



SEDIN interviews report

As part of the data collection functional to the situational analysis of the SEDIN project, we interviewed 39 teachers from 3 schools; 2 of Palermo and 1 of Messina, 2 primary institutes and 1 higher institute. The interviewees are 33 women and 6 men, teachers of various disciplines (science, literatures, art, foreign languages, philosophy, etc.). In the majority of classes (51,36%) there are between 4 and 5 mother tongues spoken among pupils, in many cases (16,21%) more than 5 languages.

With regard to the dynamics of inclusion among students, the cooperative approach is more common than the competitive dynamics. In details, among the students cooperativeness and solidarity, even if sometimes oriented to the downside (little effort in the study), prevail over the competitive dynamics, which usually involve the most capable students. The degree of motivation and participation of students depends on the classes, but it is nevertheless quite active. For some teachers foreign students recognize the role of the teacher and the school institution more than the natives.

Almost always within the classes there are aggregations in subgroups on an ethnic basis, but some of them are loose and there are cases of aggregations on a friendly basis.

Anyway, cooperation (being chosen by the 56,8% of teachers) prevails on competitiveness (8,1%) and when competitiveness appears it is crosscutting, being linked to performance and marks and not to ethnic connotations.

Interviewees identify several needs of their migrant pupils. From the analysis of the answers it emerges that linguistic difficulties remain constant in the different study cycles, indeed, among students constraints, linguistic skills in L2 is the most reported (it appears 10 times in the answers). It is followed by need for psycho-social support, guiding and integration, support and mediation

from specific professionals (cultural mediators and ethno-psychologists in particular), affectivity, self-expression and didactical material.

In order to meet these needs and help pupils to overcome their constraints, teachers mainly ask for well-designed and practical training courses. They also mention better and longer courses of Italian as L2 for foreign children as a way to help them to fill linguistic gap. In particular, teachers say, courses should be organized during the school time in order to allow the students to attend. Evening courses are, indeed, abandoned by those who help their parents by working after school. Finally, to improve the effectiveness of their work, interviewees list the following requirement: specific professionals working side-by-side with them also during school time, specific and practical tools, special timing for migrant children (for example boarding school time in order to stimulate social interaction in Italian language).

According teachers and principals, this abundance of needs are not sufficiently met by National Educational System, which does not provide any training program at all (10,8%) or provides low quality of insufficient training courses (48,6%). In particular, when courses are provided, they are theoretical and do not develop any non-formal tools to be used in concrete situations.

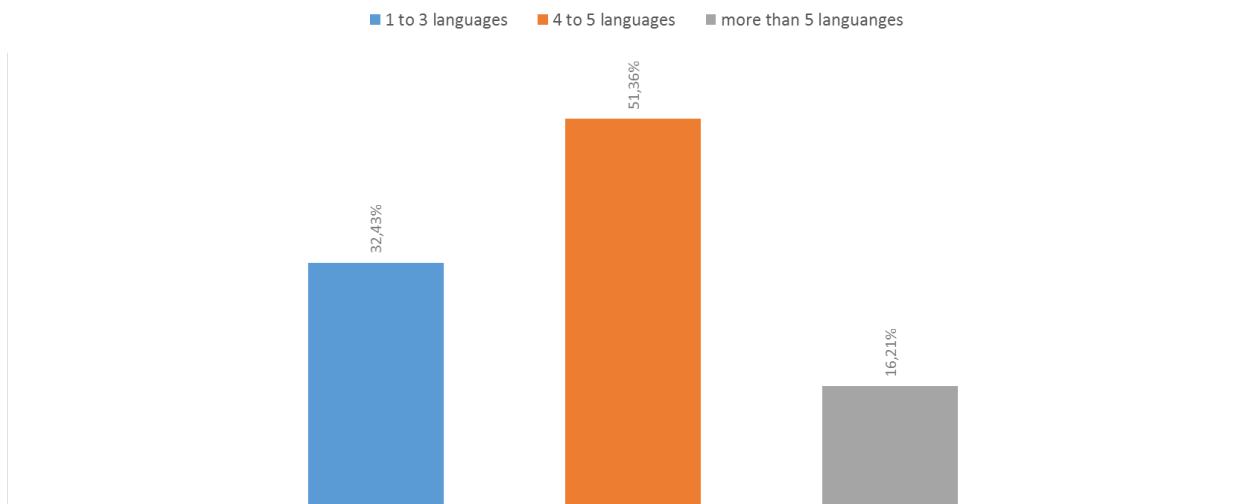
Generally speaking, both teachers and principals highlight the negative impact caused on the national education system by the prevalence of categories such as "competitiveness" and "performance" as indicators of the quality of the educational offer: these indicators, not taking into account the socioeconomic and cultural starting differences, both of the contexts and of the students of the various schools, actually risk to maintain and increase the gap between schools of "A level" and "B level". In spite of this, the majority of interviewees recognizes the importance that the national educational system gives to cooperation, debate, respect and autonomy.

