Juliana E. Raffaghelli

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

abstract

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

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

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

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

1. Introduction

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

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

He called this "a *folk pedagogy*", as the tendency of every teacher (and adult) to conceive the other's mind in a certain perspective: they are able of generating a "theory of mind". Therefore, Bruner, introduced four schematic conceptions about learning and teaching and its implications about the practice of teaching, namely[1]: a) the conception of learning as imitation, that takes to the pedagogy of transmission; b) the conception of learning from didactic exposure, that takes to a pedagogy of demonstration; c) the conception of learning as the development of "intersubjective interchange", that takes to the pedagogy of participation and reflection; d) the conception of learning as management of "objective" knowledge, that takes to a pedagogy of "metalearning" in the sense of critical understandings of knowledge – distinguishing between personal knowledge, on the one side, and "what is taken to be known" by a culture or other, in Bruner's words –.

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

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

1 This is schematic and synthetized from the author explanations for the sake of simplicity in the context of justifying concepts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ideal teacher, drawing on SSIS-VENETO Syllabus of teacher professional profile (Margiotta et al. 2003; 2006).[3]

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

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

3. Exploring Teachers' beliefs and values regarding intercultural dialogue

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

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

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

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

On the contrary, the lack of capacity of the teacher in understanding the own values and beliefs inside the own subject taught and the methods chosen to conduct learning processes may take the student to reshape the own beliefs, being

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

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

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

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

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

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

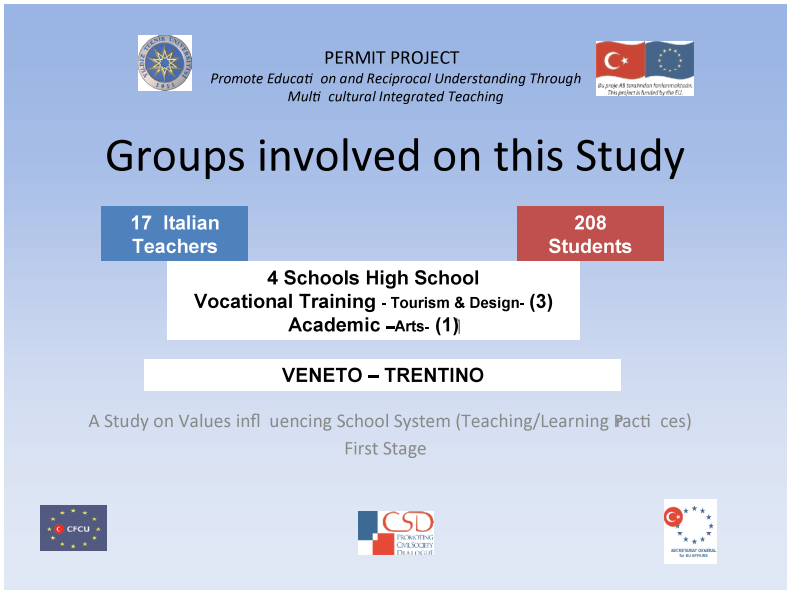
3.1. *Introducing the Study*

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

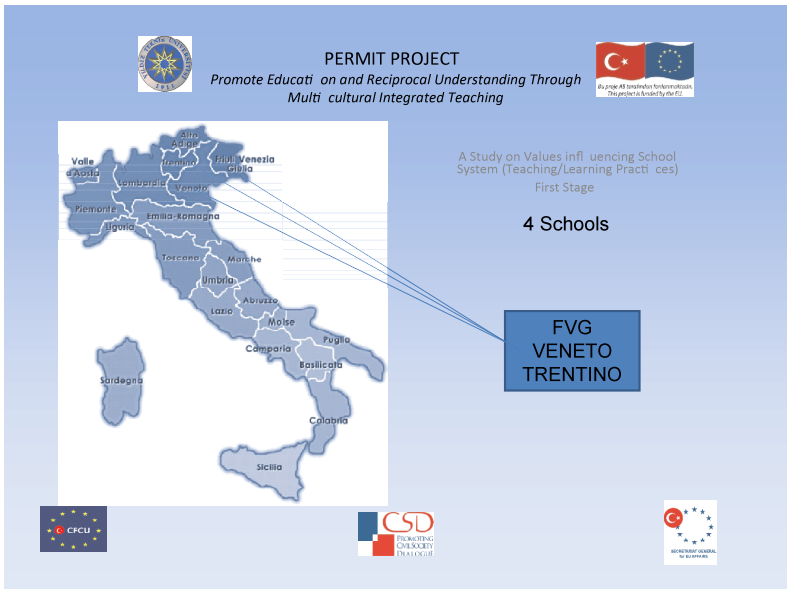
Before administration, teachers' trainers had a meeting with Italian research group in order to be trained to the administration and areas explored by questionnaire. Following this phase, a letter was sent to Heads of schools informing and asking approval for the administration with at least 4 classes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

