Teaching and Learning in Italian Multicultural School Contexts: Outdoor Education and Inclusion Processes for Children with Migrant Backgrounds

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ABSTRACT

Italy has recently and rapidly become a country of strong immigration, with an increase in the schooling of second generation children. This has highlighted the urgent need to address the issue of the inclusion of pupils with a migrant background in school contexts and to identify appropriate teaching methodologies to enable them to achieve the intended educational goals. This paper presents the results of a systematic review of the scientific literature focusing on the processes and factors of inclusion of children with a migrant background in the Italian school context, with particular emphasis on the role played by some teaching methods and strategies identified in the literature as "inclusive", in particular outdoor education. This is done to highlight the challenges that teachers face today in increasingly multicultural school contexts, where they are confronted with the multiple learning needs of all pupils, including those with non-Italian citizenship, the relationship with their families and the management of cultural diversity at school.

INTRODUCTION

According to ministerial data, the percentage of pupils with a migrant background in Italian schools rose from 7.9% to 10.3%, then remained constant before and after the pandemic (MIUR, 2022). The existing literature on the inclusion of children with a migrant background within the national context shows that there is still a long way to go, although a long way has already been travelled. This paper describes both national and local school policies regarding the management of teaching-learning processes and the complex variety of classes, as well as the use of approaches that facilitate inclusion. Specifically, it highlights how Italy has recently and in a short time become a country of immigration, characterized by a rapid increase in the number of children with non-Italian citizenship within school contexts; in particular, between 2012/13 and 2017/18 there was a decrease in those born abroad (-31.8%), offset by the increase in the number of those born in Italy (+41.1%) (ISMU, 2020). Following the increase in the number of children with non-Italian citizenship, the question of how to ensure positive inclusion processes within the school context becomes increasingly urgent. In Italy, there are still serious inequalities in education that affect CNI children, as in the case of the choice of upper secondary education (in the 2019-20 academic year, 30.5% CNI-52.1% natives for high schools; 38.3% CNI-30.7% natives for technicians; 31.2% CNI-17.25% natives for vocational) (MIUR, 2021), early school drop-out (36.5% CNI and 11.3% natives at 18-24 years of age in 2019 (Con i bambini on Eurostat data, 2019), gaps related to school lag (for primary 12.4% compared to 1.7% for natives (Openpolis-Con i bambini on Eurostat data, 2019), gaps in school results, especially in Italian and mathematics (INVALSI, 2019; Azzolini, 2012;

Daher et al. 2019; Klinger et al., 2018; Triventi et al., 2022; Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019; Cascino et al., 2018). Minors with foreign citizenship show a risk of poverty or social exclusion of 41.5%, a value almost 15 percentage points higher than the figure for their peers with Italian citizenship (26.9%) (ISTAT, 2023). In addition, forms of social exclusion involving bullying and minor friendships are still strongly present (Alivernini et al., 2019; Alivernini et al., 2019; Gobbo et al., 2011) for children with a migrant background, especially for first-generation children, compared to native children.

In Italy, addressing the challenge of the inclusion of children with a migrant background means taking care of a school population at risk (school dropout, absenteeism, school delay, etc.), in an attempt to eliminate obstacles, promote participation and school success and combat all forms of exclusion of all students, especially those most at risk of marginalization, as in the case of immigrant students, whose learning needs require the adaptation of the teaching proposal to the characteristics of the student (Passiatore et al., 2019; Santagati, 2021; 2015; Premazzi, & Ricucci, 2020; Gobbo et al., 2011; Malusà, 2017; Kast et al., 2021; Malusà, 2020; Million, 2011; Midnight, 2022) and inclusive and innovative teaching approaches.

