiatives and interventions. Popularity is one motivating factor. Van Tuyckom and Scheerder (2008) suggest that ‘the sports movement has a greater influence than any other social movement’, attesting that ‘sports is the largest social activity in Europe, interesting citizens from all member states’. Data collated by the SPFL Insider (2016) demonstrates that on an average weekend the Scottish Premier Football League experiences the highest attendances per capita in Europe of any top tier league, with circa 1.15% of the population. This is higher than northern European neighbours Norway (1.07%), Denmark (0.47%), and Finland (0.14%) - each of which has a comparable population at 5.233 million, 5.731 million, and 5.495 million, respectively. Attendance rates for top tier Scottish football are more than double those in Germany (0.47%) and almost triple those in England (0.40%). Further demonstrating the popularity of association football, Giulianotti, Rollin and Joy (2015) stated that the governing body, Fédération Internationale de Football Association (F.I.F.A.) ‘[have]
estimated that at the turn of the 21st century there were approximately 250 million football players and over 1.3 billion people “interested” in football’. Mueller et al. (1996) add that 80% of football revenue was at the time generated in Europe.

A diverse body of community activists, organisations, and former football players have therefore sought to utilise association football as a medium and indeed educational tool for engaging communities through anti-racism initiatives at local and national levels. Football teams, campaigns, and alliances have been established within Scottish men’s and women’s amateur, junior, and professional football leagues, and football-themed anti-racism education has become an established part of the national curriculum in Scottish classrooms, youth prisons, and football stadiums. Organisations such as Show Racism the Red Card Scotland and Kick It Out! have become anti-racism educational authorities in the U.K. with their work centring around inclusivity, anti-racism, and a human rights approach to education. One of these organisations, Show Racism the Red Card, will serve as the focus of a case study in the following section of this paper.

Show Racism the Red Card Case Study

Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) is described by Kingett et al. (2017) as the U.K.’s leading anti-racism educational charity. Established in Newcastle by Ged Grebby in 1996, the organisation aims to combat racism through educational initiatives, utilising football as an engagement tool. The charity state that by ‘combat[ing] racism through enabling role models, who are predominantly but not exclusively footballers, to present an anti-racism message to young people and others’, the anti-racism educational football-themed initiatives can reach appeal to a significant proportion of the U.K.’s population. Since 1996, the organisation has grown to develop divisions in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. SRtRC Scotland was established in 2003. In the fifteen years since their formation, the audiences engaging with the anti-racism initiatives have largely been young people in school settings, additional support for learning schools, youth groups, and grassroots football club. Funded primarily through the Scottish Government’s Equality Unit, in the academic year 2017-2018, SRtRC Scotland worked with more than 4209 young people and 111 adults (SRtRC, 2017). Historically however, the Scottish team engaged over 13,000 young people a year in anti-racism education prior to significant funding cuts from the Scottish Government (SRtRC, 2013). The anti-racism initiatives take the form of educational workshops which draw on a range of auditory, visual, and kinaesthetic activities (Kingett et al., 2017) and are delivered as a sustained programme, allowing participants time to explore issues pertaining to multiple racisms across several sessions. Participants engage in activities consisting of small group work, discussion and educational games - all of which are adapted to the appropriate age and stage of the group, encouraging participants to relate
the educational content to their own lived experience and understanding of media. These activities offer participants opportunities to think about the dangers of prejudice and stereotyping while education practitioners work to equip learners with the necessary skills to confidently challenge racism when they experience it. Clark et al. (2018, p.118) has suggested that the way in which SRtRC works ‘encapsulates an intersectional approach to unpacking power, privilege and justice’.

**Designing Effective Anti-Racism Interventions**

McBride (2015) suggests that prejudicial attitudes and the spectrum of ‘racisms’ have various developmental trajectories. It is important to have an understanding of where prejudicial attitudes originate before developing anti-racism initiatives to tackle these (Oskamp, 2000). Echoing this, Duckitt (1992) recommends that interventions should work across the following layers in order to account for the developmental origins of prejudicial attitudes: genetic and evolutionary predispositions; organisational patterns of intergroup contact and the norms that underpin intergroup relations; mechanisms of social influence that operate across both group and interpersonal relations; and individual differences in susceptibility to prejudicial attitudes based on the degree of acceptance of specific intergroup attitudes. At design stage, interventions must therefore consider the development of prejudicial attitudes through a multi-layered lens.

Following on from developmental considerations, interventions then need to be grounded in theory. Interventions based on theories of prejudice reduction can be divided into two primary strands. First, contact theory proposes that associating with members of an ‘out-group’ facilitates prejudice reduction as interactions can counter negative perceptions or stereotypes (Allport, 1954). Research has documented that cross-group friendships mitigate anxiety surrounding intergroup interactions, increase empathy, and promote inclusion (Abrams, 2010, Hodson 2011, Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). A clear example of how SRtRC Scotland currently promotes contact theory is their ‘Lighthouse: Refugee Inclusion Education’ programme which is co-delivered by an educator who is himself a refugee, and shares his story of escaping from Zimbabwe in the 1980s and seeking refuge in the U.K. This element of the programme has been crucial in increasing young people’s understanding of people who are forced to flee from their homes - thereby increasing empathy. Pettigrew (2008), however, argues that the length of contact may determine the degree to which attitudes, such as racial prejudice change over time. Unlike the other programmes SRtRC Scotland deliver, the Refugee Inclusion Education workshop is the only session that is not based on sustained inputs - largely due to funding constraints - and therefore risks becoming a one-off intervention which is less likely to change attitudes (McBride, 2015). Contact on its own then, without sustained
educational inputs is insufficient in challenging or changing prejudicial attitudes (McBride, 2015).

Second, antibias theories build on contact theory and suggest that having the opportunity to access information pertaining to the ‘out-group’ challenges perceptions and stereotypes through a process of education and re-education (Lewin, 1951). Within the context of the *Lighthouse Refugee Inclusion Education* workshop, young people participate in activities exploring stereotypes, prejudice, racism, terminology around refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and then learn how stereotypes and prejudice impact on those who live, work or study outside their country of birth (SRtRC, 2018). These theories are not in themselves mutually exclusive and effective interventions must merge both the contact and antibias theoretical frameworks in order to change prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviour. Moreover, in acknowledging the contested nature of racism, education practitioners must understand that interventions designed to reduce racism should be based on an approach that is flexible, allows for discussion on various perspectives, and does not assign blame to the victim or the perpetrator. Once equalities practitioners have considered the origins of prejudicial attitudes and situated themselves in theory, McBride (2015, p.19) proposes that interventions can largely be divided into three categories: 1. ‘Educational Interventions’; 2. ‘Short-term equality and diversity training courses’; and 3. ‘Media Campaigns’.

The effectiveness of prejudice reduction initiatives and anti-racism initiatives in particular have been a contested space for a number of years. Indeed, there has been a dearth of evidence from field experimental literature to support the effectiveness of anti-racism interventions (Abrams, 2010). The work of Show Racism the Red Card has historically fallen in to the categories of short-term equality and diversity training courses as well as media campaigns, of which there is a paucity of research evaluating effectiveness. More than a decade ago, The Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned a mixed methods evaluation of short-term equality and diversity training initiatives (Lemos, 2005). This evaluation included a case study of Show Racism the Red Card’s education work run in schools by a police officer in Stafford (West Midlands, England). The evaluation concluded the anti-racism initiative reinforced the point that ‘racism is wrong’ amongst young people participating in the programme, but did little to address sources of prejudice - nor did it encourage young people to challenge racism behaviour perpetuated by others (Lemos, 2005). In addition, the anti-racism interventions did little to address young people’s concerns pertaining to the situation in Iraq at the time (McBride, 2015).

Recently, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) evaluated the impact of Show Racism the Red Card’s educational interventions on young people’s attitudes in 5 English Secondary schools, wherein young people participated in anti-racism educational interventions over one school day. The authors adapted a generic evaluation tool from the Anne Frank Trust U.K. (2014,
to quantitatively evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention on the attitudes of young people through a quasi-experimental design (Kingett et al. 2017). The authors found a statistically significant increase amongst young people’s understanding of racism from 53% pre-intervention to 58% post-intervention. Evidence also demonstrated a reduction in young people’s bias toward other groups - especially in relation to followers of Islam. The investigation however, failed to demonstrate whether the intervention had an effect on young people’s willingness to challenge racism if they witnessed it. Owing to the small sample size (N = 109) further research is needed to determine generalisability of results. The authors cited limited accessibility to participants as well as limited resources to develop and analyse the educational outcomes as barriers to effective research. Abrams (2010) suggests that more rigorous evaluations are needed in order to establish the effectiveness of various programmes aimed at tackling prejudice and discrimination. Limited funding, time restrictions, as well as the difficulty of measuring shifts in attitudes longitudinally contribute to a disconnect between the initiatives and the prejudicial attitudes that they are attempting to tackle (McBride 2015; Clark et al. 2018). Moreover, the interventions and evaluations included in the current literature review have largely been conducted in England while there is a paucity of research on the impact of programmes within the Scottish context.

SRtRC’s education has therefore been adapted in recent years to reflect concern pertaining to the increase in religious discrimination (including Islamophobia) and anti-immigrant rhetoric (Kingett, 2017). A limitation of the 2005 intervention, however, is that it was delivered by a local police officer working with Show Racism the Red Card’s education pack and not by a qualified professional from within Show Racism the Red Card’s Education Team. In support of this, Clark et al.’s. (2018, p.121) case study on ‘Power, Privilege and Justice: Intersectionality as Human Rights?’, which explored intersectionality and inequality through the lens of SRtRC Scotland, suggests that SRtRC’s Education Team often have to unpack ‘reified ideas and negative stereotypes’. These findings highlight the importance of trained and qualified education facilitators in order to adequately break down young people’s concerns and address prejudicial attitudes. Additionally, the education work being evaluated was a one-off intervention workshop, yet as outlined earlier, a programme of sustained education is more likely to change racism, prejudiced, or discriminatory attitudes. To this end, Show Racism the Red Card Scotland has diverged in their educational development from the U.K. organisational umbrella and has adapted education work in order to ensure sustained learning, looking at multiple contemporary racisms within the programme in order to address different prejudicial developmental trajectories.
New Media and Equality Campaigns

Traditional media has often been used as a medium to tackle prejudicial attitudes through information provision and methodologically falls into three categories: general awareness raising; encouraging members of the public to report incidents; and campaigns targeting particular groups (McBride, 2015). Show Racism the Red Card’s Fortnight of Action is a general awareness raising initiative targeted specifically at football fans wherein Scottish Professional League, Scottish Women’s Football, Scottish Junior Football, and grassroots community football clubs come together during two weeks in October to take a stand against racism. In 2017, 114,926 football fans were exposed to standing in solidarity against racism at SPFL matches (SRtRC, 2017). McBride (2015) argues that media campaigns not only have an educational element but also provide a moral challenge. A caveat here, however, as with educational workshops, in that one-off campaigns are less likely to be effective and would likely have a greater impact if continuously repeated through the football season (McBride, 2015).