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

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



Groups involved on the Study



The studied groups within the Italian context

3.2. *Teachers' Profiles*

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

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

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

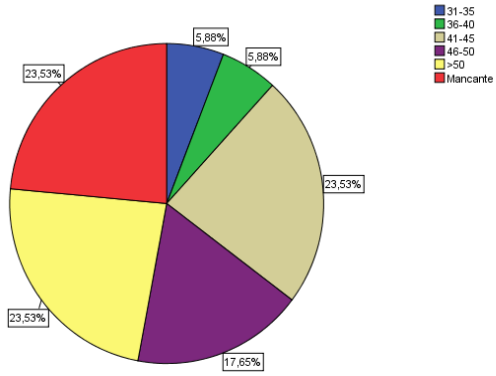
Another important issue is the fact that the bigger part of teachers are originals from Veneto Region (Padua, Venice, Verona, Pieve di Soligo, with a cumulative percentage of 47.1%; the following group is, in any case, is original from the north part of Italy (Trento and Genova, 17,7). The rest, come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

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

Age

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

Age



Gender

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

Place_of_Birth

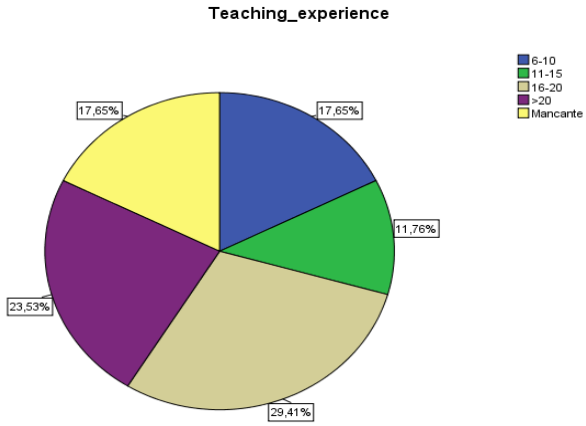
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid		3	17,6	17,6	17,6
	Bari	2	11,8	11,8	29,4
	Genova	1	5,9	5,9	35,3
	Padova	4	23,5	23,5	58,8
	Pieve di soligo	2	11,8	11,8	70,6
	Trento	2	11,8	11,8	82,4
	Venice	1	5,9	5,9	88,2
	Verona	1	5,9	5,9	94,1
	Vienna	1	5,9	5,9	100,0
	Totale	17	100,0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

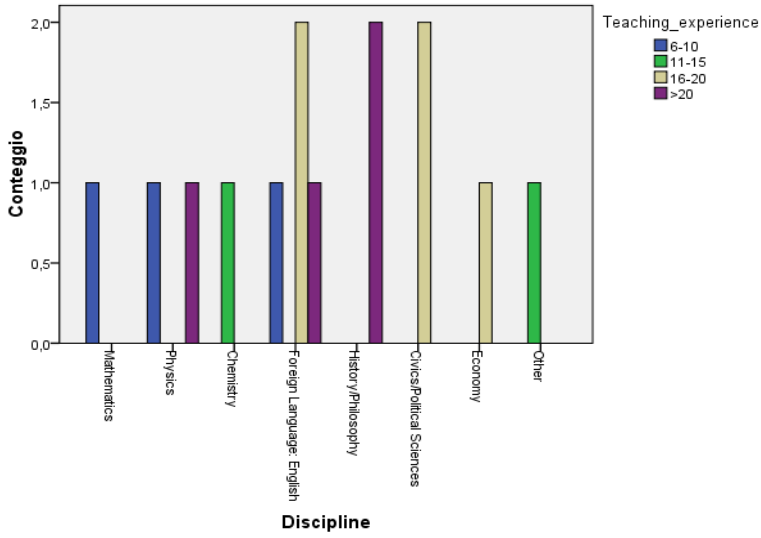
Subject Taught

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

Teaching_experience

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





3.3. *The teachers' linguistic competence*

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

So through the study of languages, it is introduced a first dimension of teachers' cultural identity, will be later deepened in the section "*Contacts with other Cultures*" and "V*alues, Opinions and Attitudes*". This analysis, in time, should be helpful to analyse the teachers' capacity –and openness- to reflect on their own cultural identity influencing teaching practices

Mother_Tongue

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

Instruction_Language

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

Foreign_Language

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

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

3.4. *Teaching Methods*

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

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

Within Permit experimentation, we have considered that more participative – horizontal discourse – could address the introduction of intercultural reflection, leading to the setting of learning situations were "complex intercultural identities" can be developed. As stated before, it's not only about introducing "intercultural topics" within an enlarged curriculum, but mainly about teaching practices that generate an atmosphere of participation, inclusion, equity, among teachers and students (Minello & Raffaghelli, this book). The main assumption here, that we recall, is that traditional methods like lecture and use of textbooks is closer to an ethnocentric approach, where prevails the teacher discourse, that in time brings to

the classroom an "official", centralized discourse. Whereas methods that allow participation (workgroup, discussions) students' activity (laboratories, fieldwork, project work), and interaction with enlarged contexts of learning (use of technologies) will allow an ethnorelative focus of topics treated in class, helping students –and also teachers- to reflect with intercultural sensitivity.