All teachers have heard of creative and alternative methods such as Montessori and Creative Learning, especially the first, but most of them do not have specific knowledge to allow them to adopt these methods. In general, all interviewees consider them valid methods to be experimented to enhance the learning processes of students not only foreigners.

Although teachers recognize that some gap exists, the linguistic deficit of foreign students are often counter-balanced by greater skills in some subjects, such as foreign languages, mathematics and science, art, geography. In addition they also find a higher motivation in migrant student and report that this motivation often push them to overcome their initial gap.

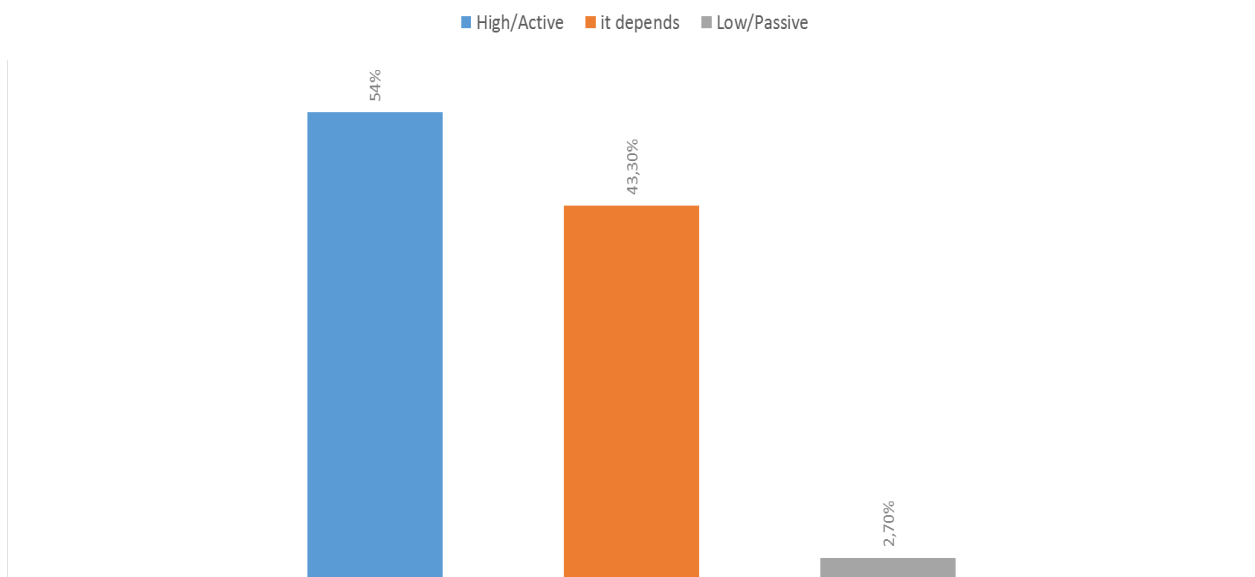
Here below diagrams reporting the answers to each question and their explanation.

1) How many mother tongues are there among your pupils?