Moreover, with the rise of new media, equality organisations have a platform to promote inclusion and diversity issues while citizens have wider access to a variety of information sources promoting equality and diversity issues across sectors. However, the extent to which individuals choose to access information and the information they choose to access may simply reinforce existing values, beliefs and attitudes. To this end, Barberá et al. (2015) argued that ‘greater access to information may foster selective exposure to ideologically congenial content, resulting in an echo chamber’. The concept ‘echo chamber’ originally related to individual decision making pertaining to accessing news media outlets that reaffirmed individual beliefs, after which Sunstein (2007) popularised the concept within an online platform (Sunstein, 2007). From this perspective then members within the online community self-select the sites and content they engage with, whilst algorithms subsequently personalise the information presented to users in the future based on previous searches and or subscriptions across multiple sites. O’Hara and Stevens (2015, p.402) suggest that echo chambers may negatively impact on democracy due to the effects of ‘slippery slope theory’ which asserts that over time, for example, someone with moderate centrist/left ideologies may develop radical or extreme left ideologies. This phenomenon occurs due to algorithms based on previous searches that result in an individual only being shown content and evidence that is situated within a particular ideological framework or ‘gated community’ (Brønholt, 2017). Within the context of echo chambers and ‘gated communities’, one has to ask – can the power of football, footballing role models and football affiliation be used to transcend echo chambers and promote equality and diversity issues? Overall, little academic research exists pertaining to the effectiveness of media campaigns and equality issues (Abrams, 2010) and there is no research on the effectiveness of Show Racism the Red Card’s Fortnight of Action campaign in changing racist attitudes. The number of user ‘likes’ on popular social media
platform Facebook for the two professional association football clubs in Edinburgh, Heart of Midlothian Football Club (29,763) and Hibernian Football Club (49,136), vastly outnumber the ‘likes’ for the Scottish Parliament (14,726) or City of Edinburgh Council (8,347). This therefore suggests wider engagement and a large community of interest in each of these clubs. Could the impact and effectiveness of SRtRC’s annual Fortnight of Action on social media therefore be evaluated through football affiliation ‘echo chambers’ due to the melting pot of ideologies, political orientations and equalities perspectives of the heterogeneous community of football fans?

Other Contemporary Initiatives Engaging Young Adult and Adult Learners in Scotland

Understanding the broad reach, opportunities, and the social responsibilities of engaging with such large populations on a regular basis, Heart of Midlothian Football Club’s ‘Big Hearts Community Trust’ and Hibernian Football Club’s ‘Game Changer’ initiative sought to engage with local communities through programmes centring on kinship care, homelessness, social isolation, and alzheimer’s disease. Educational initiatives by domestic Scottish organisations have at times also sought to utilise football’s appeal being with regards to racism, sectarianism, xenophobia, and anti-Muslim hatred in Scotland. In addition to Show Racism the Red Card, educational initiatives from Nil by Mouth, United Glasgow FC, and the Homeless World Cup, should be and often are informed by contemporary political and social issues. Such organisations echo Meer's (2018) suggestion that ‘Scotland has retained a public commitment to race equality and explicitly sought to entrench its mainstreaming’. The 2016 Glasgow ‘Goal! Tor! But!’ football festival 'Football and Social Inclusion: Best Practices from the U.K., France, and Germany', organised by the Goethe Institut, Alliance Francaise and the Scottish Football Museum, demonstrated the educational initiatives that utilise association football as an education tool already operating throughout western Europe. Domestically, the Glasgow Afghan United encourage ‘involve[ment] in all aspects of civic society’ from Afghani citizens living in Glasgow, whilst the Adult Learning Project’s ‘Glory and Dismay: The Story of Scottish Football’ in Edinburgh, and the ‘Footb[all] Memories’ project run by Alzheimer’s Scotland in partnership with the Scottish Football Museum are examples of initiatives engaging with adult learners on issues such as literacy and memory loss. This demonstrates an understanding that association football’s popularity can be utilised effectively in attracting participants to initiatives such as anti-racism interventions.

Conclusion

Collingwood (cited in Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2014) has predicted that the percentage of non-white Scots will continue to increase. Given the frequency with which Meer (2018) found that members of Scottish minority populations
were unlikely to report experiences of hate crime, it is evident that broader educational work and awareness-raising initiatives are necessary to combat incidents of discrimination, prejudice, and racism. Additionally, Chongatera (2013) noted above average rates of hate crime in diverse communities as compared to homogeneously white communities (hate crimes also covering character traits such as gender, sexuality, and religion). As such, anti-racism initiatives and interventions need to reach and engage with the Scottish population en masse. Henri and Pudelko (2003), and Willmott (1989) suggested that communities of interest (‘people assembled around a topic of common interest’) often transcend other barriers e.g. race, language, and religion. Hoggett (1997) positioned communities of interest as ‘non-place forms of community’ - which could be understood as a football team fan base being spread nationally or internationally. In such instances, this paper has argued that association football can serve as the common interest and offers an entry point for anti-racism initiatives.

The rising frequency and commonality of hate crime in the U.K. prompts further reflections such as: 'Does the 'subject' (victim) of hate crime shift as a consequence of social, economic and political change?'; and 'Should an increase in the number of recorded incidents of hate crimes (particularly race-related hate crime) be expected as the Scottish Government, football authorities, Police Scotland and other stakeholders fund campaigns to increase awareness of how to report a hate crime?'. Moreover, does this increase in hate crime justify adequate funding to evaluate the effectiveness of both education and media interventions in order to determine what works? Due to the lack of standardised measures evaluating the impact of equalities interventions, more research is needed based on mixed methods in order to establish a research discipline pertaining to interventions to reduce prejudicial attitudes. In coming years the co-authors of this paper hope to investigate this topic further, and to consider the ways in which anti-racism communications, education, and practices occur with children, young adult, and adult association football fans through, among others, the Scottish Women’s Football League, the Scottish Professional Football League, Scottish Junior Football Association, and schools, community centres, and adult education institutes. It is our hope that this introductory paper considering anti-racism initiatives taking place with young adult and adult association football fans in contemporary Scotland may serve as foundational for future research into the effectiveness of sustained and participatory engagement with communities throughout Scotland.

References


Christian Hanser

The ‘Welcome Hut’ as the Concrete Utopia of a Migrating Educational Institution: Conceptualising Civic Sanctuaries for Human Dignity in an Uninviting Public Sphere

Abstract

This study examines possibilities to create mobile educational institutions and situate them as inclusive practice within a formal educational system in Europe that is often perceived as static. Drawing on a concrete 'in-between' educational site, and linking pedagogies of radical practicality with human geography, this paper proposes a transfer of historical claims in the UK for 'really useful knowledge' towards the structural emergence of 'really useful spaces' for the social recognition of other learning. This research analyses the concrete utopia of a roadworthy tiny house shepherd’s hut, which had initially been sketched out as a vagabond institution for collective life storytelling and narrative arts.

Key words: Co-migration, centre-periphery, vagabond outreach, tiny house, concrete utopia

Introduction

Research linking migration and adult education often adopts the perspective of the displaced, involuntarily mobile ‘other’ confronted with a rigid qualification system. This contrast between the mobile migrant and the static institution can be observed in the often slow and tedious progress for implementing integration on the basis of difference and diversity as a mentality shift in institutions (Sprung, 2011). This case study develops the theorisation of the institution as an itinerant stakeholder of welcome by critically questioning its reduced role as only sedentary receiver and host of those migrating. Drawing on the spatial dimensions of outreach and proximity in the human geographies of learning, this study informed by the arts conceptualises institutions as nomadic spaces which can be migrating as much as the learners they hope to welcome. Drawing on the author’s 'in-between' educational site of the Welcome Hut, the concrete case of this roadworthy tiny house shepherd’s hut discusses imaginative ways of allowing the margins to challenge the centre towards reciprocal dialogue: how could an adult educational micro-system as vagabond antidote to functionalist skills agendas help establish connectivity between those who generally don’t meet by bringing its own organisational hierarchies on the road? Discussing eight years of cross-sector projects in community education, social work, participatory arts, as well as health care, the potential for creating itinerant spheres for singularity, anti-racist pedagogies and the poetics of difference will be assessed.
Functionalist discourses of ‘lifelong yearning’

The Welcome Hut concept was initially sketched out during postgraduate research in adult education in Scotland. I imagined a sphere for mobile educational institutionalisation firstly as a counter-narrative to narrow skills agendas in European lifelong learning policies. Theorists in adult education challenge and criticise that the provision for adult learners in policy is largely framed in a vocabulary suggesting to make adults fit for employment, bringing them on the ‘right’ track (Field, 2006). The generalised prescription of this ‘right’ way could however be perceived as alienating and detached from certain adults’ realities and their search for a primarily meaningful, and not predominantly functionalist, occupation. Lifelong learning as the externally imposed accumulation of fragmented, modular knowledge commodities therefore runs the risk to perpetuate a focus on lack and imperfection fuelling neoliberal consumer logics: the desire “for more always outruns what we have at the moment” (Welton, 2005, p195). Analyses of adults opting to craft their own small-scale decent work and therefore actively and voluntarily dropping out of vertical knowledge frameworks (Guichard & Pouyaud, 2015; Taggart & Vannini, 2014) increasingly enter educational research and challenge widespread assumptions that lifelong learning schemes should train learners into hierarchies of constant craving for new diploma certificates. A certain number of adults prefer not to participate in this race, as for them leaving aside the accumulation of functionalist skills does not necessarily mean losing out in life (Kaeyhko, 2006). Recognising unconventional life philosophies off the diploma grids as unclassifiable but legitimate ways of meaning-making then leads to a broader educational issue: how can an inclusive rather than assimilationist adult education system open spaces and welcome the many unfitting and/or dissenting narratives at the outskirts of the knowledge economy?