Teaching Methods implemented in class. The following questionnaire's area explored the teaching methods aiming to depict the current practices in class. Lecture should be considered a traditional method were teachers exposes a topic, having complete control of discourse and over the group dynamic. It could be argued that teachers can afford a topic in a participatory way, making students to feel involved into a discourse. Other methods, can be regarded as more interactive, generating the possibility of expression of diversity. It can be argued, on the contrary, that those methods can be superficial and ideologically driven towards the direction the teacher wants to impose. The best formula is, doubtless, the use of a variety of teaching methods that guides students from knowledge to understanding, and from understanding to putting to practice, and transferring to real life, seeing the significance of a determinate issue.

As we can see, the teachers in this group use a variety of methods, but lecture prevails (64,7% of teachers use rather often and often this method). The other methods are used mainly "sometimes" (35,3% of cases for group work, project work, lab activities, pair works); groupwork shows more dispersion, with a consistent part of teachers that use it "rarely" (23,5%); but another group uses it "rather often" (23,5%). Almost the same situation applies for project work. We can see that, with regard to lab activities, the situation seems to be defined for a scarce opportunity of using laboratories, since the teachers indicate that condition as "rarely" (29,4%) and sometimes (35,3%); this situation can be given because of the cost and bureaucratic problems linked to taking the class outside of the classroom/school.

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

What teaching method/s do you use when you teach?

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

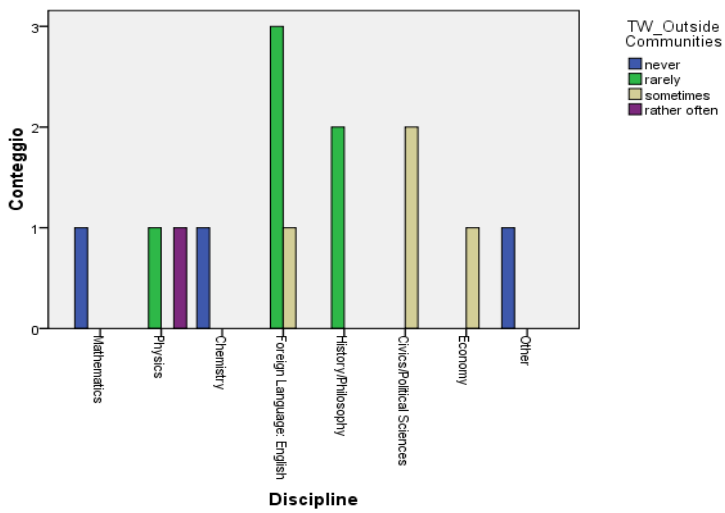
Teachers' working methods. *Communities of teaching practice*, based upon the construct *"communities of practice"* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), have been discovered ase sites for teacher learning; in that sense, a community can become a mediator of teachers' responses to their professional intervention, seen in terms of quality, efficacy, innovation, satisfaction (Midoro, 2005). In this sense, particular attention have been paid in the last years to the importance of interdiscipli-

nary interaction in order to promote "cross-borders" teaching, opening the "boxes" of disciplines, as requested by E. Morin for a better education. Characteristics of the communities of practice, including their relative strength and openness (to learning), influence the degree to which teachers work out negotiated and thoughtful responses to new schooling system demands (Margiotta, 2007, op.cit). In an intercultural vision, group-working means negotiation of senses of practices and enlargement of the "discipline-centered" approach. Being flexible, in the end, is an important dimension of an intercultural reflection.

In this section, the questionnaire attempted to raise this issue, asking about contacts with other teachers in order to solve working problems. The issue about legitimating peripheral participation , which is the main aspect of Lave & Wenger's model, is clearly incompletely raised through only one question. This last is only sensitive to the openness of participant teachers to keep in contact with colleagues.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

How often do you include ICT (information and computer technology) in your lessons.