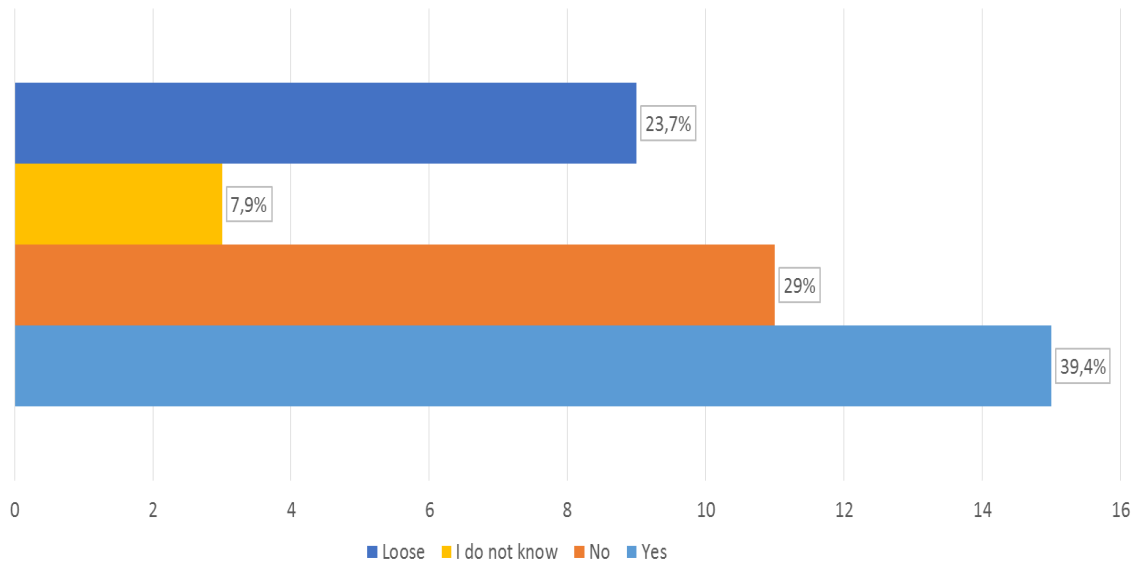
The majority of teachers (67,57%) identifies more than 3 mother tongue spoken in their class.

2) How would you describe the participation of your pupils within the class?



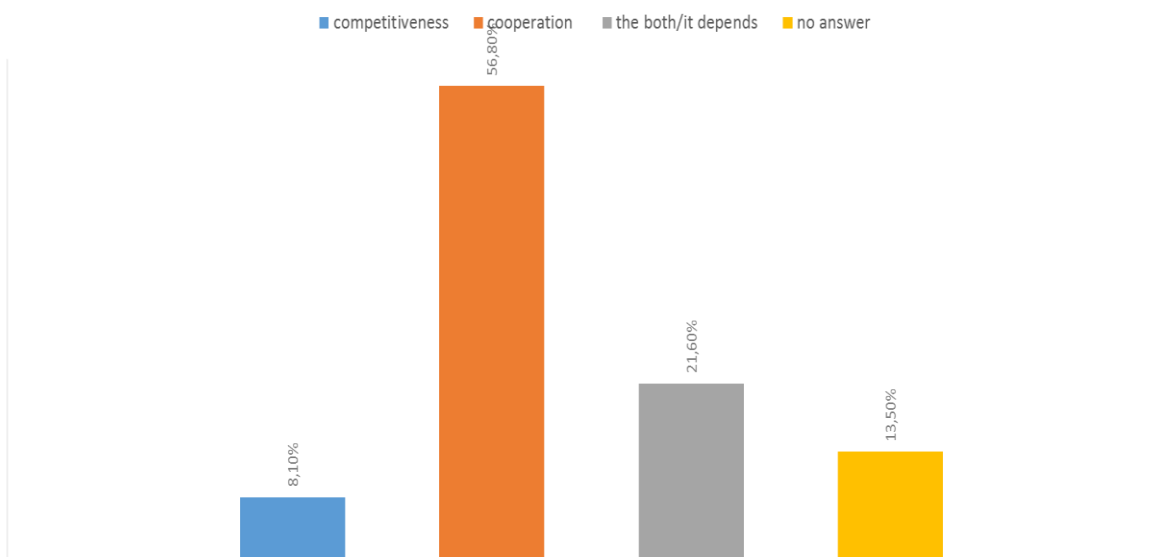
Generally speaking, in spite of linguistic gap, pupils shows high interest during lessons. In certain cases, their participation depends on the subject or the topic. It is interesting that almost all the interviewees find migrant children more motivated than their native peers. Teachers suggest that it may depends on the idea of school as a means for social redemption, whilst in native people disillusion prevails, as they generally consider school as incapable to ensure someone to get a job.