Existential learning in the West

The Welcome Hut as a vagabond educational concept was then in theory built around the notion of hospitality more than the implementation of dominant training frameworks: valuing experiential, existential and spiritual dimensions of living, and opening up a setting for the resources, wisdoms and life achievements of the individual and groups. While I was going to be an adult educator in the West, I identified much more with intergenerational and transcultural practices of learning such as the African classroom without walls (Fordjor et al, 2003) which focused on commonalities rather than compartmentalised skills classifications and labels. Analyses of literacy campaigns situated in the global south suggest that “there is a sense of giving people dignity and improving their own human condition whereas in the West adult literacy is regarded much more as a means of ‘welfare to work’” (Jarvis, 2007, p187). While researching philosophies of education that challenge the
Eurocentric dominance of formal instruction (Abdi, 2005), I was looking for transferring my very European academic training into a classroom without walls. Creating my own experiential and existential learning oasis in a tiny mobile outreach architecture had the prospects of allowing me to roam freely and with geographical resilience around and beyond the skills agendas of EU vocational adult education. Building an autonomous institution in its own right implied that it was my own responsibility as initiator to supervise the exact function through which my transcultural utopia was going to meet dominant educational standards and hierarchies: relating Marcuse’s thoughts on repressive tolerance to my mobile institution, there was a risk of becoming the folklore version of alternative pedagogy, the amusing oddity as an annexe to the commodification of adult learning: the “alternative, oppositional perspective is seen as an exotic option rather than a plausible natural centre” (Brookfield, 2005, p104). But there was also the potential that this space dedicated to existential forms of being and becoming would be taken seriously as an educational entity standing on its own feet.

In an aim to shift my personal adult educator stance from technical know-how towards the existential dimensions of learning, the competencies hosted in the shepherd’s hut were then broadly identified as something already existing in the learner’s development, therefore something healthy to be recognized more than a lack or deficit to be compensated. This alternative pedagogical space would then firstly focus on giving adult learners the feeling of unconditional recognition for what they have already achieved in life, informally and irrespective of certification schemes. Supported by a literature review on the non-recognition of refugee life skills, the micro-institution in a tiny house was invented to address the absence of recognition of refugees for the innovative and creative people they are, having shown exceptional capacities in overcoming multiple hardships: “They did not learn it overnight. Their life experiences have taught them how to live in the face of death” (Yambasu, 2004, p43).

**Issues of participation and the politics of difference**

Personal observations from professional experiences allowed me to witness subtle expressions of a mistrust of adult learners about the sustainability of the standardised learning institutions in Europe. While some of the arguments put forward were biased anti-establishment slogans, other arguments however suggested that this suspicion was solidly grounded in everyday experiences of social relegation and also humiliation within the exclusionary logics of the prevailing educational hierarchies. The ambiguities of asking from adult learners to fit into and enter a race which has to a large extent already been identified as persistently socially stratified (Forsyth & Furlong, 2003) opens criticism to the normative assumption that training is what the learners of the periphery need: “The strategy of assimilation aims to bring formerly excluded groups into the
mainstream. So assimilation always implies coming into the game after it has already begun, after the rules and standards have already been set, and having to prove oneself according to those rules and standards. In the assimilationist strategy the privileged groups implicitly define the standards according to which all will be measured” (Young, 1990, p164). Transposing Iris Marion Young's politics of difference to the contradictions of adult education provided a conceptual framework from which to claim that these learners who were classified as 'in need of orientation and guidance' were not necessarily remote and peripheral because of lack of qualifications but cautious and therefore not automatically in need of prescriptive mainstreaming. As an adult educator trying to make Iris Marion Young’s theories relevant to my own practice, I first had to ask myself with which good arguments I would encourage isolated, marginal learners to enter at the lowest level in a race where the rules of the game had been set before their entry. What looks like remote learners from the centre can also look like a remote educational system from the periphery. It was crucial to investigate how an educator can help to build a bridge and reduce this distance. My educational stance was not grounded in oppositional de-institutionalisation but in an aim to explore the missing link between the policy agendas and those learners who preferred to stay at the margins of society rather than enter an unattractive game.

In my search for educational schemes recognising singular human beings in their existential dimension, my personal stance as adult educator shifted from asking 'what makes these people withdraw from educational provision?' to asking 'what makes that these people are not being listened to in their reflections and dissent?' Words like 'bildungsfern' ("remote from education") in German imply that education only happens at the accredited centres of society. The invisible alienation of thoughtful adults from possible formalised training schemes and the centrist making of the remote learner as a dysfunctional societal category then implied to challenge the structural dysfunctions of immobilised, centralised educational set-ups in which educational alienation is discussed as unilateral problem and not addressed as a reciprocal issue between the learner and the institution: Who is ultimately distant from whom? (Latour, 2005).

While the educational system asks from the individual to be flexible, creative, constantly networking and mobile enough to take the necessary steps towards the formal institution, one could provocatively ask why the system asks something of the individual which it has enormous difficulties performing by example. One could also provoke the remote institution to lead by example and demonstrate flexibility and take a step into the tiresome, less ordered, sometimes messy and improvised margins. In order to reconfigure adult educational entities as dynamic and adaptive microcosms, the localisation of my own shepherd’s hut institution to the informal street level ultimately took place on three conceptual dimensions.
Firstly, by critiquing the vertical distribution of narrative capital to the most affluent participants of society (Delory-Momberger, 2009), a major concern was to develop horizontal schemes of storytelling and expression of life story. My training as humanistic-existential counsellor was followed by a professional choice to develop collective forms of listening activism rather than storytelling training for those who can afford their own private story coach. Including the concern for social justice in the largely individualistic humanistic practice (Bondi, 2005), narrative practices can be reframed in the format of non-clinical and civic existential care, and not only as private, therapeutic or self-optimisation consultations.

Secondly, responding to the tendency within society to withdraw from civic and collective engagement to privatised security zones (Low, 2003), a dimension of meaningful civic engagement could be explored. The sources and reasons for this silent wish to retreat and expressed perceptions of fear and fatigue needed to be taken seriously (O’Toole and Gale, 2013). While society and its public sphere can be perceived as uninviting, the challenge was to create cosy spaces, civic zones and public sanctuaries of micro-hospitality in this macro-setting of judgment, assimilation and conflict. Creating a physical setting improvised around a wood fire stove allowed to have the concept of a mobile institution physically grounded in a pedagogy of shelter and refuge. At odds with the standardised architecture, equipment and room design of many functionalist learning centres, educating in a tiny house was then a deliberately non-sterile, disruptive invitation to the untidy poetics of difference. It was framed as a disruption towards - not away from - dialogue.

The main focus of this article lies on the third dimension of my educational utopia, the notion of radical proximity to peripheral lifeworlds within society. By analysing vagabond learning entities as stakeholders in their own right within adult learning, I will be arguing that the claim for ‘really useful knowledge’ also relies on the format of the educational system with might have or might not have the capacity to opening up ‘really useful spaces’ in order to allow recognition for singular life paths. If sinuous and diverse learner journeys were to be recognised in their own right for a dignified role in society, could a vagabond centre hosting the wisdoms emerging from these journeys move beyond the role as a mere add-on to existing institutions?

‘Really Useful Knowledge’ in really useful spaces: the theory

My hypothesis was that a migrating site of learning would have more freedom to roam between both worlds of institutionalised and alternative education and could facilitate an emotional turn in activist adult education: the feminist transcendence of binary oppositions, suggesting that social justice does not have to pass exclusively through ideological conflict but can also be facilitated through
listening and care (Bondi & Laurie, 2005). While the emancipation of the individual is historically framed in political agendas, the vagabond manifesto for adult education would then primarily provide care for the “capacity for social imagination, the most important prerequisite for engaging in emancipatory action” (Hart, 1992, p154). Shifting attention from power struggles to the person’s poetic and imaginary expression does not necessarily mean to depoliticise adult education, but to prepare reconciliatory futures within dialectical rather than binary spaces of coexistence. The reconfiguration of the institutional framework towards a shared and reciprocal co-migration carries with it the potential reconfiguration of the locus of the peripheral voice within educational discourses. Because the mobile learning centre establishes an unprecedented intermediary space as close to the margins as to dominant discourse, participation can be housed differently in the public sphere. With a fluctuating standpoint as a permanently mobile institutional positionality, this educational system is more flexible to reach out, to retreat, to step aside, to confront, but ultimately also to provide the rare space of stillness and care (Conradson, 2003) that is different from the stasis of traditional institutional hierarchies.

The challenge of connecting vagabond education: the practice

From the very first steps outside of academia, the proposal to intervene in an established institution as a migrating educator with a wooden hut generally caused confusion, raised doubts and triggered initial suspicion in the helping professions. The possibility to gradually make my way to working in such settings was owed to the curiosity and conviction of very few staff members, sometimes only one person, who convinced senior management to accept the presence of the Welcome Hut space as an experiment. As soon as members of staff were seeing the hut officially installed in front of the building and advertised in the media or on their institutional website, the base for mutual encounter between staff and the itinerant other was laid out and more and more educational stakeholders got timidly involved. Entering the professional world through an educational utopia however demanded first of all a shift from my own comfort zone in critical theory into learning to practice professional relations of trust and reciprocal project coordination. In order for the daily practice of reshuffling educational hierarchies to include both the periphery and the centre, its coherent implementation implied being constantly reshuffled and challenged as an educator myself. In order to facilitate mutual listening and situate my practice in direct connection to institutional set-ups, I had to shift my own vocabulary from critiquing the structural dysfunctions of the educational status quo to emphasising the creative freedoms available to each citizen to shape their own learner path and of each institution to be agents of their internal change.