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

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

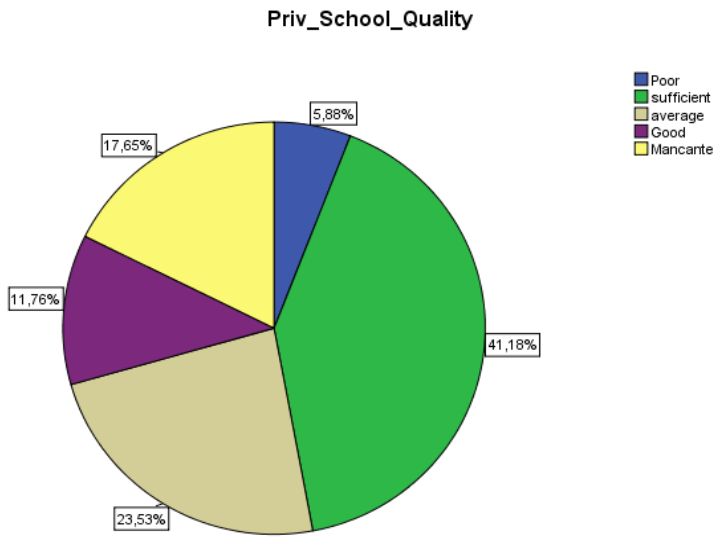
The problem of public/private schools is, in any case, complex, since depending from the model of development adopted, public system is perceived as a hub of excellences, or as a container of poor people for access at a basic education that can be in time seen as system of "indoctrination" .

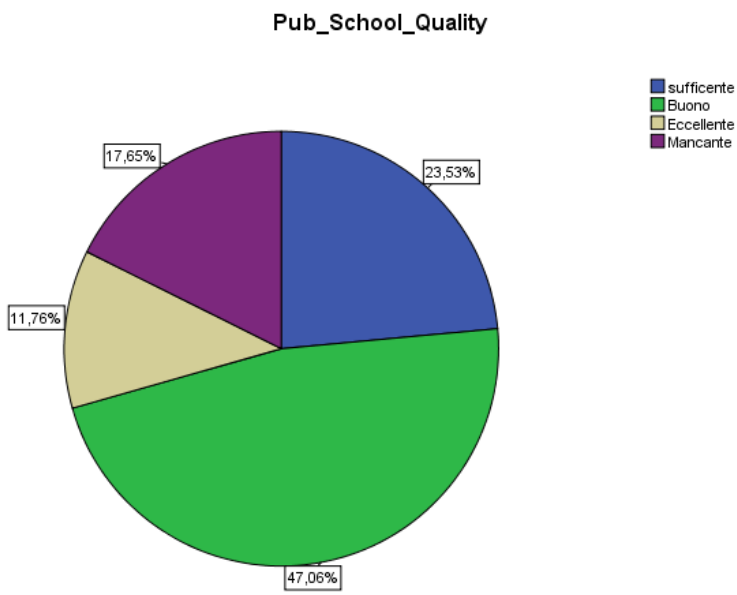
Generally, Italian teachers, coming from public schools declared that public school is a good environment to work. In fact, this representation is consistent with the welfare state in Italy, that have promoted public school in a well developed, central bureaucratic system, even if in the latest years we can see a declining situation, with the introduction of autonomy's law.[4]

4 We should consider here that this research was implemented during 2009, prior to the commotion of the "Gelmini's Reform" which made schools literally blow under the pressure of downsizing (in budgetary and personnel terms) with the following pressure to remaining teachers.

The counterpart of this situation is that Italian system could be considered elitist and centralized, presenting problems for social inclusion, participation of local population on the institutional identity, with consequences of drop-out of students of low social status; and the isolation of potential dialogue with institutions towards a strategy of local development (integration with market labour). As a corollary, intercultural perspective of teaching and learning is still fragmentary, introduced with some difficult, since curriculum delivered is too rigidly imposed to local populations.

Nevertheless creativity and willingness of teachers are pushing against the system with best-practices that are creating the ground for a systematic approach.





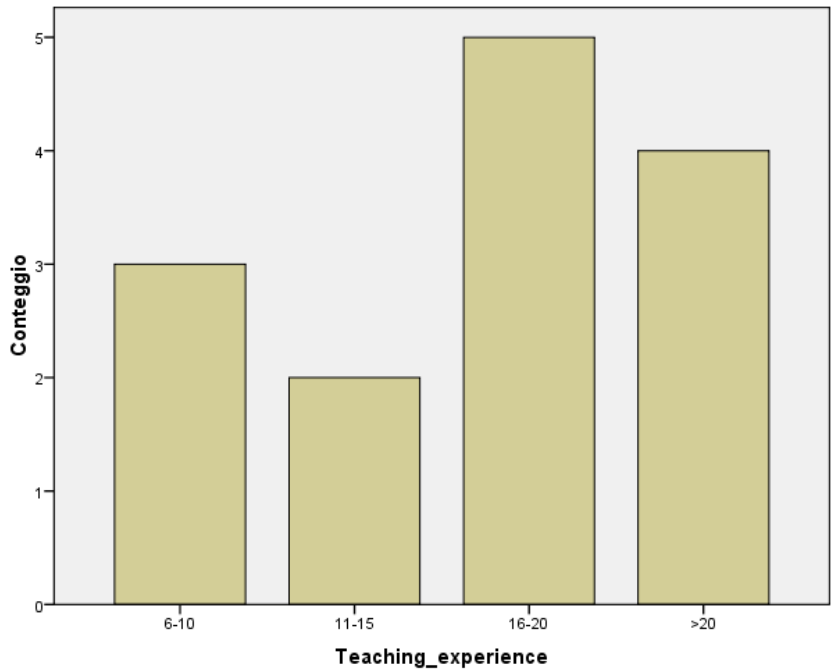
3.5. *Contact with other Cultures*

This section of the questionnaire explores the experiences of teachers' contact with other cultural realities and people, as a) through real contact in situation of tourism, b) contact on the online environments ———-this last, in order to compare with the experience of their own students, that are keen on the use of technologies and well entered on the social Web[5]

