
Systematic vulnerabilization of migrant students. How the dialogic approach can clear the way for a change

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1. Introduction

The pandemic can be understood as a crisis within a crisis. Societies are more than ever facing the inevitable consequences of the pervasive tension caused, not least, by the industrial ‘progress’ of the so-called ‘developed countries’, imposed as a model worldwide (Bauman, 2000). The precept of growth accompanying this, together with a focus on capital and not on people and their lifeworld as a whole, produces crisis at different levels (Fotopoulos, 2009). In particular, the Global South, plundered of all kinds of resources since the beginning of colonialism, suffers the consequences (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2017). While migration itself is a constant of human history, in our time it repeatedly becomes a sudden reality and a forced choice for entire generations and communities who liquefy in dehumanized flows navigating a “liminal space” (Turner, 1977) potentially for the rest of their lives. The invention and erection of borders and recent regulations have, in many cases, transformed migration from process into living condition and migrants into immobilised agents trapped in “non-places” (Augé, 1992) at the mercy of the actions and decisions of others. The protection of borders has been given

priority over human rights, the rights of children, and asylum rights, as Lampedusa, Moria or the Poland-Belarus border exemplify in relation to “Fortress Europe” (Rivera, 2016).³ Borders anyway do not end when the destination is reached: many further borders still have to be overcome on the way to equality which, no matter where, remains a utopia, and inequality a fundamental global problem (Koch, 2018). The pandemic has made these inequalities more and more evident, exacerbating existing ones and creating new ones (Benach, 2021).

This special issue focuses on *migrant students*; children, adolescents and young adults who have a higher probability of suffering from the policies related to the containment of the pandemic, being already in a disadvantaged position (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

3 On Poland/Belarus border – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/2021/12/press-briefing-notes-polandbelarus-border>; Council of Europe Commissioner for Human rights: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/commissioner-calls-for-immediate-access-of-international-and-national-human-rights-actors-and-media-to-poland-s-border-with-belarus-in-order-to-end-hotspots>; On the implementation of hotspots: <https://ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/HOTSPOTS-Report-5.12.2016..pdf>.

The question *how to support them?* goes therefore beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, as the main source of their vulnerable position is upstream from it. This chapter aims to shed light on core factors and mechanisms which produce and reproduce the disadvantage of the targeted population and to sketch alternative perspectives and practical strategies that make a real inclusive turn in education and beyond possible.

This paper is organised in two parts: the first one aims to depict the worsening of the situation of many migrant students during the pandemic (section 2) and to identify core causal factors (section 3); the second part juxtaposes

the signalled problems to promising solutions (section 4).

Throughout the chapter, interdisciplinary critical theoretical reasoning intersects with empirical data. The meta-analysis carried out for this article corroborates recent cross-national data with data resulting from isolated local studies with focus on Europe. In this way local and global perspectives connect and the article meets the challenge of considering such global phenomena in a global way. The theoretical and practical proposals presented in this paper can be validated in and adapted to each specific context.

2. The Problem

The term ‘migrant students’, which depicts the protagonists of this volume, refers to millions of individuals who have in common two characteristics: they are school-aged and they left the country in which they were raised. In order to identify the reality that a significant part of this population has been facing during the pandemic, I integrate in this article specific data on migrant students with general data on *migrants* and on *students*.

2.1 Vulnerabilization of *Migrants* during the Pandemic

Empirical studies conducted in 2020 and 2021 show that migrants are among the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond education, on which the following sections focus, six main problem areas emerge from the analysis of the literature. Even if presented separately, they must be understood as interlinked:

1. *Work*: migrant workers are over-represented in lower paid, informal and temporary jobs

as well as in sectors more affected by the pandemic, such as services – in particular, domestic services – and sales (Global Migration Data Portal, 2021; International Data Alliance for Children on the Move [IDAC], 2021; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020a; Vilá et al., 2021). This same group has, however, also limited access to financial measures introduced to mitigate economic loss (Global Migration Data Portal, 2021). Unemployment and loss of jobs lead to further drops towards and below the poverty line (Dempster et al., 2020; Taran and Kadyshcheva 2022).

2. *Residence*: As residence permits are frequently connected to employment status, the risk of expulsion has increased. Additionally, further mobility, including voluntary return to the countries of origin, has not been a possibility for many: beyond economic constraints, the closure and militarisation of the borders has made it extremely difficult or even impossible (Global Migration Data Portal, 2021).