The aim of the paper was to carry out a systematic review, starting from the collection and synthesis of the available scientific evidence on the topic of school integration of children with a migrant background in the Italian school context. After analysing the ministerial documents and the literature dealing with the subject, we looked specifically at the challenges faced by teachers at local level in increasingly multicultural school contexts, where they have to deal with numerous learning needs arising from the relationship with CNI families and the management of cultural diversity at school. Among the different teaching approaches, the literature highlights how OE can be seen as a fully inclusive methodology capable of meeting the needs of a school with high socio-cultural variability.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. *The Italian School Context And The Processes Of Inclusion Of Children With A Migrant Background*

The main national regulatory references, which address the inclusion of children with a migrant background, are numerous, including: the Eurydice Reports (2004; 2009); *The Italian Way for Intercultural Schools and the Integration of Foreign Pupils* (2007); *Guidelines for the reception and integration of foreign pupils* (2014); "Different from whom?" (2015); *National guidelines for the curriculum* (MIUR, 2012; 2018); *Intervention tools for pupils with special educational needs and territorial organisation for inclusion* (2012). From these ministerial documents, inclusion is still considered a real challenge to which an attempt is made to respond with a "model of intercultural integration". This model is characterized by the presence of general principles that emphasize the risks of exclusion and assimilation, such as universalism, the common school, the centrality of the person in relation to the other and interculture at all levels (Mascitelli & Lazzari, 2016). It also points out that, following the introduction of children with socio-economic-linguistic-cultural disadvantage into the SEN category, pupils with a

migrant background are over-represented in that category, which is characterised by the right to benefit from a personalised and individualised educational plan, compensatory and dispensing tools (individual support measures) and an adaptation of programmes and assessment (Jørgensen et al., 2021; Cascino et al., 2018; Milione, 2011). However, care should be taken not to confuse the SEN category with the group of children with a migrant background, given the high heterogeneity of the latter (Söhnholz, 2020). In addition, the need to promote heterogeneity in the composition of classes is underlined, avoiding segregation (limit to 30% of the total number of students enrolled for each class if with limited language skills) even if this aspect is still contradictory given the scarce scientific evidence (Ambrosini, & Caneva, 2012; Midnight, 2022; Janta, & Harte, 2016). In terms of methodology, a systematic literature review was carried out using databases such as ERIC, GOOGLE SCHOLAR, EBSCO, INDIRE, DIVA, MIUR, including both scientific articles and grey literature, written in Italian and English. Multiple keywords were used, such as "migrant children", "multicultural education", etc. As there are still few studies on this topic, a total corpus of 155 articles was compiled.

In a second phase, the relationship between 'multicultural education' and 'outdoor education' was explored in a total of 35 articles reviewed. In order to promote the inclusion of children with a migrant background, the prerogative of the Italian school system is to facilitate the learning of Italian as a second language, which is considered a field of intervention in transition, which requires different times for learning L2, for communication and for L2 as a study vehicle to learn precise disciplinary contents(the first favoured by heterogeneous learning contexts, the second by teachers intended as facilitators).

The importance of the role played by kindergarten and primary schools in promoting the inclusion processes of CNI children is also reiterated several times in ministerial documents (Azzolini, 2015; Heckmann, 2018; Bennet, 2013). At the same time, the need to recognize and enhance the culture of origin and ethnic identity of CNI children at school is underlined, through the enhancement of multilingualism (narratives, materials, fairy tales, pupils' language courses, language loanwords, etc.) and the children's mother tongue, as well as their background (Buonomo et al., 2019; Nusche, 2009; Janta, & Harte, 2016). To do this, it becomes important to ensure the involvement and participation of the CNI family through the help of specific cultural mediators (Bennet, 2013; Janta, & Harte, 2016; Nusche, 2009), encourage the promotion of interventions to combat discrimination and prejudice to raise awareness, support the autonomy of schools and networks in the field of reception (between educational institutions, civil society and the territory) and allocate appropriate resources to schools with a high concentration of CNI children (due to demographic factors and related to family strategies). At the local level, it also seems necessary to increase the quality of teacher training on the management of diversity in the classroom and the acquisition of intercultural competences (Biasutti et al., 2020; Makarova et al., 2019; Glock et al., 2019; Caneva, 2012; Clark & Andreasen, 2021; Forghani-Arani, Cerna, & Bannon, 2019), with the idea of fostering cooperative learning to facilitate the participation of all components in the knowledge process, (for newcomers) by privileging teaching in small groups, the activation of language laboratories and

adequate non-verbal supports. Regarding learning environments, the importance of varying them and including external ones (nature and territory) is underlined, ensuring a flexible use of spaces, to prevent diversity from turning into inequality. It is a matter of encouraging a continuous exploration and discovery of the environment, cooperative learning among peers, the active engagement of the student in the construction of his or her own knowledge, the didactic activity in the form of a laboratory that favours operation, reflection, and participation.