Travel Abroad per Years and Teaching Experience

Travel_Abroad

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid %	Cumulative %
Validi	yes	14	82,4	100,0	100,0
Mancanti	Mancante di sistema	3	17,6		
	Totale	17	100,0		



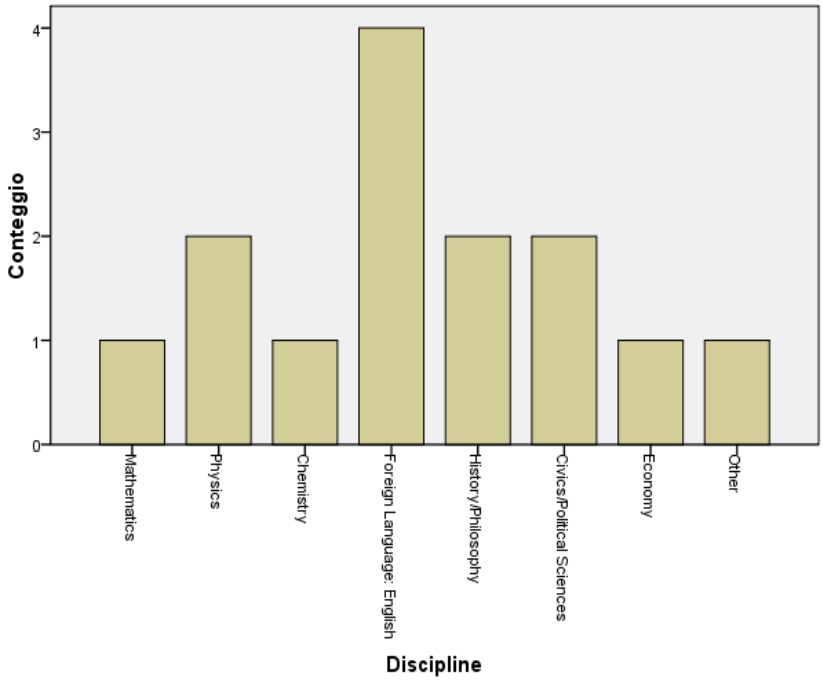
Teachers have had, in every cases, experiences of contact with other cultures abroad. We can see that teachers are actively engaged both in tourism, exchanges experiences with their students, and other kind of travelling abroad.

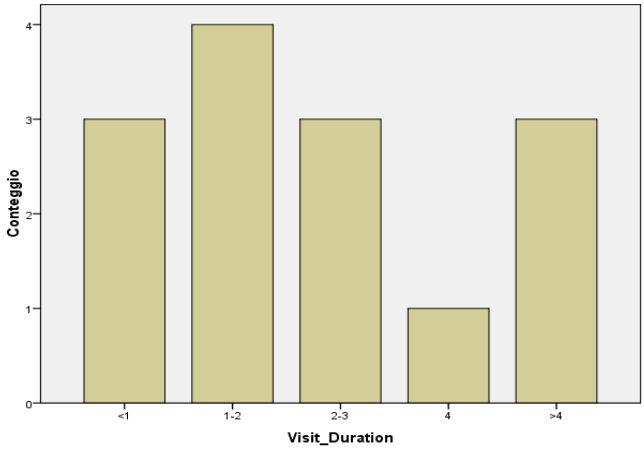
When we take a look to the disciplines, we can see that the "traveller teachers" are mainly those coming from the field of languages. This is consistent with the development of their own education as languages teachers, but it's also a sign of

5 See Raffaghelli, chapter 10, this book.

openness given by the own research/training method of the own subject taught, that could in time lead to a more intercultural conception of teaching.