I had to accept that the discovery of the otherness of the other as the shared experience of proximity (Levinas, 2003) first of all meant putting my own
convictions and values on hold and accepting institutionalised lifelong learning as the realities of most adult learners and as a horizontal partnership without superiority of any one educational practice. Instead of playing out a convenient binary opposition of a ‘better’ de-institutionalised and ‘their’ institutionalised world, trust in dialogue gradually emerged through my own daily exposures to alterity and vocational training as a possible neighbour, not opponent to utopia (Ricoeur, 1992). In order to be actor rather than observer of the professional field of lifelong learning, I had to welcome the unexpected complexities of the field as equally legitimate expressions as my theoretical choices of critical theory from the university library. It became apparent that schemes of regular collaboration could only emerge within dialectical spheres of mutual trust and mutual inspiration where the mobile site is open for exploration and participation of staff as much as the visit of locals. The visit of the hut becomes otherwise permeated by what Jean Barr has referred to as a divisive ‘superiority from below’. The aim was the ‘articulation of ‘views from below’ – not because they offer truer, more accurate accounts of the world but because they increase the possibilities of knowledge’ (Barr, 1999, p80).

It is therefore only after learning to renounce from my vertical position as the ivory tower analyst that my horizontal utopian site set new ideas and synergies among staff teams in motion. Before establishing relations, I had to make my intrinsically imagined utopia accessible and more vulnerable and open to scrutiny by the real world. It is important to further define the ideological orientation of my educational stance when speaking about the disruptive nature of my shepherd’s hut interventions. While disruption can be used to create division and perplexity and to install certain value systems by force, my public sphere disruption through the tiny house installation has the intention to be a poetic more than political provocation towards dialogue and connectivities. Once I was able to communicate that my presence in the institution as vagabond educator was not to oppose the routine procedures and fuel conflictual systemic disorder, but to facilitate a temporary intermediary space of dialogue, the doors within the institutional system opened and city majors, directors and board members mixed around the wood fire with those coming from the invisibilised zones of the public sphere.

What has become my daily ritual of introducing a foreign element (the hut) into an established system, has indeed become an open-ended and improvised reshuffling of routines and standards as I had theoretically imagined, in which my role is generally to foster the process of communication, but not to push participants into a specific direction. As a mobile educator observing the situatedness of learning in place-based specificities, I cannot give an expert opinion during my short term vagabond visit. Every new intervention negotiates again the role and place of the marginal others of a learning environment, and every new environment also brings a tension on how the Welcome Hut will be perceived by the institutional hierarchy. It can happen that the traveller’s wagon will initially be hosted as the untidy and strange guest disturbing an institutional
identity of stability, preservation and control. But it can also happen that in the course of the project, this presence triggers new forms of mobility and outreach within this institution’s walls.

**In-betweenness as fragile and fertile ground**

The Welcome Hut as an in-between site of learning poses an important question that is situated beyond postmodern fluidities. Is in-betweenness always just a professional option for the educator? I would like to point at the unilateral orientation of such a question. Does ‘working in-between’ solely rely on the educator? Working in-between the institutional walls and the vast public sphere has allowed me to witness, observe and reflect on the major role that the social, cultural and professional environment plays in supporting or delegitimising in-between practices. In a transient world order in motion, major societal struggles (loneliness, hidden precarities, radicalisations etc.) will increasingly not be played out within the radar of the institution, but outside of the system’s safe walls (Bauman, 2011). More than that, this radar from the centre is often perceived as controlling rather than caring (O’Toole & Gale, 2013)

If scientific research increasingly argues that many societal issues are not sufficiently addressed by the normative institution as we know them, one could argue that it is our system of care and education, and not only the individual learner, that should allow for making in-betweenness a hospitable place in professional practice (Parr, 2008). Could vagabond practices be housed in the school systems, in training curricula and within the ethical remit of the regulated helping professions? This would necessitate changing the perspective from the innovative, eclectic project of an individual artist to transposing this isolated case of the Welcome Hut to a broader potential of a reconfigured adult educational sphere in which migrating institutions are not peripheral but central to a co-designed way of educating adults, dialoguing between movement and stillness.

When I started working with the Welcome Hut in the public sphere, the large majority of counselling professionals and social workers that I knew from my own training programmes looked at the concept with suspicion and reservations. Offering almost the same activities as them, having followed the same courses as them suddenly did not seem professional, respectable and reliable because it was happening in a mobile shepherd’s hut in the public sphere. In-between practice was kept at a safe distance. And then, when I first started practising my concept in so-called areas of multiple deprivation with the help of art centres rather than local social work, the reaction to my shepherd’s hut presence by the inhabitants of the housing towers was also based on suspicion: ‘You are elitist wanting to make us talk about positive things in our lives that are so full of hardship’ was a comment I heard quite a few times, illustrating among other things a distance and gap between the perceived reality of the housing estates
and the kind of relational activity I proposed from my own middle-class humanistic life story training. Neither inhabitants nor professionals initially wanted to enter the hut or embrace this uncategorised practice. When I had made in-betweenness my professional choice, I did not deliberately choose homelessness, the impossibility to be accepted by the one or the other. I chose the hope that the vagabond perimeter, this zone of non-belonging, might become a hospitable rather than hostile space. In-betweenness could be an inclusive practice, a hospitality hub and it could be given a legitimate place in society. Most of the time however, in-betweenness is considered as an exclusionary label. With 8 years field experience and the decision to continue going to housing estates to gradually deconstruct the suspicions of ‘elitism’ by observing and listening, I have found a way to reframe my own strangeness as a mobile adult educator in positive terms, making this liminal space my professional home and gradually receiving innovation awards by government as well as postgraduate research funding. Going beyond my individual case study, the question remains how such deviance and the dignity of the margins can be welcomed through encounter, not through containment. While an adult educator has a certain creative freedom to facilitate hospitality in adverse circumstances, society also has the capacity to choose how to receive this unclassified otherness worthy of a responsive system.

This paper encouraged educators to re-negotiate institutional ideals of stillness and to enter the complexities of positionality in adult education to investigate remote zones of the civic sphere. To what extent is it only the learners who withdraw from society? Does formal education withdraw from the realities of learners as well? Can educational institutions afford to function around a sedentarising centre if indeed they want to bridge gaps and respond to a climate of mistrust? The Welcome Hut is a rooted institution: rooted in mobility. It has come to be embraced by highly regulated organisations which acknowledge the contribution of vagabond learning and co-migration to the constant and restless building of a society that is capable to listen to difference, apply interest in alterity beyond the theoretical and speak the language of change.
Bibliography


Katinka Käyhkö & Jyri Manninen

Using Strategic Alliances in Developing More Inclusive Liberal Adult Education

Abstract

Liberal Adult Education providers, associations and civil society can support the integration of migrants in Finland. However, including “new” students requires special efforts. This ethnographic case study maps the networks and alliances needed to start a multicultural music pilot. The data are collected using participatory action research, participant observation, diaries, and reflective writings. Network analysis (Robins 2015) is used in the analysis. The results suggest that networks, strategic alliances and participatory planning help when starting something new. In addition to the challenge of involving new participants, different administration structures, rules and regulations between organisations may complicate piloting.

Key words: Liberal Adult Education, Diversity, Strategic Alliances, Participatory Action Research, Network Analysis

Introduction

The main adult learning opportunities available for migrants and refugees in Finland are the integration training courses offered to individuals with a residence permit during their first three years of stay. These courses include language training, some vocational skills and basic civic education courses, and they have been mainly organised by vocational training (VT) providers or private companies. However, there is a growing interest to make use of and develop further the course provision of non-formal, non-vocational adult education (i.e. liberal adult education, LAE, or folkbildning) for and with migrants, in order to facilitate integration. In the Nordic countries, the over 150-year-old folkbildning system has proved to be an effective tool for building a democratic, stable welfare society and increasing wellbeing. In fact, it has been a civic education project to educate illiterate common people and convert them to civilised, well-behaving citizens (Kantasalmi & Hake 1997, 354–363; Dahlstedt & Nordvall 2011, 245; Koski & Filander 2013, 585–590). The current reasoning is that folkbildning could be used again to integrate newly arrived citizens into society (Manninen 2017; Fejes & Dahlstedt 2018; Palmén 2018). The concept of folkbildning has been translated into English as both “popular” (e.g. Rubenson 2013; Fejes and Dahlstedt 2018) and “liberal” (Jarvis 2014). Sometimes both terms are used, e.g. “Nordic popular (or liberal) adult education” (Eurydice 2015, 58). In practice the training provision within this system is mainly hobby-related liberal arts courses (handicrafts, music, etc.), but some basic skills courses and civic education courses are organised as well (for a detailed analysis see...
Manninen 2017). In this paper, we use the term liberal (Micari 2003) because it is the most common translation in Finland, and in this paper we use a music course pilot as a case study.

The potential role of liberal adult education (LAE) is recognised also at the European level, where it is referred to as "a stepping stone or a springboard to further learning and qualifications" (Eurydice 2015, 58). OECD (2018) encourages local-level joint efforts to enhance integration of migrants, and states that familiarity and confidence among different groups of people can be facilitated, and integration fostered, by sharing interests and providing spaces for learning and recreational activities. Migration can also have a positive impact on the whole receiving community, and creating spaces where interaction of migrants and natives is possible is thus recommended (ibid.). In 2015 the University of Eastern Finland (UEF) launched a project called Learning Spaces (www.uef.fi/opinsauna) to further develop LAE learning opportunities involving people seeking asylum, other migrants and native Finns. In 2017 funding was received from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). The project seeks strategic alliances with regional and national LAE providers and associations to encourage, develop, and pilot new types of courses and activities, keeping especially in mind the learning possibilities of the educationally marginalised asylum-seeking adults living in reception centres.