3. *Segregation*: The so-called ‘securitisation’ of borders⁴ reduced access to humanitarian support (Global Migration Data Portal, 2021; Priya Morley et al., 2021; You et al., 2020) and possibilities of family reunification, while delays in asylum programmes trap migrants in uncertainty (Mixed Migration Centre, 2021). In general, ‘social distance’ has strengthened segregation (Bhimji, 2021; Mukumbang 2021) and prolonged isolation increased barriers to access social protection programmes (Mixed Migration Centre, 2021).
4. *Housing*: Social isolation is also linked to housing conditions, and migrants are frequently relegated to remote, peripheral areas with less infrastructure and fewer mobility services, characterised by social and economic hardship (OECD, 2021). The quality of living conditions of migrants is also affected by their reduced possibility of choice which results in frequently overcrowded households (Jaljaa et al., 2022).
5. *Health*: Beside the general difficulties in accessing healthcare services (Hayward et al., 2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated health vulnerability (Krist et al., 2021; Zenner and Wickramage, 2021). The infection and death rate due to COVID-19 is particularly high among migrants; the main causes include over-representation of migrants in system-relevant professions (such as the healthcare services), poorer living conditions, and reduced access to information (Hintermeier et al., 2021). Beyond physical health, psychological health is increasingly endangered, while at the same time there are fewer chances to get professional support (Mangrio et al., 2022).
6. *Safety*: The consequences of the pandemic related to the previous problem areas have caused an increased vulnerability to crimi-

nal networks: human trafficking, particularly of children, and migrant smuggling have increased, and criminal organizations have successfully taken advantage of desperation, isolation and overwhelmed institutions (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021).

These data show how the pandemic has increased the vulnerability of that segment of society which was already *vulnerable*, i.e. deprived of resources and entitlements – which would allow them to acclimatise, cope, adapt and recover from the effects of hazardous conditions (Gallopín, 2006; Sen, 1991).

2.2 Vulnerabilization of (Migrant) Students during the Pandemic

Students, as understood in this publication, are children, adolescents and young adults (henceforth children) – that is people who are usually embedded in family systems and highly dependent on them⁵. How children experience the pandemic and what impact it has (had) on them are therefore interrelated with the experience of their families and the impact it has on them too. The natural dependency of young people on their family has even increased with the closure of schools, as it transformed families – at least in the lock-down phases in Europe – into the only centre of reference for children, solely responsible for the satisfaction of their needs. The vulnerable position of migrant families, which increased further during the pandemic, means therefore a sharper impact of the pandemic on their children.

During the lock-down all children suffered social isolation, which has a host of short-term and long-term consequences (Larsen et al., 2022). The abrupt shifts from school to no school to on-line school have had a negative impact on the social, emotional and mental well-being and

4 For a discussion on the (in)securitisation of borders see: Bigo, D. (2014). ‘The (in)securitization practices of the three universes of EU border control: Military/Navy – border guards/police – database analysts’, *Security Dialogue*, 45(3), pp. 209–225. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26292341>.

5 In this text we refer to ‘migrant students’ and relate to them as part of a family system. Even if this corresponds to the reality of the majority of this population, it is important to consider that around 15 % of first-time applicant children in the EU are unaccompanied minors (EUROSTAT 2022).

academic achievement of young people (Office for Civil Rights [OCR], 2021) and a slowdown or even regression of language development, particularly salient for migrant children (Bathke, 2021).

Some children, and disproportionately migrant children (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020), suffered the consequences of school closure during the pandemic more than others (OCR, 2021; Tso et al., 2022; Wilson and Mude, 2020;). It led, for instance, to high anxiety, to (more) hunger and physical and psychological violence (Bhabha, 2020; IDAC, 2021; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2021; Vilá et al., 2021) and to the lack of specialised support, as in the case of children with learning disabilities (Binkley, 2020; Goldstein, 2020). Besides school closure, the need of family members for support in child-care or financial resources as well as the fear of endangering older members of the family through infections decreased the numbers of children who could enjoy formal education (Zenteno, 2020; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2021).

Being out of schooling has serious implications not just for the present but also for the future of the children, also considering the fact that a return to school is in many cases not happening (United Nations [UN], 2021): marginalized children have therefore fewer chances than before to emancipate themselves from their socio-economic position (Dorn et al., 2021).