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





Travel Abroad Motivations

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

Visited Countries

Visited_Country (First Choice)

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

Visited_Country (Second Choice)

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

Visited_Country (Third Choice)

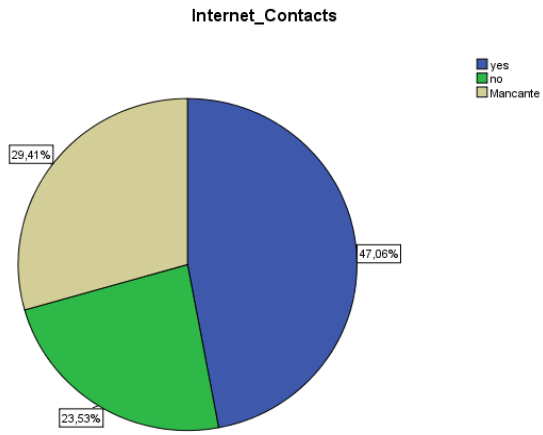
		Frequenza	Percentuale	Percentuale valida	Percentuale cumulata
Validi		5	29,4	29,4	29,4
	Cuba, Argentina	1	5,9	5,9	35,3
	France	1	5,9	5,9	41,2
	Greece, Romania, Slovak, Swizzerland,	1	5,9	5,9	47,1
	Guatemala	1	5,9	5,9	52,9
	Iceland, The Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Austria,	1	5,9	5,9	58,8
	Kenya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

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

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

Online "Intercultural Contacts"

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



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

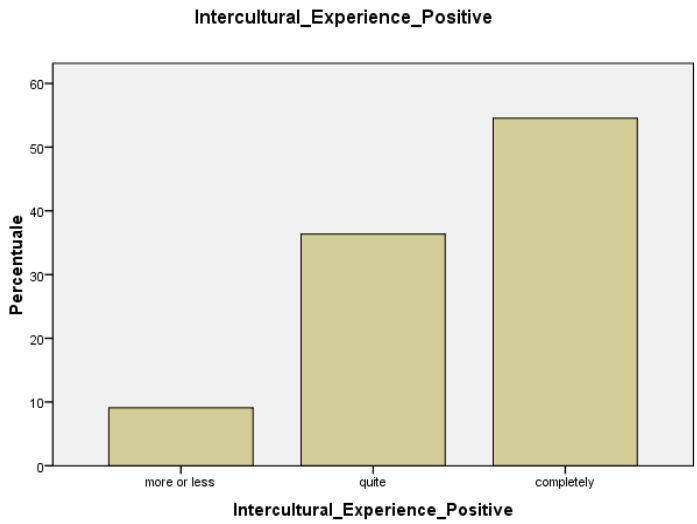
> *"I have sometimes e contacts with the english teacher of a dutch school. I met her during a students exchange"*
> *"With my cousin in Russia, it is a recent way of communicate"*
> *"I was mixing with teacher for 2 weeks."*
> *"regarding history of mathematics for a couple of years"*
> *"SEVERAL NATIONALITIES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

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

Type of intercultural contacts

> *"Visiting different countries I could meet locals and foreign tourists as well. My partner works for a multinational company and I have many occasions to interact with persons of other cultures" "Some of my students come from China, Pakistan, ecc"*
> *"Friendship, studies, work, neighborhood, family"*
> *"Parents"*
> *"I have had contacts for Comenius 2"*
> *"Yes,I have but only with turistic guides"*
> *"The most other culture I met was in Turkey. I was there for a comenius project so I was half tourist half guest"*
> *"SEVERAL CONTACTS FOR FRIENDSHIP AND WORK"*
> *"AS A FRIENDS AND RELATIVES"*
> *"Friends"*

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

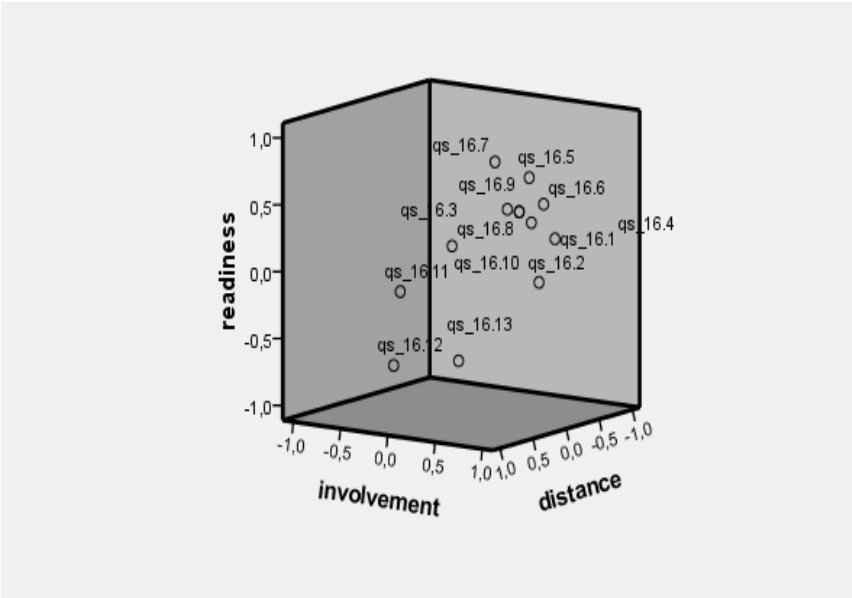
Another interesting information is the dispersion of opinion with regard to the role played by religions. Yet the balance goes to a negative opinion with regard to the statement "Religions distance peoples". And an important third part of teachers strongly disagreeng with the assumption that would preclude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

The above mentioned results seems to show that there's a very positive position (at least declared) with regard to exploring and experiencing intercultural dialogue. It is necessary to say that here emerges some "utopy" about the possibilities of dialogue, and also an alignment with official discourses that promote "diversity". The practice, in everyday life, could be completely different, and the section "teaching methods" is demonstrating that there is still a long way to go before achieving a good intercultural awareness, further transferred to the real world.