2. *School inclusion: the role of teachers and the relationship with CNI families*

As far as the relationship between the school and CNI families is concerned, the literature shows that the involvement and participation of these families is often complex. According to parents, this is due both to practical and organizational issues, such as lack of knowledge of the Italian language and the Italian school system, school hours incompatible with working hours, distance from home, poor local transport, etc., as well as cultural issues, such as fear of the loss of their children's cultural origins, excessive interference of the school in parental authority and/or the desire not to interfere with the school authority. Teachers, on the other hand, declare a lower level of involvement in school activities and a lack of knowledge of the language of CNI families, especially in the pre-school phase. However, a contradiction emerges, namely, if on the one hand, teachers complain of a lack of interest in school on the part of CNI families, on the other hand, they claim that, if called to school, the latter participate in the meetings (Daher, Leonora, & Gamuzza, 2019; Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019; Prestinoni, 2013; Vincenti, 2007; Schapiro, 2009; Bennet, 2013; Colombo & Santagati, 2021; Heckmann, 2018; Janta & Harte, 2016).

Although the importance of the presence of the cultural mediator on the part of teachers and families is underlined (Chiappelli, 2019), this figure is often discontinuous, for reasons related to a low budget availability on the part of schools and the fact that not all teachers consider this figure necessary. Teachers and families perceive, in fact, the figure of the mediator as excessively interfering (Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019).

Teachers tend to orient immigrant pupils towards shorter paths because of their beliefs, while CNI families tend to trust teachers due to lack of information about the Italian school system (Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019). It is also observed that intercultural education is perceived by teachers as a challenge, more established than practiced, in which difficulties persist in the ability to manage the cultural claims of immigrant families (Caneva, 2012). An implicit assimilationist and ethnocentric model of teaching seems to persist even today, with a tendency to deny cultural differences and to treat all children without taking into account their specific needs. This mirrors an attitude that underestimates the skills and knowledge of CNI children and interprets diversity as a "deficit" (Daher, Leonora, & Gamuzza, 2019; Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019; Vincenti, 2007; Colombo, 2012; Caneva, 2012). The attitude of teachers appears to be universalistic and welcoming and, at the same time,

fearful of the increase in workload, due to the performance of institutional tasks concerning CNI children (Colombo, 2012) and considered onerous.

The national school context becomes even more complex if teachers' beliefs and expectations are taken into account, which can lead to the implementation of the "self-fulfilling prophecy", thus affecting the learning outcomes of CNI children (Heckmann, 2018; Schofield, 2006; Schachner et al., 2018; Dimitrova et al., 2016; Prestinoni, 2013) or even the current trend to place CNI children in classes of children with younger ages (Premazzi & Ricucci, 2020; Azzolini, 2015), further aggravating their school delay.