The socio-economic context in which children are embedded has an impact also on their experience of homeschooling. The following factors have played in this regard a crucial role: the availability to the child of the internet and suitable technical equipment, the existence of quiet space, the child's digital competence and that of their parents as well as their ability in general to support their children (Binkley, 2020; Cherewka, 2020; Goldstein, 2020; OECD, 2020; van de Werfhorst et al., 2020; Zenteno, 2020), and the ability and the possibility of the school-staff to develop adequate strategies (Azorín, 2020; Bubb and Jones, 2020; Niemi and Kousa, 2020; Pelikan et al., 2021; Reimers and Schleicher, 2020; Wood, Boone-Thornton and Rivera-Singletary, 2021 Zhao, 2020).

3. Behind the Problem

The meta-analysis presented on the impact of (the management of) the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant students has shown that they suffer a major vulnerability which is linked to the marginalised position of their family. In order to support migrant students, it is therefore fundamental to *understand* the source of this structural inequality and the mechanisms of its production, and to *counteract* its reproduction.

3.1 A Problem of Perception

Lack of language skills, non-existent or reduced local networks and cultural knowledge about

their new context are factors which explain the disadvantage that some migrants might have at the start. However, these factors cannot, even all together, amount to a comprehensive explanation of their social exclusion, of why they “lack effective participation in key activities or benefits of the society in which they live” (Razer et al., 2013, p. 1152). Indeed, language skills can be developed, a local network can be built and relevant knowledge gained, *provided that the system makes it possible*. However, no matter how advanced language skills are, how dense the local network is and how familiar the child is with the implicit rules of the place, data show that social exclusion persists even through generations: the so-called

Second Generation is still disadvantaged – in some countries more than in others – compared to children whose family biography doesn't include transnational migration (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2017; Fernández-Reino, 2020). Being socially excluded – that is, being marginalised from one's own society – means not being accepted and valued in the community, not being in a position to make easily a valuable contribution within it, nor being “able to access the range of services and/or opportunities open to others” (Mowat, 2015, p. 457). It is therefore not just a mere state but encompasses *feelings*, which can be transitory and context related or permanent and identity-forming (Mowat, 2015).

An analysis of the characteristics of migrants trapped at the margin of society as well as of non-migrant marginalised population reveals a wider matrix of inequality, or as Hill Collins (1990) first called it: “matrix of domination”. Due to the practice of *doing difference* which permeates the contemporary post-colonial society, the different, intersecting characteristics of each person determine their social positioning and thus the power or powerlessness they have in specific social spheres and social contexts (Budde, 2018, p. 46). Gender, ‘race’, class, age, disability, religion are some main categories which compose this matrix: they are not simple elements of diversity, they are axes for power distribution.

Particularly relevant to understand the specific exclusion of migrants is the category ‘race’, as since the beginning of colonialism it has been used to differentiate, homogenise and arrange into hierarchies social groups with different geographical origins. The social practices of “depersonalization, delegitimization and dehumanization” (Tileaga, 2007) have been used for centuries in order to legitimate colonial abuses. Even if races are proven not to be a biological reality but a social construction, racism is still widespread: it permeates the (not yet de-)colonised world society.

In relation to people considered as *foreigners*, the word *race* is today, at least in Europe, frequently substituted with the term *culture* which seems a more neutral description of difference,

though the same essentialist, fatalist perspective on identity lays behind it. Imagining the world as organised into separated national cultures, understood as inherently homogenous and stable systems, and classifying humans depending on their real or presumed origin foster *othering*. The mechanism of this involves: 1. Separating individuals into an in-group and an out-group; 2. Rendering invisible their individuality; 3. Attributing negative characteristics to ‘the others’ and positive ones to one's own group⁶ (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1985). This psycho-social mechanism favors political scapegoat strategies (Dumitrescu, 2022; Wirz et al., 2018).

This categorisation of people in cultures does not consider its dialogic character: identity develops continuously in interaction with others and the environment (Buber, 1965; Layes, 2003). The fact is that the way individuals think, feel and act is influenced by a plurality of local and trans-local cultures as well as the experiences of people and the specific situation they find themselves in (Conti, 2012; 2021a, 2021d).

Balibar (1990) calls this widespread use of culture “neo-racism”, as it makes it possible to reproduce in a subtle way racist logic and hierarchies. Together with the reinforcement of nationalism and the successful political production of scapegoats, it *produces* and *legitimizes* unequal and unjust treatment of migrants. Racism, in its overt individual form as well as in its more subtle, institutional form (Ezorsky, 1991), is therefore a mechanism of *vulnerabilisation* of migrants, as it *produces* their vulnerability and *legitimizes* their discrimination.