3) How would you describe the relations among pupils in your class? Are there strong group identities? How to explain these cleavages?



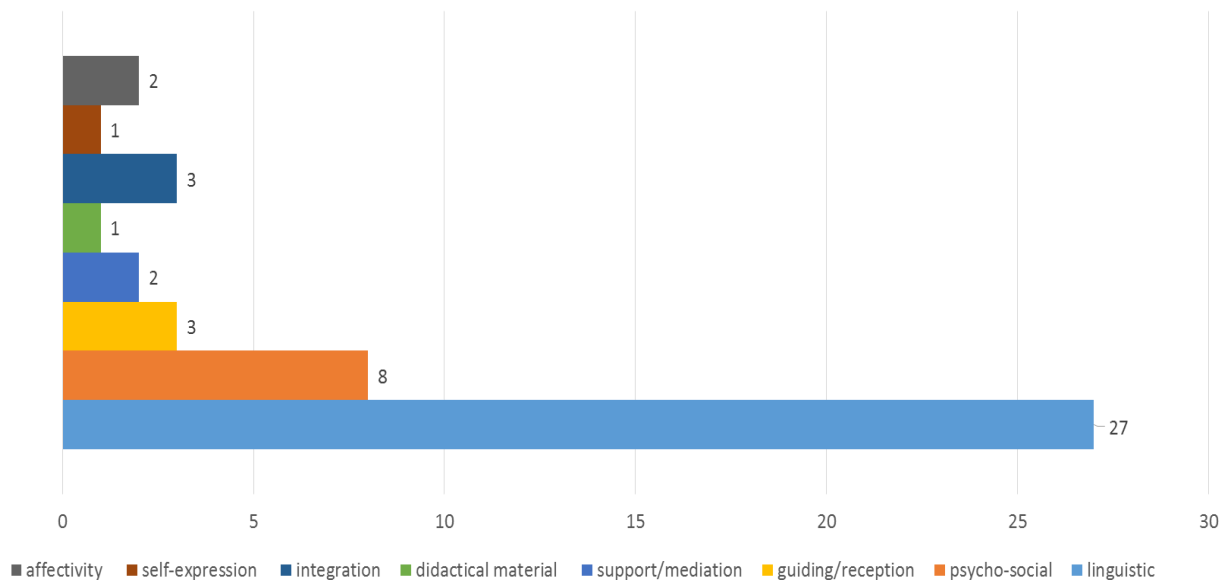
Although the majority of teacher underlines the existence of cultural identities in classroom, they also suggest that these identities are loose (23,7%) or not so strong (39,4%) to impede the creation of crosscutting alliances among the pupils.

4) If not, how would you describe the nature of relations between pupils, from competitiveness to cooperation?