Matrix of Components Rotated

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

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



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

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

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

During my classes intercultural issues are tackled…

> *"lot of my students come form foreign countries with different religion and different culture*
> *when I find it interesting for my topic"*
> *"it is part of my educator's duty"*

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

Topics already tackled

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

This variety of statements highlight an undefined representation of "intercultural teaching" among teachers involved. In fact, it seems that this representation is evolving through daily pedagogical practices. But the diversity of practices is another factor resulting from the several disciplines point of view. Therefore, one conclusion could be that an intercultural approach must be created taking into account the discipline or subject.

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

> *"I think that it could be very interesting to include a module about religions. By my experience I think that sometimes what we see so different has the same background."*
> *"all of them, I think. It's a question of time for it."*
> *"Conoscenza dell'altro Conoscenza delle diverse religioni"*
> *"The different right; European right; European citizens."*
> *"Lawfulness, education of citizens."*
> *"Comparative religion, comparative history"*
> *"Viewpoints of other cultures on religion, life and habits, duties and rights anthropology art, heritage, current topics from the news"*

From answers emerge that it exists, in any case, a vision that what is to be done; hence, it is recognized the problem, and the several modalities to solve it.

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

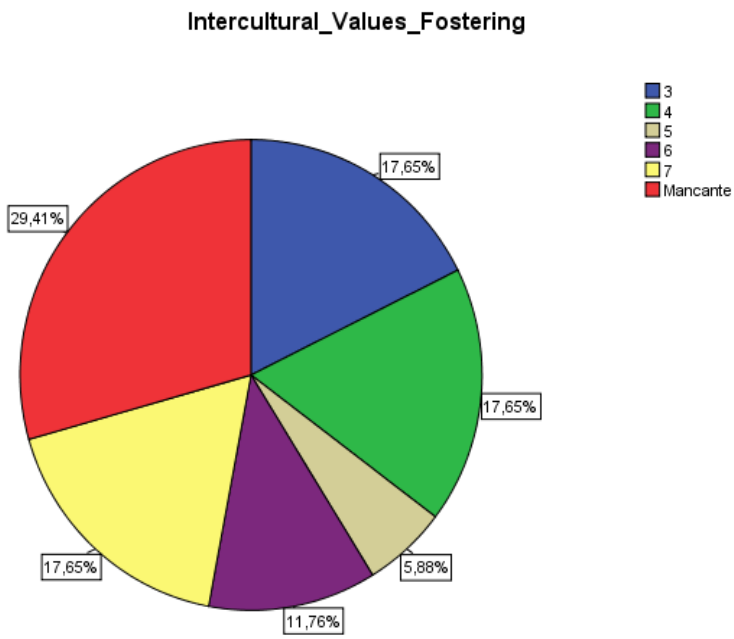
Readiness to tackling topics related to intercultural education in your class or would you rather take part in further training

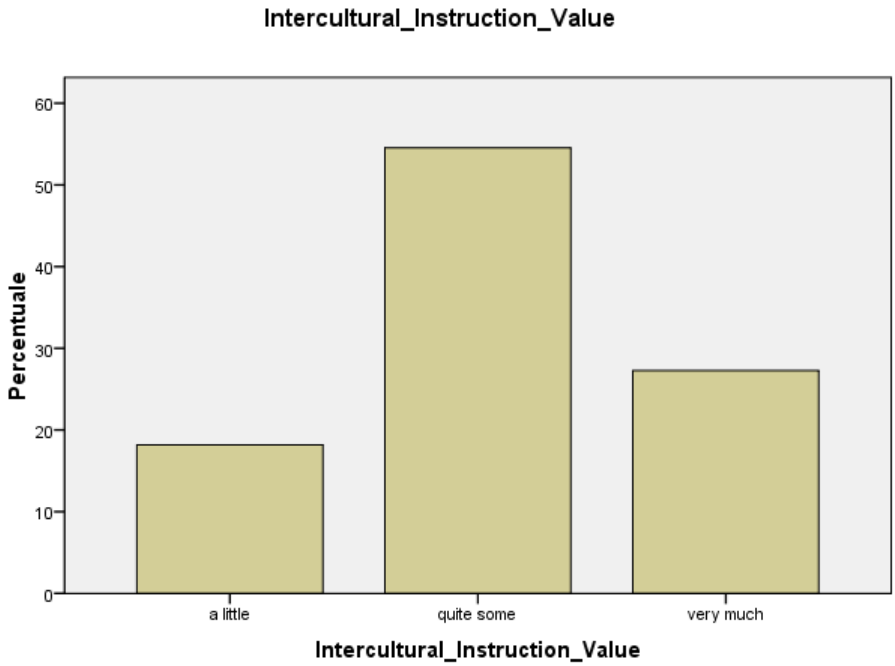
"I'm not interested in" *"I consider myself ready, but I would take part in training, if I had the possiblity, because there is surely much to learn"* *"I'd rather take part in further training in order to deal with these issues"* *"Mi piacerebbe seguire un corso di formazione: secondo me non ho una preparazione adeguata"* *"I'm not ready, I need take part in training"* *"not really ready, just interested"* *"Further training is always a benefit"* *"Yes"*