The unfounded idea that people with different national origins are a priori different from all other millions of national citizens – imagined instead as all alike – freezes migrants in the condition of *foreigners*, as “someone who belongs to a country that is not your own” (Collins Dictionary, 2021). Where should people belong to, if not to the place where they live? ‘Foreign’ is indeed a mode of being, or better *not* being (yet) in relationship as it expresses “something [...] un-

⁶ This third step is not applied to ‘cultures’ considered as similar and therefore allied.

known”, its suggested synonym “unfamiliar” (Collins Dictionary, 2021). Once arrived, contact with migrants is possible, therefore they can (and do to many) become known and familiar (Conti 2021b). This stigmatising narrative of unbridgeable and fixed cultural difference is tightly linked to the juridical creation of formal, real differences. While on the one hand, the lack of formal recognition of equality reproduces the mechanism of *doing difference* and legitimates, indirectly, discrimination (Calderón Chelius, 2021), on the other hand a formalised equality is certainly fundamental, though it is not itself enough for neutralising racism (Chitolina Zanini, 2021).

3.2 Problematic Actions

Racism must be recognised and prospectively overcome on the systemic as well as on the individual level. Adverse interactions with institutional, symbolic and individual acts of racism lead to “heightened levels of arousal, hyper-vigilance, and symptoms associated with anxiety and depression” (Henderson et al., 2019, p. 927). Racism is trauma (Henderson et al., 2019).

Considering the strong personal impact that peers and teachers have on the experience of migrant students at school and therefore on their relationship with learning and on their development overall, it is important to increase awareness about the fact that migrant students are indeed frequently victim of racism from peers (Alivernini et al., 2019; Nikolaou et al., 2019; Morales, 2021, Steketee et al., 2021) and from teachers (Artamonova, 2018; Bruneau et al., 2019; Copur-Gencturk et al., 2020; Quinn, 2020; Tereshchenko et al., 2019).

As teachers are themselves powerful role models, it is important to pinpoint how such often unconscious perception of migrant students *as migrants* and therefore *as different* and not seldom *as less valuable* can come to expression. Findings based on data collected in the UK, Germany and Italy within the framework of the European project SHARMED (SHARed MEories and Dialogues) shows harm on three different levels (Conti, 2021c):

1. *Affective*: due to the spread of the essentialist mind-set, migrant students, even second generation ones, are exposed to the increased risk of not being perceived in their uniqueness, of being denied their belonging to the imagined national ‘we’, of having to carry out their hybrid identity development under the pressure of binary logics.
2. *Cognitive*: a lack of openness, curiosity and appreciation of knowledge of other reference systems pushes migrant students into the role of those just in need of learning, which can on the one hand reinforce in the group racist patterns of thought and on the other hand reduce self-confidence. Furthermore, the epistemic authority of migrant students risks being relegated to the peculiar field of knowledge related to the country of origin, regardless of their real knowledge about it and of the knowledge they gain about their new context.
3. *Behavioural*: the focus on the students’ migration background causes biased expectations about their abilities and talents. Furthermore, migrant students, in particular those with a low level of language proficiency, suffer the overall underestimation of their competences.

The specific experience that migrant students have in their school environment depends on the reaction of their environment to them, which is influenced by their whole individual intersectional profile which goes beyond the sole categories of ‘race’/‘culture’ and ‘language proficiency’. Categories, which are frequently used to read ‘the other’ and that tend to turn on (un)conscious biases, are:

Class: as the COVID-19 pandemic puts in evidence and reinforces, the socio-economic status of the parents is determinant for the experience of children in relation to education. One of the reasons for this is the fact that the positioning of children in relation to this category influences teachers’ perception and behaviours significantly (Autin et al., 2019; Brandmiller et al., 2020).

- *Gender*: while generally boys have more power than other genders, in education there is a general tendency to favour girls (Terrier, 2020) except in mathematics (Brandmiller et al., 2020; Carlana, 2019). Gender and sexual minorities suffer specific discrimination (Bochicchio et al., 2019; Stucky et al., 2020).
- *Religion*: while religious belonging is generally not relevant, except in specific religious educational settings, there are specific religious affiliations which dramatically increase the risk of discrimination of migrant students, as in the case of Islamophobia (Ridha, 2021; van Bergen et al., 2021).
- *Disability*: physical and/or psychological disability increase the risk of marginalisation for the students themselves and their families. It is important to consider that the vulnerabilisation which migrant students might experience can itself become a cause of the development of disabilities, especially

psychological ones (Migliarini et al., 2018; Okot Oyat, 2017; Robards et al., 2020; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018).