This paper presents the preliminary results of an ongoing ethnographic case study, which focuses on the efforts of developing more inclusive hobby-related learning opportunities for mixed groups. The case presented here is a music pilot of the Learning Spaces project. The aim of this pilot is to plan and organise a multicultural music group in a small music school. Cooperation with the reception centres and associations doing multicultural work in the region is also required. Adults seeking asylum, those with refugee status, other migrants living in Finland and native Finns are included and mixed into the same group to facilitate interaction, sharing of skills and development of social networks (see also Kukovetz & Sprung 2014, 167). In this paper, we analyse the music pilot’s planning process (i.e. the networks making the pilot possible and the participatory planning phase) and the beginning of the implementation phase during spring 2018. The data are collected by using network analysis, participant observation and diaries, and reflective writings of the key actors. The word migrant is used to describe all who have moved to Finland for a variety of reasons, whenever the referred sources have not used another particular term. We first scan the national landscape of integration and LAE in Finland. Then we describe the music pilot and the networks surrounding it. The research questions, data and theories are outlined before presenting the first results related to the pilot in question. Finally, some tentative themes of the discussion are raised.
Integration and Liberal Adult Education in Finland

The organisational structure of the Finnish liberal adult education system (LAE; *folkbildning*) is based on five types of organisations: adult education centres (184), folk high schools (76), summer universities (21), study centres (11), and physical education centres (14) (National Board of Education, 2018; Association of Adult Education Centres, KoL, 2018). In addition, associations and other third-sector organisations offer non-vocational courses. It is estimated that annually 950,000 individuals participate in LAE courses, and many of them take part in several courses (Tilastokeskus 2017). Despite its popularity, LAE has several structural problems: participation is highest among well-educated, financially better-off, working or retired individuals who are mainly female (77%), and have participated before. The majority of learners are “heavy users”, and LAE organisations fail to attract new learner groups who might benefit more from LAE courses. In addition, the course planning focuses a lot on the suggestions collected by active participants, and therefore the organisational culture and practices do not fully enable development of innovations and new course offerings. (see Manninen 2015.) For the same reasons, the number of migrant participants has been rather small, and people seeking asylum are seldom included, e.g. due to insurance reasons (a Finnish ID is required for the group insurance). In a recent report (Saloheimo 2016, 28) approximately 20% of the LAE institutions informed that they had no immigrant students in 2014. Nevertheless, migrants have been participating in LAE courses for decades and a lot of development work has already been done (see Anderzén 2011; Saloheimo 2016; Palmén 2018). There are materials to be found and guidelines to follow, such as those provided by the Outreach, Empowerment and Diversity network (OED 2014a, 2014b). Some active LAE providers have been committedly working with migrants, providing especially language courses (Finnish or Swedish) and vocational training, and good practices have been made known (e.g. Anderzén 2011; KoL 2014).

Folk high schools have been particularly active: according to Suoraniemi and Pantzar (2013, 3) in 2012–2013 every second (42) folk high school in Finland offered training for immigrants in over 100 different courses. Currently 40 of the 87 folk high school campuses in Finland have specific several-month-long immigrant training programmes (Suomen kansanopistoyhdistys 2018). These courses and programmes are mainly “for migrants only”, and the possibilities to interact with native students are seldom fostered. There are no statistics on the migrant participants and teachers of the 184 adult education centres. Yet, the national webpages of Adult Education Centres offer basic information in 15 languages (KoL 2018). A new potential participant group arrived in 2015 in the form of over 32,000 individuals seeking asylum in Finland. The changed situation caused actions in ministries and brought new fuel to the discussions, but the “big wheel” seems to turn slowly. For example, it has not been possible to open the Training Voucher support to people seeking asylum. So, we have potentially
interesting courses, that are not marketed to certain potential participants and to which they are not allowed or cannot afford to participate. From the beginning of 2018 the national legislation included also the different LAE providers in the integration of migrants, particularly in the implementation of the literacy classes for the immigrants with a residence permit (HE140/2017; Finlex 2018; Palmén 2018). The main reason for this change was that the responsibility of the literacy training of migrants was moved from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment to the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC 2017a). There was quite a fuss about this “new educational task of the liberal adult education”, and the full funding provided for it by the government, if the training in question was accepted to the official three-year integration plan of the migrant. The possibility to study part-time and also art- and general skill-related subjects were mentioned as benefits of this change (MEC 2017a; Palmén 2018). Even a recommendation for a study plan was drafted (MEC 2017b). The transition period is estimated to take until the end of 2019 (MEC 2017a).

Finnish LAE institutions are regulated by the Law on Liberal Adult Education (632/1998, renewed in 2009, c.f. Finlex 2018a) and in the Decree on Liberal Adult Education (805/1998, c.f. Finlex 2018 b). In these, the purpose of LAE is defined as promoting the wholeness of society, equality and active citizenship through education and lifelong learning. Self-motivated learning, communality and agency are highlighted, and diversity, multiculturalism and internationalisation are mentioned among the aims of LAE. Thus, the limited role LAE institutions so far have had in the integration and the “fuss” about current changes are somewhat surprising. According to Filander (2015), the pressures upon Finnish LAE to take stronger societal responsibility especially for those at risk of marginalisation – including migrants – have been both external (e.g. OECD) and internal or national, i.e. ministry-driven. Already the Liberal adult education programme 2009–2012 repeatedly mentions education of immigrants as one of the key fields of development for Finnish liberal adult education (Ministry of Education 2009, abstract, 12, 19, 52, 76). Yet it is easy to join Pastuhov´s (in Wiktorin 2017, 12) ponderations on how it seems almost as if there are two different kinds of citizenship within LAE: one voluntary and hobby-centred for the native Finns and another, almost obligatory, language-learning and vocation-oriented one for “the outsiders”.

In summary, it can be said that although the potential role of LAE, associations and civil society in supporting the integration processes is already well-recognised, many Finnish adult education providers still seem to struggle to open their doors to non-native learners. The situation comes close to Kukovetz and Sprung’s (2014) observations on the structurally ‘white’ adult education. One particularly difficult aspect seems to be finding ways to create learning opportunities where members of both the native and migrant groups could learn together and from each other. Trying to include those still seeking asylum or the so-called paperless as learners is considered even harder, regardless of their legal right to study and the LAE institution’s autonomy to provide courses for
“all” (c.f. MEC 2018). However, there are examples of “mixed group” practices recorded already from 2010 (Anderzén 2011, 24). One can only ask: why haven´t the good practices been spreading among the Finnish LAE providers?

**Strategic Alliances in the Context of this Study**

The data were and continues to be collected from a music pilot implemented in the Learning Spaces project in cooperation with a local music school in a city of approx. 76,000 inhabitants in Finland. There are three reception centres (RCs) within a 100km radius of the city, giving basic living conditions currently to approx. 450 people seeking asylum. The Learning Spaces project had collaborated with these reception centres from 2015 onwards, so the alliance between the university and the reception centres was already formed. The direct contacts to the reception centres facilitated the flow of information. There are two higher education institutions (HEIs) and some international companies in the city that keep drawing international students and workforce. The region also has an active network of associations, projects and institutions involved in multicultural activities (later MC network), born to counterbalance the racist fame of the city more than a decade ago. Both the HEIs and the member associations of the MC network provide strategically important direct contacts and information channels to relevant groups of people. The people directly involved in this pilot form three groups. The first group includes the four key implementers, i.e. the Music School owner (MO), the project manager (PM), the music teacher (T) and the project coordinator (PC). Among them the constitutive alliance is the personal connection between the PM and the MO who shared the idea and collaborated already in the funding application phase of the pilot in question. The MO had struggled to “find a suitable partner”, and was happy to have finally found support from the university.

The actual teacher (T) and the PC (both native Finns) were recruited later to their tasks: the teacher due to her expertise as a community pedagogue and musician with experience in intercultural groups of children, and the PC for having coordinated other projects with migrant adults. At first there was a plan to include a migrant teacher to the pilot, too. This did not happen, however, since no fitting candidate was found in time, the pilot budget was very tight and the teacher preferred not to share the pedagogical responsibility with anyone. The second group is the participatory planning team, including the key actors without the PM plus five representatives of participant groups and one interpreter. The third group are the, in total, 13 participants of the actual pilot group. To foster possibilities of intercultural encounters and belongingness (see Alenius 2016, 50–52), these adult men and women, aged from 19 years to early 50´s, include migrants and native Finns and represent 10 nationalities.
Research Questions and the Data Collected

At this phase, we have one main research question and three sub-questions:
Q: What kind of networks and strategic alliances are required to make this pilot possible?
   a. Who impacts who in these networks and alliances?
   b. How does the information flow and how are the decisions made between the different actors?
   c. Do the positions of power change during the process?

Since we are dealing with an ongoing pilot, at this point of the journey we only have partial data to analyse. The data analysed here consists of the following:

- The making it happen process and networks of the pilot in question
- 5 participant diaries (including both the participatory planning team members and actual participants)
- 4 reflective writings of the key implementers (including the authors of this paper)

The Theories Applied

Social network analysis (Robins 2015) is used to detect the apparent and behind the scenes networks and strategic alliances of the key implementers. Aspects of action research and participatory action research (PAR) are clear. We are studying a process of developing something new in which both writers are involved from their different positions, we have included volunteer participants as reflectors on the process, and three of the participants have volunteered to participate in the analysis of the data (see McNiff & Whitehead, 2006; Kindon, Pain & Kesby 2007). Pratt and her co-researchers from the Filipino community (2007) see PAR as a way of rethinking and revising not only ways of doing research but also rethinking democracy (ibid. 102). This is particularly interesting in the context of liberal adult education, which has in Finland been rooted in the ideas of civic education and active citizenship (c.f. Filander 2015).

Preliminary Results

Even this small music pilot has its own “backstage”, which can be partially mapped by studying the enabling networks and alliances, the recruitment and marketing phase, and the decision-making of the pilot.

The Enabling Networks and Strategic Alliances

First, we look at the enabling networks and strategic alliances that have made this particular music pilot possible, combining the individual and organisational levels (Robins 2015). The main data here are the reflective writings of the four key actors: the teacher, the MO, the PC and the PM. Based on their writings, email communications and orally specified information regarding the different
people and entities they have so far consulted in different phases of the pilot, a map of networks was compiled (Figure 1):

![Network Map]

Figure 1: Enabling networks and alliances of the pilot (Valtonen & Käyhkö 2018).