Finally, the literature shows that teachers believe that the greatest challenge of inclusion is the language difficulties of CNI students (Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019; Prestinoni, 2013) and economic disadvantage (Daher, Leonora, & Gamuzza, 2019), complaining, however, of a lack of adequate training (still, in their opinion, too theoretical) and resources for diversity management. However, at the same time, there is a limited participation in intercultural training courses by teachers (Colombo 2013; Heckmann, 2018; Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019; Vincenti, 2007; Caneva, 2012; Forghani-Arani et al., 2019; Dervin, 2017; Butnaru et al., 2009). Teachers appear to be aware of the professional responsibility that concerns them in terms of the impact of their action on the academic success of students and the management of the heterogeneity of classroom contexts where students with different sociocultural backgrounds are present (Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019). They understand inclusion as still difficult and linked to the good will of teachers, which, in some cases, leads them to adopt innovative teaching strategies only occasionally. However, discomfort seems to remain a constant element of inclusion, even where relationships with teachers are perceived by CNI children as satisfactory (Colombo, 2012, 2013; Colombo, & Besozzi, 2011; Vincenti, 2007; Colombo, 2013; Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019). To respond to the challenge of inclusion of children with a migrant background within Italian school contexts, teachers attribute the importance of knowing the migrant background of their pupils (Schachner et al., 2018; Heckmann, 2018; Janta, Harte, 2016; Martin at al., 2021; Prestinoni, 2013; Kennedy, 2017) and their parents (Kast et al., 2021) as a central factor. They are convinced that the use of cooperative and practical-experiential learning, based on all sensory channels for the authentic social and linguistic development of children, is able to highlight the potential of each one (Santagati, 2021; Passiatore et al., 2019; Janta & Harte, 2016; Schofield, 2006; Chiappelli, 2017; Hunchback, 2018; Gobbo et al., 2011; Makarova et al., 2019; Azzolini, 2015; Pierfederici, 2014; Mura et al., 2020; Colombo & Santagati, 2021), which can become a facilitating tool if combined with flexibility and variability of time and space (Sarumathi, 2017; De Almeida et al., 2019; Makarova et al., 2019; Biasutti, 2020; Pierdefederici, 2014; Premazzi & Ricucci, 2020; Daher, Leonora, & Gamuzza, 2019) both indoors and outdoors (Alsubaie, 2015; Premazzi, & Ricucci, 2020; Colombo, & Santagati, 2021), creativity and the search for innovative and active methodologies and constructive ways to foster inclusion, which place the learner at the center and make use of formative assessment (Biasutti, 2020; Catarci, 2018; Makarova et al., 2019; Coin, 2018; Barthel et al., 2020; Capperucci, 2016; Malusà, 2020; Bennet, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. *Individual And Socio-Cultural Factors And Educational Outcomes Of Children With Non-Italian Citizenship*

Data and literature show the existence of a gap in educational achievement, especially in Italian and mathematics, between natives and children with both first- and second-generation migration backgrounds (Azzolini, 2012; Daher, Leonora, & Gamuzza, 2019; Klinger et al., 2018; Triventi et al., 2022). However, it should be emphasized that the results in this regard are conflicting or, rather, that there are highly differentiated models, explained through two theories: that of morbidity and that of the paradox on the status of immigration as a risk factor (Dimitrova, 2008; 2011; Dimitrova et al., 2016; Azzolini, 2012) or not (Schachner et al., 2018). Such conflicting results are due to the influence of numerous individual and sociocultural factors on the acculturation process and on children's academic performance. These factors include:

a. age of arrival in the country (Azzolini, 2012; Daher, Leonora, Gamuzza, 2019; Klinger et al., 2018; Schofield, 2006; Berry, 1997; Milione, 2011, Theodosiou-Zipiti & Lamprianou, 2016; Triventi et al., 2022; Guo et al., 2016; Sohnhold, 2020; Klinger, 2018; Azzolini, 2015; OECD, 2019; Azzolini, 2012);

b. genre (Berry, 1997; Milione, 2011);

c. expectations (Berry, 1997; Milione, 2011) and students' attitudes towards school (Triventi et al., 2021);

d. generation (Theodosiou-Zipiti & Lamprianou, 2016; Triventi et al., 2022; Guo et al., 2016; Sohnholz, 2020; Klinger et al., 2018; Azzolini, 2015, 2012);

e. country of origin (Azzolini, 2012; Daher, Leonora, & Gamuzza, 2019a; 2019b; Gamuzza & Leonora, 2022; Klinger et al., 2018; Azzolini, 2012);

f. support/social support: family (less time, poor language proficiency, inadequate space for homework) especially for the first generation (Karakus et al., 2022; Daher, Leonora, & Gamuzza, 2019a; 2019b; Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019) and teachers (Heckmann, 2018; Makarova & Birman, 2015; Alivernini et al., 2019) and school/resources (Bennet, 2013; Heckmann, 2018);

g. SESC family (Azzolini, 2012, Daher, Leonora, Gamuzza, 2019; Klinger et al., 2018; Schofield, 2006; Theodosiou-Zipiti, & Lamprianou, 2016; Triventi et al., 2022; Guo et al., 2016; Sohnholz, 2020; Klinger et al., 2018; Azzolini, 2015; Guo et al., 2016; OECD, 2019) especially for the first generation (Karakus et al., 2022) and the social capital of the family (Premazzi, & Ricucci, 2020; Schapiro, 2009; Makarova et al., 2021; OECD, 2019);

h. acculturation orientations (Schachner et al., 2018; Berry, 1997; Million, 2011; Makarova, & Birman, 2015);

i. time in the New Country (Schofield, 2006; Berry, 1997; Million, 2011; OECD, 2019);

j. presence of prejudice and other forms of discrimination against immigrants, underestimation of ethnic bullying that affects performance especially for the first generation, taking up the theory of conflict (Karakus, 2022; Oxman-Martinez &