The intersectional profile of migrant students consists of categories whose enormous *discriminatory power* is inversely proportional to their *descriptive power*: these categories don't say anything about a person but they have the stand of revealing everything or at least 'enough'. Despite being categories, and therefore "relational, changeable social constructs" (Dietze, 2006, p. 8, own translation) which are produced through actions within processes of interaction, they are seldom negotiable and negotiated. They are mainly invisible: some take them for granted, others don't even see them. Indeed everyone is embedded in the matrix, absorbs its logics and it needs a conscious effort to question them and to react and stop being subordinate to them, that is: stop dominating, oppressing and violating others.

4. A new conceptual framework

The matrix of inequality brought to light in the previous chapter stands in contrast to the claim of equality that lies at the heart of the democratic ideal. Its fulfilment requires the deconstruction of this matrix and the development of new promising visions. In this chapter I present a conceptual framework which can orientate such a turn and exemplify it through the description of concrete measures in education.

4.1 A Change of Perception

Characteristic of democracy is that *all* people (*démos*) – not just some of them – share the power (*kratós*) of shaping together their intersubjective

reality. In many countries, laws – usually constitutional ones – have been enacted in order to protect the right of every person, not to be discriminated against, enshrining equality as an inalienable right. Moreover, international human rights instruments – treaties and further legal sources for the protection of human rights globally – support this precept by formally guaranteeing basic rights for all human beings and specifically for children, no matter *who* they are and *where* they are.

A particularly meaningful international critical debate on the gap between legislative paradigm and glocal reality has been brought up by the U.N. in relation to the unjust disadvantages that people with disabilities all around the globe

experience (U.N. General Assembly, 2006). In this context, the term *inclusion* has been introduced as a paradigm which aims to counterpose the unjustified *exclusion*.

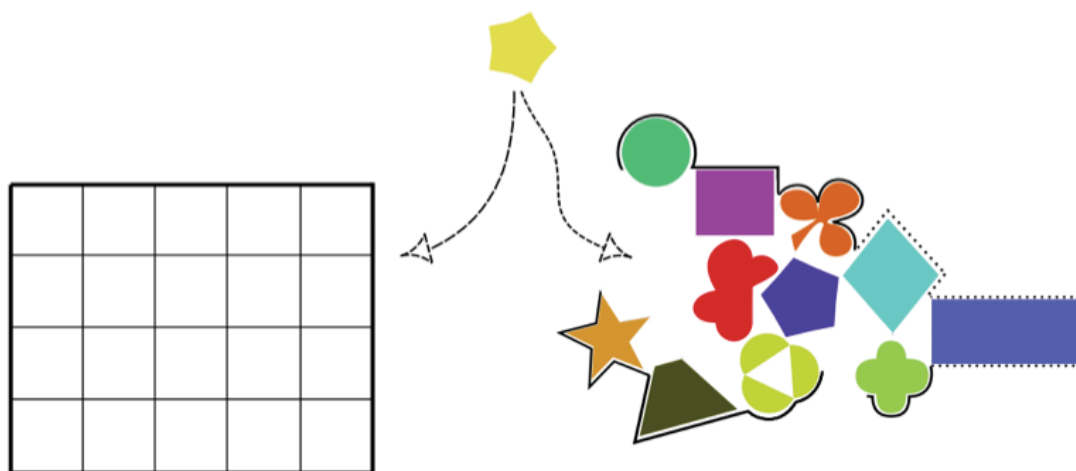
As disability is not the only category with discriminatory power which prevents people from being equal (see section 3), *inclusion* has become a more general call for pathways to a more equitable, direct and influential participation of all members of a society, no matter what is their intersectional profile.

A great merit of the concept of inclusion is that it focuses on society as a whole, tackling the problem of inequality, by de-legitimising the practice of *doing difference* though embracing individual diversity. It responds to Hannah Arendt's call for recognizing "the right of everyone to belong" and connects it, as she does, with "the right

to have rights" (Arendt, 1958; 1962, p. 298). *Membership* (i.e. being part of a community) and *participation* (i.e. taking part in it) become one.