The existing alliance was the connection of the University and the three reception centres. Then the Music School and the University found each other, and so the University became the point of contact between the reception centres and the Music School. The central actors are the MO and the PC (compare Rogers 2015). What is striking here is the quantity of administration personnel consulted within the university and the need to consult even the national tax authorities. The numerous requests to perform in public also stand out. The university’s situation is explained by three reasons. First, there were no ready-made guidelines or agreement forms available in the University for this particular kind of project and funding. The administration processes are tailored to serve big, consortium-style research projects either on national or international levels. The “university’s third mission” and grass-roots-level cooperation with smaller sums of money may not have been considered important enough to prepare guidelines for. Secondly, the pilot is dealing with asylum-seeking adults who live in reception centres away from the city. Some travel expenses – from January 2018 onwards considered as taxable income in Finland – were required to facilitate their participation. Third, the Music School is a private company and this impacted the agreement writing. The key actors (except the teacher) are frustrated by this and react to the administration- and legislation-related “unexpected obstacles”:

Bureaucracy has also produced difficulties. We haven’t been able to consider all its twists and turns in this first-time pilot. (MO)
This has taught me that the university is a really rigid organisation to implement this kind of development project. (PM)
The university did not provide guidelines (...) I’ve had to consult numerous people and many of them many times. (PC)

The Importance of Personal Contacts

Personal contacts make fruitful cooperation and alliance-building possible. The personal connection between the PM and the MO laid the foundation for this music pilot. Both used their contacts to find the teacher and the PC. Later, the personal contacts of the PC and migrants themselves started to matter. The aspect of personal contacts becomes more obvious when we study the networks used in the recruitment and marketing process of the music pilot (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Networks and contacts used in recruitment and marketing (Käyhkö 2018).

Here we see the networks and paths of spreading the word used while finding the members of the participatory planning team and later on the actual participants of the music pilot. Only the people that we know as contacted are marked. The PC and the MO activate the whole. The PC has a brokering role (Robins 2015, 8). Apart from assuring strong ties with the reception centres and the Music school, she also creates an alliance with the MC network, makes use of her existing direct contacts within the migrant communities, visits intercultural events to spot people possibly interested in participating, and contacts students and local choirs. Several face-to-face meetings with potential participants or gatekeepers able to use their own networks take place. Secondly, both the MO and the PC use social media with rather good success. Third, a fruitful line of
action was the “grapevine” among migrants themselves. A bonus result of the marketing phase networking was finding a potential migrant teacher for the Music School.

**Phases of Decision-Making**

There were multiple entities involved in the decision-making during the piloting process. We divided the process into seven different phases of which the first five were completely, and the sixth one partially, available for research at the time of writing this paper:

1. Funding application (spring 2017)
2. Getting the funding (8–9/2017)
3. Launch-planning (10–11/2017)
4. Participatory planning with the representatives of participant groups (1–2/2018)
5. Marketing and selections (2–3/2018)
7. Final evaluations (6–8/2018)

In phases 1 and 2 the PM and the MO made the decisions, plans and calculations with the help of the accountants, and the MEC chooses to fund the project. In phase 3, the decisions were made by the four key actors together, the PC acting as a secretary and representing the link to the migrant communities. In the phase of participatory planning (4), aspects like the name of the group, best possible timing, ways of spreading the word, etc., were decided together with the whole participatory planning team, which included five representatives of potential participant groups, an interpreter, the teacher and the PC. Here, the optimistic view of the key actors is challenged by the participants. Even though inclusive decision-making was being aimed at, the set goal was not always reached. One of the participant diary writers noted in the participatory planning phase that the core ideas of the group content came from the teacher and the others just supported them. The same writer also pondered:

> *I thought, what if we other participants would have been asked first about what we would like this pilot to be and what we would like to do here? Would we have ended up with more ideas? (Participant Diary 3)*

In the marketing and selection phase (5), PC and the MO spread the news in different networks. Also, members of the participatory planning team promoted the pilot amongst their own contacts (see Figure 2). The MO, the teacher, and the PC selected the pilot participants. Once the implementation phase (6) started, most of the practical decisions fell in the hands of the teacher, though in some cases in consultation with the participants and other key actors.
Discussion

Due to our pilot’s schedule, we have been able to analyse only partial data and thus can only provide very tentative results. Yet, in response to our main research question, it can be said that many kinds of networks and strategic alliances, both old and new, were required to make this small music pilot possible. The central individuals and channels of information at the phases studied seem to be the PC and the MO, but the actively sought strategic alliances and cooperation networks, and the intercultural participatory planning team with their own direct contacts and networks were all needed to find the participants for this pilot. A lot of the networking was “outsourced” to the PC, who ended up serving as the direct or intermediary contact to the communities of interest. This reveals a development challenge for the adult education providers: if new groups of participants are to be included, one has to start by getting into actual contact with them. This requires time and personnel. The associations and other third-sector actors provide important bridges or shortcuts and thus collaboration with them is highly recommendable. The right to the “final word” in decision-making has varied during the process. Though consensus and shared decisions have been sought, decisions were not always as democratic as was hoped. The impact of legislation, university administration and national tax office in the backstage of the pilot is notable.

Starting something new requires time: time to plan, to search funding, people and other resources – and time to reflect and learn while doing. The lack of time in this pilot is obvious and impacted by two things: first, the tight budget, and secondly, the pressure adding the “flood” of public performance opportunities. Nevertheless, the numerous offers to perform in public can also be considered as a positive “sign of interest” (Teacher). Any group, but especially intercultural groups including people seeking asylum, work, etc., are vulnerable to changes. So far, we have lost two key participants, one due to a negative decision on their residence permit and one due to a job offer elsewhere. Two participants attended only once: potential reasons for quitting might have been anything from the group composition or facilitation style not meeting personal expectations to disliking the interrogative presence of the university. When working with new stakeholders, there is a myriad of administration-related issues that may not be fully charted beforehand. Changes in legislation and regulations can bring surprises and not always even the people in charge of implementing these regulations are up-to-date enough to guide the individual project safely onwards. The combination of a big hierarchical organisation like a university, a small flexible one such as a music school and the geographically distant reception centres creates a special setting for cooperation. However, we have managed to move forward. Where there is a will (and alliances, networks and cooperation), there is a way, even when it comes to developing novel adult education possibilities.
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Alessandra Mussi

Arab Migration and Parenting: the Experience of Arab Migrant Women in Italy

Abstract

Despite the considerable presence of Arab migrants in Italy and the West, these communities, women in particular, are affected by prejudices, Islamophobic feelings and racist episodes. My work intends to explore the dimension of parenting in Arab migrant women because the experience of maternity can contribute to the wellbeing and the integration of the whole family. The study presents an empirical research based on the ethnographic method and in-depth interviews with mothers belonging to the most populated Arab communities in Milan, Italy, within the framework of the European project ISOTIS – Inclusive education and Social Support to Tackle Inequalities in Society.

Key words: Arab migration; migrant parenthood; gender; ethnography, biographical interviews.

Introduction

Milan is the Italian metropolitan city with the highest number of non-EU citizens legally residing as of January 1, 2017: 440,622, 11.9% of the national total. The most represented communities in Milan, in order, come from: Egypt (14.7%), Philippines (10.6%), China (10.2%), Peru (7.4%), Albania (6.4%), Morocco (6.4%), Ecuador (6.2%) (Giacomello, Mastropietro, Serusi, & Lobello, 2017c).

The Moroccan community, first in terms of number of nationals present in Italy and fifth in Milan, is a historically settled community in Italy going through a phase of progressive but marked stabilization. In 2016, over 35,000 Moroccan citizens obtained Italian citizenship, while amongst the remaining number, 68.9% have a residence permit for long-term residents. Holders of a residence permit subject to renewal, on the other hand, have put down family reasons as the main reason behind requesting residence (61.4%). The Moroccan community is substantially balance on a gender level, with males slightly ahead, representing 54.6%, while women the remaining 45.4%. Furthermore, the number of minors is striking: 124,123, or 27.3% of the total number of Moroccan citizens legally residing in Italy (Giacomello, Mastropietro, Serusi, & Lobello, 2017b).

The Egyptian community in Italy counts on 137,668 individuals, with a clear preponderance in Northern Italy and, in particular, Milan. Compared to the Moroccan community, this is a community of younger settlement in Italy which,
in the period between 2010-2017, saw a population increase of about 41%, slowing down only over the last year. Despite this, it is palpable that the seeds are being planted in terms of a phenomenon that is already widespread within the Moroccan community. Across the last two years, the stabilization process has also started among the migrants of Egyptian origin. In fact, there has been a significant increase in Italian citizenship being attained (3,438 in 2016), while 62.8% of legally residing Egyptian citizens hold a long-term residence permit. The main reasons for residence permits subject to renewal are work (48%) and family reasons (43.7%) which, among the new arrivals in 2016, counted for approximately 68.6% of the total. Within the Egyptian community, there is a gender bias in favor of the male component: men represent 69.1%, while women cover the residing 30.9%. Minors represent a significant portion: 44,880, 32.6% of the total number of Egyptian citizens (Giacomello, Mastropietro, Serusi, & Lobello, 2017a).

Research topic

The current phase of migration process, characterized by stabilizations, family reunifications, moving or creation of new families, adds a certain urgency to the study of parenting in Arab-Muslim migrant women. Despite the considerable presence of Arab migrants in Italy and the West, these communities are amongst the most impacted by prejudices, Islamophobic feelings and racist episodes. Arab women are often described as veiled, passive, and subjugated by the power of men. They are particularly affected by episodes of prejudice but also by assumptions made by academic research, which entails the risk of condemning them to immobility rather than helping to “free” them (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Ahmed, 1992). The literature review highlights that Arab women, as mothers, have long been part of studies in the field of anthropology, sociology and psychology; meanwhile there are still insufficient contributions in the educational field. Two moments related to the life of children are subject to particular analysis: birth (Ali & Burchett, 2004; Davies & Papadopoulos, 2006) and adolescence (Aroian et al., 2009; Renzano, McCabe, & Sainsbury, 2011).