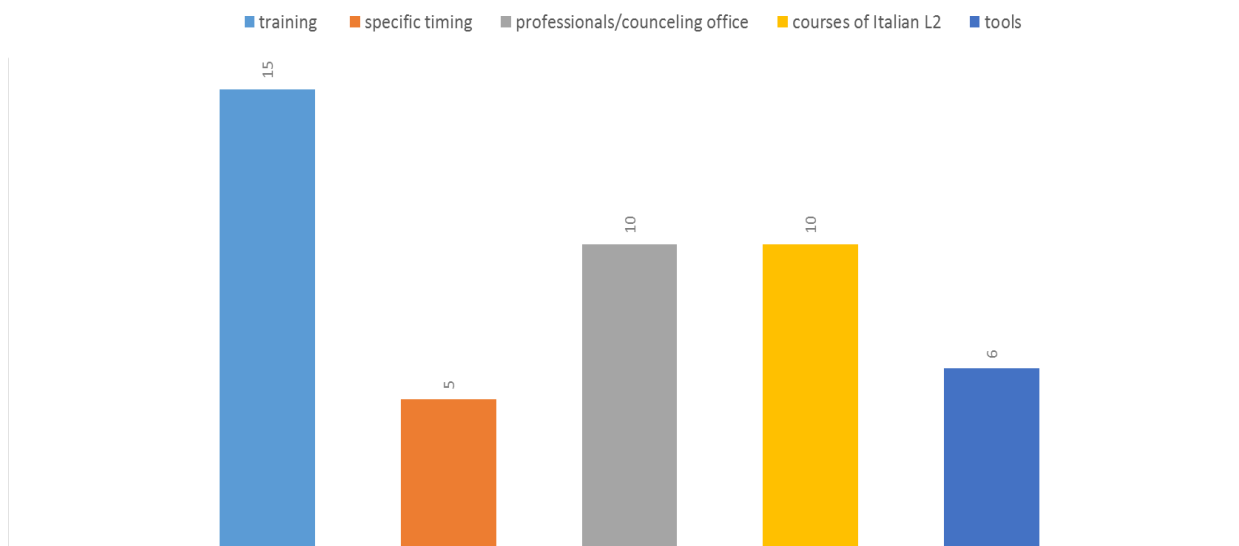
As previously stated, the presence of group identities does not prevent cooperation among students. The 56,8% of interviewees, indeed, states that relations among their pupils are cooperation-oriented.

5) Would you say refugee/migrant children have specific needs? Explain.



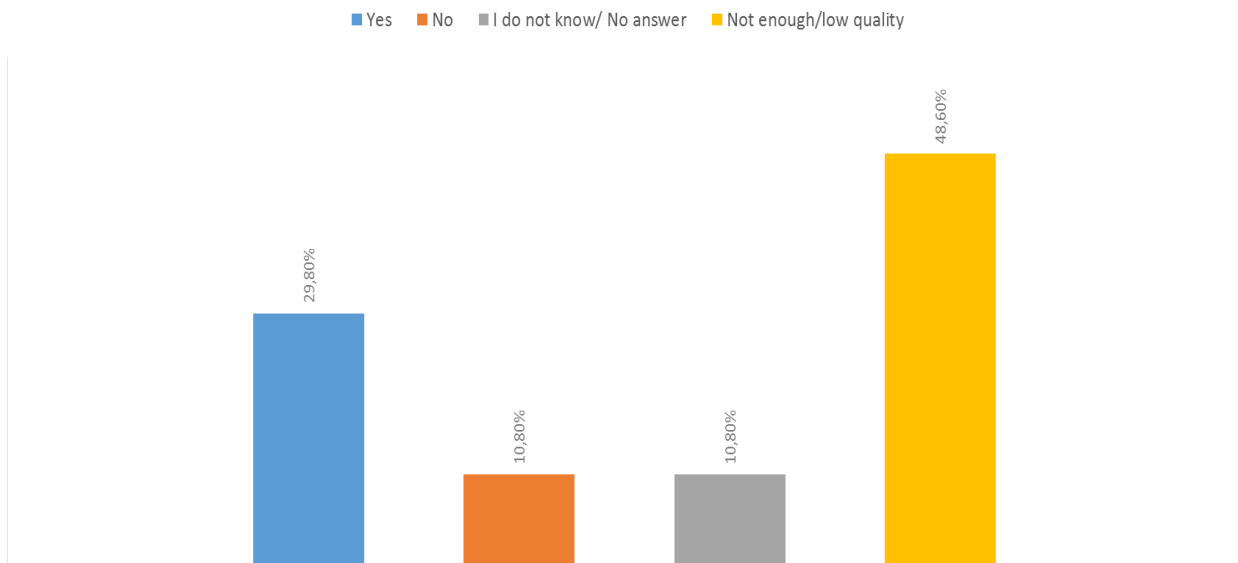
Each teacher has listed more than one need. In general, linguistic needs are the most mentioned, followed by psycho-social needs (needs for specific support by cultural mediators and ethno-psychologists).