Choi, 2014; Schachner et al., 2018; Azzolini, Santagati, Mantovani, 2019; Berry, 1997; Milione, 2011).

k. knowledge of the Italian language (Schofield, 2006) linked in turn to the time spent in the country and country of origin (Martin et al., 2021; Azzolini, 2012) also linked to age, number and effectiveness of relationships, the language of the country of origin and parental education, which can amplify language barriers (OECD, 2020);

l. instability of family composition (Azzolini, Santagati, Mantovani, 2019);

m. parenting style (authoritative) and educational attitudes (assimilative or integrative) (Makarova et al., 2021);

n. self-efficacy teachers who lead them to use new and innovative practices with immigrant children that appear to be positive (Sensin et al., 2019; 2020; 2020b);

o. teacher expectations (Martin et al., 2021; Makarova et al., 2019) and their implicit attitudes (Costa et al., 2021; Schapiro, 2009; Kast et al., 2021) that are more positive in contexts with greater ethnic diversity (Glock et al., 2019; Ineke Pit-ten, & Glock, 2019) and influencing their assessment of CNI children (Theodosiou-Zipiti, Lamprianou, 2016);

p. mixed results (Ballatore et al., 2018): a higher density of CNI children, especially first-generation children, seems to increase the variety of intercultural initiatives (Catarci, 2013) and academic achievement (Theodosiou-Zipiti, Lamprianou, 2016); decrease negative implicit attitudes of teachers (Ineke Pit-ten, Glock, 2019; Glock et al., 2019; Costa et al., 2021) while according to other studies it leads teachers to evaluate immigrant students more negatively (De Benedetto, De Paola, 2022) and has a minimal negative effect on the performance of immigrant children and almost zero on that of natives (Bossavie, 2018; Azzolini, 2012; Brunello & Rocco, 2013) or there is no relationship according to other studies (Schachner et al., 2018).

2. *Inter-ethnic relations at school*

About intercultural relations within school contexts, even these results in the literature still appear quite contrasting today. In fact, according to some studies, there is a relational satisfaction of children with a migrant background with both teachers and peers and no relational differences between natives and non-natives (Daher, Leonora, & Gamuzza, 2019), while according to others there is a relational disadvantage for children with a migrant background, who show limited social relationships, with less intensity and reciprocity than natives, which bring out the existence of forms of relational distress (students with performance anxiety, controlled by demanding families, children with limited SES and school failure), showing a complex social inclusion for these children (Chiappelli, 2021; Mura et al., 2020; Bathel, 2020; Azzolini, Santagati, Mantovani, 2019 Cavicchiolo et al., 2020). It also emerges that CNI children are more at risk of social exclusion, especially involving first-generation children (Alivernini et al. 2019; Alivernini et al., 2019; Gobbo et al., 2011). In fact, first-generation CNI children are characterized by a greater loss of "social capital", i.e. by a greater heterogeneity of relational networks that depend on the time spent in Italy. First-generation immigrants also appear more isolated at school and benefit more from increased relationships (Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019). It also seems to concern CNI students a partial relational integration, as their interethnic relations do not extend outside the school (Santagati, 2015). Italian children prefer

relationships with co-ethnics (homophily), while CNI children show greater openness to interethnic contacts (Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani; 2019; Colombo, & Santagati, 2021).

These numerous differences in the social relationships of CNI children are due to a multiplicity of factors involved ranging from socialization outside the country to cultural factors, from the presence of unfavorable attitudes to language knowledge, from the time spent in the host country to the SES, up to generation, etc. (Cavicchiolo et al., 2020; Azzolini, Santagati, & Mantovani, 2019).