My work analyses the topic of parenting by focusing on the experiences of Arab-Muslim women in relation to the childhood phase. By doing so, an educational perspective is being adopted. The relevance of such a perspective is twofold: on the one hand it enriches pedagogical reflection in the field of parenting support by adopting a culturally specific perspective, on the other it widens the reflection on a phenomenon discussed at an interdisciplinary level, through the specific contribution of the pedagogical perspective. This research fits within the framework of the ISOTIS project - Inclusive Education and Social Support to Tackle Inequalities in Society, coordinated by Paul Leseman (Utrecht University) and on the Italian side, Giulia Pastori (Bicocca University) (www.isotis.org). Its
aim is to analyze and tackle the emergence of social and educational inequalities from childhood, with a specific focus on the vulnerability of migrant families.

**Theoretical-epistemological framework**

The epistemological framework is based on:

- the bio-ecological model of human development of Bronfenbrenner (1986),
- the unified theory of development of Sameroff (2010),
- the concept of developmental niche of Super e Harkness (1986).

Within this epistemological framework, my work lies in the tradition of educational studies on family education (Formenti, 2000; Milani, 2001; Pourtois & Desmet, 1989). In particular, it cites the latest studies on parenting support, which recommend an examination of the child and the relationships with the caregivers inside the family context, alongside a look at how to help parents mobilise their educational potential. The literature in this field, together with Intercultural Pedagogy (Nigris, 2015; Portera, 2013), points out that research on migrant parenthood is needed to promote the well-being and the integration of the whole family (Balsamo, Favaro, Giacalone, Pavesi, & Samaniego, 2002; Iavarone, Marone, & Sabatano, 2015; Silva, 2006, 2012). In addition to this, my work refers to the studies of Engendering Migration (Pessar & Mahler, 2003) on a theoretical level. It spans the dimension of parenting with gender, because being a migrant woman or a migrant man and being mother or father (Giovannini, 2007) are divergent realities, from which different experiences and representations arise. The study also follows research that analyses the topic of Arab women from a culturally specific perspective (Ahmed, 1992; Pepicelli, 2010).

**Migrant parenthood**

Families today are made up very differently amongst themselves (Silva, 2012), in particular the migrant ones. At the same time, they often turn out to be particularly isolated, with a poor social network and a certain “invisibility” concerning care and assistance services (Favaro, 2002). Each migrant family is a nucleus, which elaborates its migration story in a different way, varying depending on personal vicissitudes, groups of origin and historical-political events. Starting from the re-elaboration of all this material and the degree of welcome upon arrival in the host country, the parental integration dimension is played out, seen as a determining factor regarding protection and children’s well-being (Iavarone et al., 2015).

Parenting is considered an «interpretative and operative category of the parental care relationship» (Iavarone et al., 2015), within which the individual’s past as a child, social norms and educational beliefs of the culture of origin and an imaginative tension towards new forms of parenting different from those already known come into play. For the migrant parent, this tension comes about amidst
greater drama, feeling torn between the desire of maintaining continuity with the educational models coming from their own culture, the perception of distance from that world, and the fear of betraying it by approaching parental styles from the host country. The family is the context within which the «belonging-identity dynamic» begins (Iavarone et al., 2015, 61), initially as a series of constraints but also coming with possibilities of affirming themselves. Therefore, migrant parents have the opportunity to offer their children cultural references and values that can allow them to transit between different cultures (Silva, 2006). And this realm of possibilities must be protected and stimulated by parenting support programs.

**Thesis definition**

The study intends to explore the topic of parenting in Arab women in connection with the experience of migration, through the collection of life-stories of Muslim mothers who belong to the most populated Arab groups in Milan. The aim is to explore their experiences as mothers in Italy and their representations about: parenting, childhood, and education.

My leading research questions are:

- What are the risk factors but also the resources and skills connected with migrant motherhood, in particular for a woman of Arab origin?
- What orientating criteria emerge for the development of initiatives to support parenting in migration?

Maternity is an extremely delicate moment in the life of each woman, but especially in that of a migrant woman (Moro, 2002). Migration is a traumatic event; motherhood while living the trauma of migration becomes a moment of distinct vulnerability, with the "cultural transparency" compounding the psychic transparency. Ethnopsychanalyst Moro’s theories help us understand the risk factors associated with migrant motherhood, but it is also important to emphasise the protection factors and the resilience and educational skills that motherhood can bring to Arab migrant women. The experience of motherhood is, for Arab women, a decisive event that marks social recognition and the legitimate transition to adulthood. In migration, this event maintains its importance: it adds meaning to a migration project that has often been cultivated precisely from the idea of creating a family or of securing it a future. At the same time, it provokes disorientation (Giacalone, 2013). Her emotional world is complex: she feels lonely, far from her family of origin, disorientated, guilty, but also a sense of satisfaction for the ongoing project, and hope for her children’s futures. Along these lines, motherhood can be interpreted as an experience that gives meaning to both the journey and daily efforts.

Representations related to motherhood in Arab women have historically been influenced by cultural systems, such as colonialism, political Islam, and Arab
nationalism. Colonialist projects were justified by the mission of liberating Arab women. This mission pushed to identify and align Arab motherhood with the European equivalent. With the emergence of nationalist movements, criticism of colonial domination grew: it was deemed necessary to resist assimilation; native customs were to be rekindled. There were two options: those on one hand who preferred to avoid any change in women’s conditions, and on the other those who believed in a project of general regeneration of Arab societies and hence changes in women’s conditions – but in ways seen as culturally acceptable and not responding to explicit feminist demands.

Even today, Arab women continue to negotiate between modernity and tradition, seeking their own cultural identity, both as women and as mothers. Being a mother doesn’t necessarily conflict with studies and work, like being a Muslim does not necessarily mean being relegated to stay at home. Indeed, education and a good profession can amply contribute to the development of the educational skills of a good Muslim mother (Davies & Papadopoulos, 2006). For migrant women, this task becomes even more delicate, because the confrontation between the culture of origin and the culture of the destination country can complicate, sometimes dramatically, this passage: it is extremely demanding to reconcile tradition and modernity; identify as a woman and as a mother without the fear of betraying one’s own culture of origin, by adhering to a new one (Cattaneo & dal Verme, 2005, 93). So, the hypothesis is that maintaining links with the culture of origin and simultaneously incorporating elements from the new one; creatively rethinking the representation connected with motherhood within the original culture following the confrontation with the new one could be the preconditions in order to make this experience become a moment of reconciliation with one’s own ghosts deriving from the country of origin, and also the beginning of a process of negotiation between educational models and multiple identities, which can be positive for the well-being of both mother and child.

**Methods and methodology**

The methodological paradigm of this study is that of the qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In particular, an ethnographic approach (Gobbo, 2007, 2011, Ogbu, 1981) is adopted. Biographical interviews (Schütze, 2007; Schütze & Schröder-Wildhagen, 2012) are used too as instruments to collect life stories and suggestions coming from Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Tarozzi, 2008) are taken into account in the analysis of the collected material.
The usefulness of this approach

An increasingly complex world presents itself in front of the contemporary human being and researcher’s life experiences and the cognitive journey. Ethnography is useful in understanding the complexity of the contemporary world and in reacting to the current challenges which face pedagogy, since it is a particularly effective perspective from where to try to understand the processes of social transformation in place and what they entail in terms of «educational meanings and projects» (Gobbo, 2007, 5). The contradictions and nuances that characterize contemporary social reality and, in particular, the educational one could pose dilemmas to the researcher from other research perspectives which are difficult to solve. From the point of view of the ethnographer, they constitute the specific material itself of their cognitive effort, which is directed towards an analysis that is able to «grasp the nuances, the richness and the multiplicity of reality» (Galloni, 2007, 23).

Another important feature of the ethnographic approach used in educational research concerns the dimension of the encounter with otherness. The anthropologist is guided by the purpose of understanding the other striving, however, not to bring them back to their own conceptual categories. In doing so, a delicate work comes into play of managing the relationship with their informants, constructed by negotiating roles, recognitions and meanings. It is a relationship which is nurtured from the moment of access to the field, gradually becoming more intimate, based on a relational attitude characterized by dialogue, negotiation, cultural decentralization and a “mixed logic” (Fabietti, Matera, & Malighetti, 2012).

Research as a form of education

The methodological choices made reflect both the indications developed in the educational field in relation to approaches that give voice to the insiders, in particular to migrants (De Souza, 2004), and the indications of method developed in the tradition of dialogic anthropology (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). This is a way of doing research with both political and formative effects. Political because it offers a gateway in order to give a voice to women who usually have “little voice” in the institutional contexts of the host countries. Formative: the researcher’s questions not only lead the subjects to reflect on themselves (Galloni, 2007), but they stimulate the agency of the protagonists by encouraging them to reconnect with their own representational world and to activate their resources and skills. Reflecting on their own experiences, narrating their life stories, daily efforts, and aspirations can help the women to reconnect with the symbolic world from their country of origin, weakened by migration, to re-evaluate their capabilities while re-discovering educational and resilience skills useful for the wellbeing and integration of both mothers and children.
The research

After an initial exploratory phase, I decided to focus on two main contact channels: two associations that work with migrant mothers in high density migrant populations areas and personal contacts. These two associations, Mamme a Scuola (www.mammeascuola.it) and La Scuola delle Mamme (www.cespi-ong.org), offer Italian courses for immigrant mothers and, at the same time, set up children’s play areas for children 0-3. Through the Italian courses they attract many women who want to learn the language, but their objectives are far more ample: creating a welcoming environment that can support the parenting experience and integration of mothers in the host country. Through personal contacts, I attempted to reach women outside associative networks, living in other areas of Milan and beyond. I met, spent time, shared moments, ideas, and experiences with women through the ethnographic method. I also interviewed 16 of them basing myself on a type of interview which concentrates first on the biographical side and then assumes a semi-structured style.

Preliminary results

Self-narration. Although I was cultivating an ethnographic relationship with many of the women I interviewed, I often encountered teething problems when asking them to tell their own story; to open themselves up during the interview. In particular, the initial biographical part of the interview caused several women to enter into a disorientated state, leaving them asking for more specific questions or alternatively exhausting their life story in just two words. For example, I got to know Arianna (all names are pseudonyms) (Morocco) through Mamme a Scuola and after having built up our relationship for over a year. I’d dearly hoped that Arianna would have naturally opened up during the interview. Instead, we started the part of biographical interview that ended abruptly:

--A -- I am a Moroccan woman, I am 35 years old, I have been married for 7 years. I have two children: the first is 4 years old, the young girl is one year and nine months old. I live in Milan with my husband and I go to school at Mamme a Scuola to learn Italian. I like the experience of living in Italy because it is a good experience, people are good with me, with the teachers in my son’s preschool there are no problems. (13.04.18)

Her words reminded me of the self-presentation method memorized during the Italian course, without a real willingness to get involved in a deep self-narration.