6) What would you need for responding to theirs?



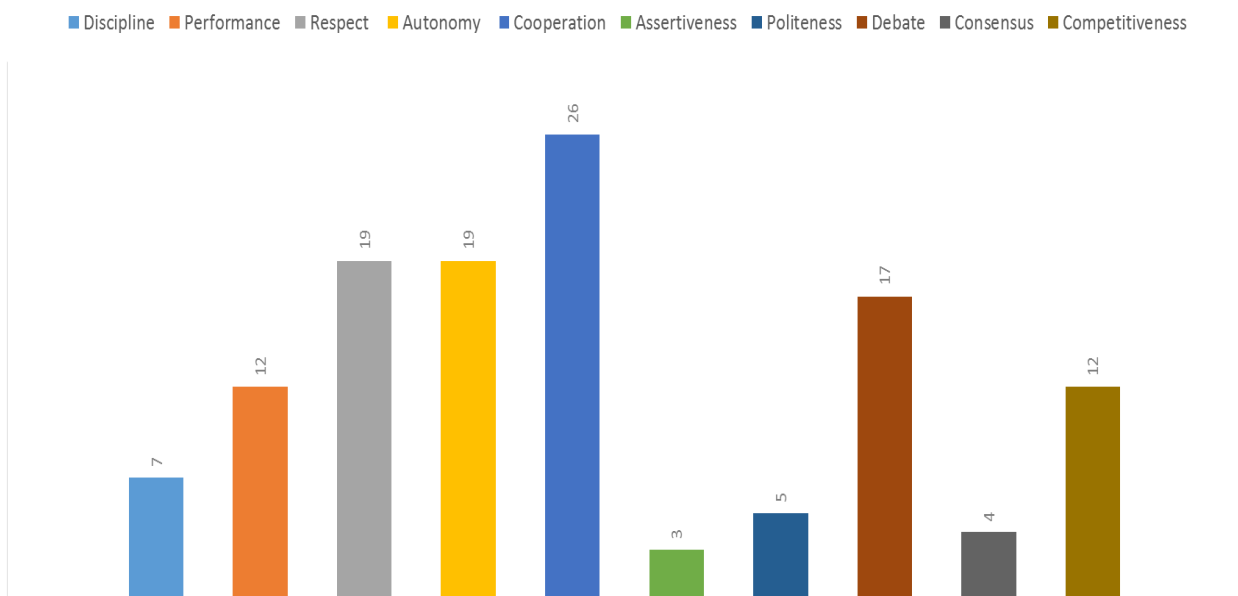
Coherently to the answers reported above, interviewees consider proper training courses for them and courses of Italian language for students as their main needs. Also specific tools and skilled professionals (cultural mediators and ethno-psychologists) are considered crucial resources for them to face challenges in their multicultural classrooms.

7) Do the national educational system and/or the civil society offer further education training programs for teachers in order to respond to those needs?