Regarding the composition of the class, further contrasting results emerge, such as a higher density of CNI children in classrooms, especially of the first generation, which seems to have a minimal negative effect on the performance of immigrant children and almost zero on that of natives, as well as on inter-ethnic relations by increasing conflicts (conflict theory). Other studies show that the density linked to the presence of CNI children does not affect relationships between peers (Colombo, & Santagati, 2021). It also seems that diversity, in terms of diversification of ethnic groups, when the proportion is controlled, leads to an increase in performance and inter-ethnic relations (Plenty, & Jonsson, 2017; Schachner et al., 2018; Azzolini, Santagati, Mantovani, 2019; Martin et al., 2021) and how linguistic diversity leads to worsening social integration of non-native speakers (Bredtmann et al., 2021). In essence, a relevant factor appears to be a positive class climate based on collaboration, cooperation, sharing of interests, practical and group experiences, a climate of cultural pluralism, based on equality and positive exchange/contact between peers which, by increasing contact, leads to positive intergroup attitudes and the overcoming of prejudices (contact theory), as well as the improvement of inter-ethnic relations (Chiari, 2011; Azzolini, Santagati, Mantovani, 2019). Active and cooperative learning between heterogeneous groups leads, therefore, to an improvement in academic and inter-ethnic relations, greater participation in one's own learning process, responsibility, reflection, sharing experiences and caring for others and promotes social skills, motivation, and a decrease in the sense of isolation (Janta & Harte, 2016).

3. **Outdoor Education (Oe) As A New Inclusive Educational Paradigm And Multicultural School Contexts**

The richness within the increasingly heterogeneous classes allows us to profitably reflect on the approaches that can be used to facilitate the affirmation of intercultural teaching and to pursue quality inclusion processes, and it remains a challenge to be addressed (ISMU, 2023, p. 132). The EO, in this sense, as a further training to support teaching professionalism, can contribute to strengthening the ability of teachers to responsibly manage educational processes and, in students, to build conscious attitudes and civic behaviours. To respond to these new needs, it is therefore essential to understand how to use approaches such as EO to adequately respond to the need to look at teaching within the horizon of quality education for all.

OE can be conceived as an organized reaction to the phenomenon of "indoorization" (Bortolotti, 2019, p. 19), taking the form of a set of educational theories and practices (scholastic and extracurricular) "characterized by the centrality that is recognized to the external environment as a privileged place of training" (Farné &

Agostini, 2014, p. 10). It provides for a wide "variety of pedagogical experiences characterized by active teaching that takes place in environments outside the school and that is linked to the characteristics of the territory and the social and cultural context in which the school is located" (Giunti et al., 2021, p. 5). In this approach, the environment is to be understood as an opportunity for socialization and learning, which involves the use of various local cultural laboratories conceived as classrooms decentralized throughout the territory (museums, libraries, natural environments, etc.). (Frabboni & Zucchini, 1985), assuming the functions of civic educational spaces.

Hence the issue of inclusion is inextricably intertwined with that of quality education, calling into question the importance of promoting and enhancing multiculturalism at school. The growing presence of children with a migrant background in Italian school contexts (MIUR, 2022) and the persistence of deep inequalities bring with them phenomena of social exclusion, which make inclusion a real challenge (ISMU, 2023; Booth, Ainscow & Dovigo, 2014); Alivernini et al., 2019; Alivernini et al., 2019a; Gobbo et al., 2011), requiring didactic responses that take into account these problems and the decoding of the learning needs of all students. In response to this situation, existing documents at the national level speak of "intercultural integration" and the importance of adopting comprehensive and holistic educational approaches that can be a response to such social changes. In this regard, the literature highlights how EO may be able to respond to the new needs of cultural variability, involving practical-experiential and multisensory learning, which provide for teaching based on real problems, on the flexibility of space and time and on cooperative learning and group activities (Zinant & Zoletto, 2018). These characteristics, typical of OE methodologies, are able to promote positive social interactions and solid social-emotional skills, to increase engagement and motivation (Watts; 2019; Bortolotti, Schenetti, Telese, 2020; Nielsen et al., 2016), to provide more opportunities to enhance children's culture of origin and cultural similarities and differences (Schenetti, 2022; Vaccarelli, 2016; Matthews, 1994; Cutter-Mackenzie, 2009; Roberts et al., 1999), to support the learning of novel mathematical terms and concepts (Simpson, 2008; Johnson, & Perez, 1976; Stapp et al., 1969), thus contributing to advancing solutions and interventions to combat early school leaving (Mcleod, 2007), inequalities and so on. To respond to the complexity of multicultural school contexts, research is now called upon to explore the use of didactic approaches such as OE to better respond to the needs of recipients and the changing reality of reality.