From brief answers in this area, it comes out that teachers assign strong importance to the issue of teachers' education on intercultural dialogue and teaching methods. Nevertheless, teachers seems to show lack of clearness about what kind of training could satisfy this education need. This could be indicating further the importance given to interculturalism phenomena in class, as a "runaway" object, to be understood.

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

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





Values to be transmitted to the young generations

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

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

14. **Tolerance** (that can refer to an ethnocentric advanced state, passing to an ethnorelative state –from minimization to acceptation)

15. **Knowledge/Curiosity** (That can be refered to a middle etnorelative state –adaptation-)
16. **Solidarity/Respect/Understanding** (that can refer to an advanced ethnorelative state –Integration-)

Fostering intercultural values in school

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

It results clearly significant the call for bigger contact with immigrates, instead of seen interculturalism through international contacts (travelling to foreign countries). This demonstrates that there is plenty of awareness about the dissemination of the phenomena of domestic multiculturalism, and about the necessity of revisit curriculum, didactics, school organization in order to tackle the problem. Of clear importance, also, the need of keep exchanging practices and working models within interdisciplinary teachers' groups.

Questions of questionnaire relevant to teaching intercultural issues

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

Final Remarks

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

4. Conclusions

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

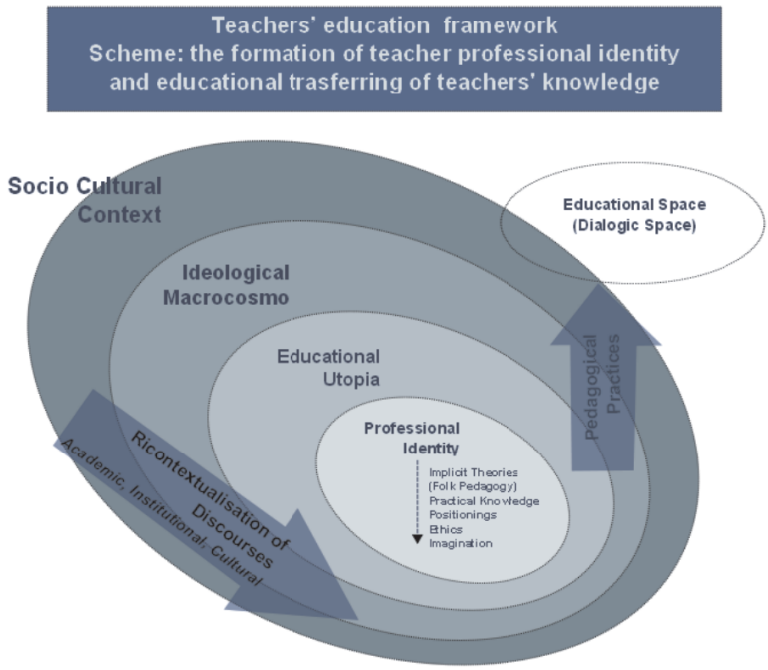
Knowledge (both conceptual and practical) as emerges from the first part of this survey, is the base of meaning making processes. Teachers' curiosity and openess, in that sense, is clearly driven by the previous experience, which under the light of reflection can also show the limitations that previous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

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

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

As this research shows, many of the beliefs about contact with otherness, and also strategies to introduce an intercultural perspective to teaching, were rooted on stereotypes (i.e. "intercultural is beautiful", considering the "folkloric" representation of foreigners); but also, the important exposure of teachers to diversity in previous professional and personal life; as far as of diversity in class, made them be ready and curious to deepen their competences about strategies to introduce an intercultural perspective of teaching and learning.

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



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

The effort here has been to show how teachers' beliefs regarded stereotypes (i.e., the importance given to "tollerance" which might be the expression of yet ethnorelative approach), in a changing scenery with the increasing and conflictive presence of diversity in class. But also, the openness of teachers participating to this study (probably best performers and innovators), to be the protagonists of a new education where intercultural dialogue is crucial.

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

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