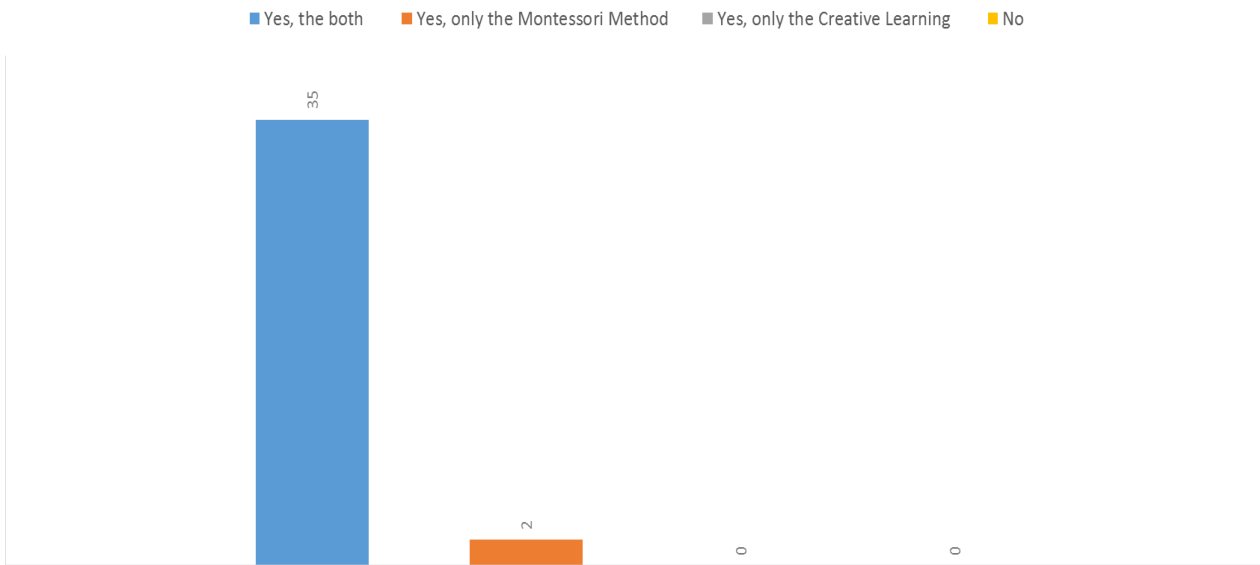
Almost the half of the sample considers training courses provided by national system and civil society not qualitative and unable to produce an improvement of their skills and capacities.

8) According to you, which are the main values promoted by your national educational system?

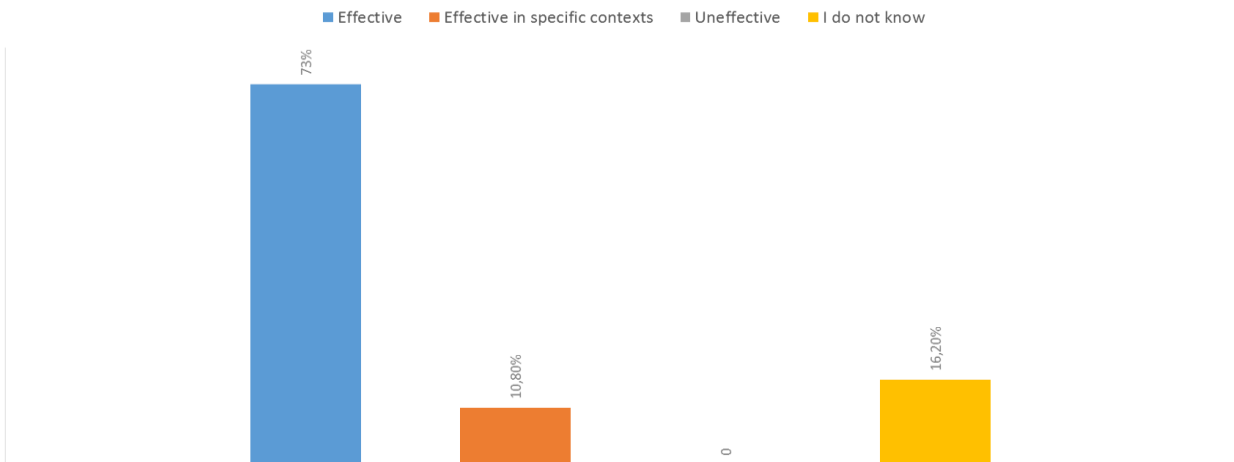


The answers show “cooperation”, “respect” and “autonomy” as the main axis of education in Italy. Anyway, the both principals interviewed has given a very different answer, as they detect “performance” and “competitiveness” being the main values promoted by Educational system. It is possible that teachers reported what they do consider the most important values to promote and not the values actually promoted by the Ministry of Education.