Empirical research conducted in the context of the EO is quite recent. In Italy, the EO is mainly in use within the Network of Outdoor Schools (2019). The examination of the dimensions and variables present in the studies analyzed allows us to detect how the variety of individual and socio-cultural factors requires a knowledge on the part of teachers of the background of each student and the use of flexible approaches, active methodologies and operational techniques, which look at forms of cooperative and participatory learning, useful to correspond to the needs of children and those with a migrant background (MIUR, 2021; Eurydice, 2004; Chiappelli, 2021; De Almeida et al., 2019; Catarci, 2018; Capperucci, 2016; Söhnholz, 2020; Barthel, et al., 2020). The EO appears to be used by teachers in different ways and depends on the needs and territorial characteristics in which each educational

institution is inserted. However, its boundaries appear to be blurred from the point of view of the methodologies used, whose holistic approach, benefits and limitations seem to emerge in much of the research carried out (Giunti et al., 2021). The widespread awareness of the importance of the benefits that EO brings in terms of learning has led the scientific community to deal with its dissemination and its cognitive repercussions. Consolidated mainly in Scandinavian countries, the use of EO is continuing to expand thanks to its properly inclusive character, both on an educational and social level, especially with reference to the inclusion processes of children with CNI (Schenetti, 2022; Bortolotti et al., 2020; Zinat & Zoletto, 2018), showing more and more how it asserts itself as a real instrument of democracy. The research confirms that EO can be considered an inclusive approach, by virtue of its flexibility in terms of time and space, its stimulations aimed at improving learning, its practical-experiential logic and linked to problem solving, multisensoriality, collaborative activities, the creation of climates conducive to acquisition, the involvement of the families of CNI children, an enhancement of the characteristics of each student and his or her culture of origin and the use of formative assessment (Bortolotti & Bosello 2020; Dyment & Bell, 2008; Farné et al., 2018; Ovesen & Ovesen 2020; Svensson, 2018; Nilsson & Larsson, 2019), with increased collaboration, engagement, motivation, positive social skills and relationships, and vocabulary enrichment (Gemmell, 2021; Bølling et al., 2019; Stapp et al., 1969; Nielsen et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

In summary, Italy has recently become a country of strong immigration, where forms of educational and social exclusion persist that affect the population of children with BM (Schachner et al., 2018; Alivernini et al., 2019). In school settings, there are gaps between the educational outcomes of children with CNI compared to those of natives (ISMU, 2021; OECD, 2019), also placing the involvement of migrant pupils and their families at the centre of the problem. Starting from the scientific literature, the increase in CNI children within school contexts has led to pay more and more attention to the use of innovative teaching approaches, which allow teachers to respond to children's new learning needs. In this sense, OE today constitutes, by virtue of its intrinsic and extrinsic qualities, an eclectic and flexible approach capable of helping to promote an understanding of the "heterogeneity of needs" at school, while supporting, at the same time, a global citizenship education that guarantees processes of effective inclusion of children with a migrant background.

Teachers are now seen as key elements in the educational process for students to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to be active citizens, to work and to live in the community. In increasingly multicultural school contexts, teachers therefore have a very important role to play in helping pupils to learn and live together and in creating a welcoming climate and safe environment to facilitate the educational success of all pupils. For this reason, in addition to adequate intercultural training that helps teachers to acquire knowledge, skills and useful attitudes for their teaching activities, it is necessary to develop experimental research on advanced inclusive methodologies that can provide a solid scientific basis for teachers' actions in this

context. In this sense, OE represents a fruitful field of frontier research.

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