But, later, as the interview progressed, in particular with the semi-structured part, the questions provided an opportunity for the women to reflect on themselves and their own experiences, allowing them to gradually reach a level of profoundness unexpected given the initial responses. Many women I interviewed came to Italy for family reunification reasons, experiencing migration
as something forced upon them rather than chosen, desired, or driven by strong reasons. They clearly hadn't had many opportunities to elaborate their own experience, and my questions prompted them to reflect and find words not only to describe their story, but also elaborate it.

When I start the interview with Sabrina (Morocco), it seems that she is someone without any noticeable troubles. But after a while she burst into tears: it seemed like a barrier had been broken, allowing her to face the existential nodes that sit behind her suffering.

--AM-- Breathe... drink some water (...) Do you feel like going on?

--S—Yes, yes, it’ll do me good so I can let off steam! (19.04.18)

Here that formative dimension of my research is explicit. Not just self-narration, it is made stronger thanks to the dialogue with a person who is Italian. This is a real exercise of “intercultural conversation” (Gobbo, 2007b), within which the researcher exercises an attitude based on active listening and cultural decentralization, but which also stimulates confrontation and exchange: presuppositions for an effective integration into the society in which she is landing into.

Below is an example of a conversation between myself and R. (Egypt). She is extremely worried about being able to build a life in her new country and to learn Italian. In this excerpt, she fires off a number of questions to understand how I lived in Egypt and learnt the Arabic language during a previous fieldwork in Egypt:

--R-- But how did you learn Arabic so well? (...) How long have you been in Egypt? (...) Ah, did you study Arabic at the university? (...) And why did you study Arabic? (...) And who was with you at the university? (...) And were the others Egyptian? (...) And when you went to Egypt were you alone?” (04.05.17)

It is similar to a process of mirroring between her and me: my experience in Egypt reminds her of hers in Italy, being alone, difficulties with a new language. But it also gives her the hope of being able to make it: a language can be learned, new relationships can be built, but you can also meet people who might understand you because they have lived an experience similar to yours. Through our encounter, R. reflects on herself and her own migration experience, discovering resources that could help her face the difficult path of integration in the host country.

Relationship with children. For Arab women, motherhood is a fundamental part of life. Being alone and dealing with the parental experience in the arrival country is difficult, generates insecurity, a sense of loneliness and fear, but at the same time children often become not only the scope of the trip, but also of life:
devoting yourself to them could push you towards facing the difficulties of daily life.

Silvia (Egypt), for example, married a man who had already emigrated to Italy and for the first few years she remained in Egypt with her children, while her husband was living in Italy. Then she decided to join her husband because she wanted her children to grow up close to their father. Silvia studied social services at university so was clear in her mind an educational project for her children (which in other cases remains more implicit): children must grow with the presence of both parents. This strong educational motivation drives and supports Silvia in her decision to migrate:

--S-- I got bored, I saw that the children were growing up without their father, they were missing him. I talked to him, I convinced him. “The children need you. You're tired and we've got tired too. They really need a father figure at home.” (24.04.18)
The same thing happened again, during everyday difficulties, like the one they faced when they lost their home:

--AM-- Have you always been living there or did you change home?

--S-- No, before we were living near the school, we had a regular lease, but when the contract ended, the owner told us that she would not renew the contract because she had sold the house. So from one day to the other we found ourselves without a home. We turned to the council, which helped us. They hosted us for few days while my husband was looking for a new flat. (...) We were initially in a hotel and then in a type of temporary house.

--AM-- All together in any case?

--S-- Yes, all together. For me and my children it was free, while my husband had to pay. We are here to live together, then they wanted to separate us: it’s not good. That's why he stayed with us. (24.04.18)

Relation with educational and school institutions. The entry of children into Italian educational and school services marks the first contact with the host country for many Arab mothers and a first occasion for socializing.

In recent research, it emerged that for many foreign parents, and especially for mothers, a child’s admission to school and pre-school is an opportunity for empowerment, and a way out from the social and cultural isolation that often characterizes the first years of any migration experience. Taking care of children, interacting in the public space that educational institutions offer, and interacting with other parents and teachers are important occasions for immigrant mothers to build a new social network (Maher, 2012).
The teacher-parent relationship, when meeting with families of foreign origin, is more problematic because it fits into the wider issues of the confrontation between cultural groups, individuals in continuous movement and of different cultural and educational models.

At the same time, however, meetings between teachers and parents can be transformed into a reciprocal exchange of information and intercultural enrichment.

For many of my interviewees, housewives with a limited number of relationships outside the domestic context, entry into the educational world marked an important juncture in their lives in Italy: legitimated in going out of their homes and interacting with teachers and others parents thanks to their role as mothers, they start to penetrate the external context - and build their first social relationships.

Barbara (Morocco), for example, has been at home for three years and only when her children started to go to preschool did she too go out and get to know other people:

--B—when my children were born I started to go out alone a bit... Actually not when they were born, when at that point I had been [in Italy] for three years, but when they were here at preschool. It was in that moment that I started to go out alone, to go to Italian language school, to do everything... well, many things, not everything. (14.05.18)

The experiences with educational services reported to me are varied, from the most negative to the - many - positive ones, but invariably linked to the specific relationships and initiatives of the teacher rather than from an intentional, institutional design which aims to achieve an intercultural education.

Although foreign children and families are a constituent part of the population of contemporary educational institutions, it is still difficult to see it as «a professional event of today and tomorrow, which requires lasting and far-sighted -no longer avoidable- responses» (Favaro, 2013, 38), on the basis of which educational institutions should intentionally rethink themselves and their educational projects, objectives and strategies.

Social network. Many of my interlocutors spoke to me of the strong sense of loneliness felt, particularly in the immediate period following their arrival in Italy: the lack of extended family, the absence of husbands engaged with work, no external social relationships.

For some of them, loneliness and having to deal themselves with everyday difficulties, made them clam up towards others over time: although they interweave various relationships with both compatriots and Italians, they state
that they do not trust anyone when they have a problem. They rely solely on their own strength.

Silvia, for example, does not talk to anyone when there is a problem, she only counts on her husband:

--AM-- When you have a problem, something you would like to talk about, do you have people you trust, with whom you can talk?

--S-- I have nobody to refer to or talk to. I only have my husband and he only has me.

--AM-- And people you consider friends?

--S-- Yes, there are, but I can’t say that they are close friends. (24.04.18).

Against isolation, closure, other women report a different experience, linked to “resilience tutors” that helped them overcome initial difficulties and start a process of knowledge and integration in the Italian context and social reality through the mediation protected by trusted Italian people. These sometimes neighbors, often old people, other times teachers/educators or representatives of associations with whom they came into contact.

Ilaria has built a close relationship with a neighbor:

--A-- Are there Italian neighbors?

-- I-- Yes, there is a lady, her name is Lucia, she lives near my house, a very sweet person. (...) She was the first person to enter my house and she was continuing to speak to me in Italian. At first I did not understand but she continued until I started to understand her.

[Later, Ilenia, Ilaria’s 2-year-old daughter, intervenes during the interview]

--Il-- Lucia!

--I-- What do you want?

--Il-- Lucia!

--I-- Lucia? Now let’s go to Lucia! (turning to me) She asked to go to Lucia, my neighbor. She really likes Lucia, even Laura [the other daughter]. “Mom, I want to go to Lucia!” “Now Lucia is sleeping” “No, I want to go!”

--AM-- And do they go to her home?

--I-- Yes, yes. (11.04.18)
Anna has kept in touch with the nursery teacher of her 10-year-old son. She considers her as a point of reference on issues related to education and childcare:

--AM-- And in kindergarten how did he [her son] feel?

--A-- In kindergarten, in fact ... The teachers told me that he would be very, very good. He was very active even in kindergarten, the teacher said that he was running all the time alongside cars. “He drives me crazy!”. They told me that he is very smart, that he speaks Italian better than the whole class, he pronounces well, he learns very fast. They told me he would be very good at school, very smart. Then the kindergarten teacher sometimes sends me a message and asks me about him.

--AM-- Ah, you remained in good relationship?

--A-- Yes, a teacher who was very good and a friend. She retired last year. Sometimes she sends me a message to ask me about him. (...) This teacher was very smart, she knew how to treat every child according to their personality: a shy child, an active child...

(...) She sent me a message to ask how I was, how the children were, I told her there was a problem and I went to her. Because she was a teacher, then she worked in the nursery office. I went to talk to her in person. (...) She gave me advice before anyone else. (2.05.18).

**Conclusions**

These are first reflections taken from the material collected during a still ongoing empirical research. They highlight how different aspects related to parenting can constitute for migrant women of Arab origin possible causes of vulnerability. But these may also later turn into protective factors. So, becoming mothers during migration can be a source of insecurity, fear, and bring about a sense of loneliness. But it can also prove a stimulus to face the journey and the adversity that lies in wait. In the same way, isolation can lead to one shutting down, but by encountering resilience tutors can help them to open up to others and face a new life context in front of them. Finally, admission into educational institutions can lead to contacts that help give rise to a dialogue and intercultural exchange, provided that these services are correctly geared towards a real intercultural education.

These first results show, therefore, how parenting in migrant women of Arab origin, if adequately supported, can contribute to the development of educational
and resilience skills able to support the integration process and, consequently, the well-being of the whole family. The indications from here for teachers and operators who are in contact with Arab mothers are based on the same methods that the research was carried out with:

- recognition of the resources available to mothers and the legitimacy of different parenting methods;
- recognition of cultural and educational diversity but also promotion of negotiations and hybridizations;
- enhancement of narration, dialogue and intercultural meetings as qualities of a relational posture but also as practices with formative implications.

In conclusion, it is hypothesized that a parental support initiative will be developed together with educators and/or teachers, specifically targeting mothers of Arab origin. This would serve as a laboratory for experimentation of the pedagogical indications that emerged during the research.

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