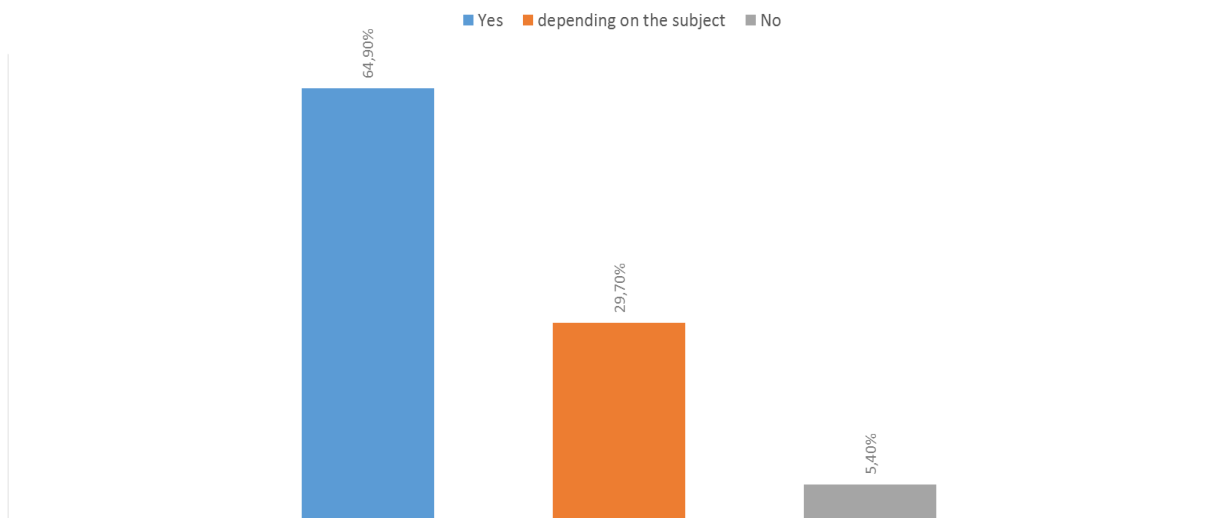
9) Have you heard about alternative and active educational methods, such as Montessori and Creative learning?



10) If so, what do you think about these methods?



11) Are there gaps in the educational performance between native and migrant students? If yes, which are they?



Although a little part of teachers does not find any gap between native and migrant pupils, the 94,6% of interviewees recognizes the existence of different quality in performances. But the answers are not obvious as one might imagine. In particular, the 29,7% says that it depends on the subject and that the gap does not exist in math, art, gym, music, etc., i.e. subject for which the use of a specific language does not affect the performance. Although confirm the gap, the rest, the 64,9%, reports that sometimes migrant are more brilliant and smarter in their performances due to their high motivation.

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of the answers gathered during the interviews, we learn that the inclusive environment that teachers report as prevailing in classes is counter-balanced by the lack of social interaction during the preschool period and after the school time. This does not allow pupils to get a high proficiency in Italian languages, which affects not only performances, but also self-confidence and social relations. The impact of the changes in their lives after migration, the different cultural background and learning strategies pushes teachers to the conclusion that professionals like ethno-psychologists should be included among the school staff. Also mediators are considered pivotal professionals able to help teachers to better understanding and meeting the needs of their pupils. Teachers are particularly concerned about the low quality and quantity of training courses organized by the national educational system and the civil society. In this sense, most of them underlines the inadequacy, in quantitative and qualitative terms, of the training opportunities offered by the national educational system. Therefore, on the one hand they claim that such courses are insufficient and not capable to produce a real enhancement of their skills in the multicultural context, on the other they ask for training able to provide practical tools to face their daily challenges also through the non-formal education.