The discourse on inclusion is extremely fruitful for the fight against discrimination of migrants, as it fights against the construction of the artificial and arbitrary line between who is normal and who is not, what is normal and what is not. It recognizes the heterogeneity of society, highlights that all its members are equal and focuses on their right of non-discrimination. In this way it breaks free from category-thinking and in particular from the juxtaposition migrant vs. 'the others' – the recognized members of the "Imagined Community" (Anderson, 1983) – which the concept of *integration* instead still perpetuates, spreading further the illusion of homogeneous national cultures.

Fig. 1: Integration (left) and inclusion (right) (Conti 2022)



By accepting inclusion as a guiding principle, each institution is required to rethink itself: it must become accessible to all, as access – and thus participation – is a right which institutions must guarantee to everyone. Education must therefore be for the development of all.

However, inclusion has three subtle weaknesses, originating in the emergence of the concept in the context of the fight for the rights of persons with disabilities. The first relates to the focus on nearly *natural* individual peculiarities and does not consider those created by the sys-

tem itself (Printz, 2018); the second is its deficit-focus, as difference is mainly something to be compensated by the system; connected to this is a third weakness, that individuals are not conceived of as more than those characteristics perceived as potential barriers to equal participation.

The concept of *dialogue* can bring forward the transformative vision that inclusion initiates, offering a theoretical framework which overcomes these three blind spots. Indeed *dialogue* and *inclusion* are concepts that overlap: both see participation of all members of a system as a con-

dition and as an aim at the same time. Inclusion emphasises that difference should not be an obstacle to participation, whereas in dialogue difference is precisely the entitlement to participation: on the one hand, because difference is perceived as something positive, extremely valuable for the group, and on the other hand, because people couldn't otherwise really participate as equal members, if they could not be who they are. Difference is related therefore to the uniqueness of a person, whose identity is characterised by an inner heterogeneity which the person should be free to express.

Under the framework of dialogue, *equality* (in opposition to *hierarchy*) is extremely important, as this is seen as a condition for real participation. Dialogue aims to the creation of horizontal transformative processes. Indeed the three core characteristics of dialogue are: 1. appreciative interest for the differences brought forth by individuals; 2. active, self-determined participation of all; 3. ideal freedom from hierarchy (Conti, 2012, p. 112).

In a society where exclusion is performed on a daily basis through the practice of constructing difference along the topography of power relations, the dialogical approach gives individuals the power to negotiate their own difference in interaction with open and curious others.

4.2 Dialogic Actions

According to the above argumentation, a shift towards a fully inclusive society would entail the chance for every member to shape it to the same extent. School itself is the core of the system and should therefore be a space in which its members learn to shape freely and respectfully their own common reality together. The inclusive school is a creative, inspiring space in which everyone engages and takes advantage of the opportunity to participate (Conti, 2021a). An inclusive transformation of school through the dialogic approach is therefore more than about individualising teaching: it is about rethinking education *together* thanks to teachers who are facilitators of learning processes, connecting school with its

community. The core characteristics of dialogue applied in the educational context mean: 1) serious consideration, appreciation and involvement of difference (of perspectives; of actors) in decision-making processes; 2) development of strategies and settings which allow everyone to engage in the learning process and in all further relevant activities; 3) constant attention to a respectful, empowering egalitarian interrelation between adults and children as well as among children.

Therefore, in order to support (migrant) students during the pandemic and beyond, the following concrete proposals must be taken in consideration:

1. *Multiple needs*: Schools must implement strategies that consider students in all their being. School is not just about providing knowledge to students but supporting the holistic development of children (Kasper, 2021). Social needs, emotional needs, and mental health needs must be explicitly addressed as well as basic needs such as nutrition, despite the closure of school facilities (United States Department of Education, 2021). In relation to learning, during the pandemic it is also important to guarantee equity of education, through “adjusting the schooling processes, and providing ample encouragement and support” (Kovács Cerović et al., 2022) as well as developing learning concepts which fit with individual competences, interests, and learning styles as well as the infrastructure at disposal of the different students (Fox et al., 2021).
2. *No-tech, low-tech and high-tech*: If a school wants to adopt e-learning, it must provide digital equipment for children who don't have adequate resources at their disposal (Li and Lalani, 2020) and must support children and parents to develop digital competences, without taking them for granted (Wood, Boone-Thornton and Rivera-Singletary, 2021). To reduce complexity, it is useful to coordinate with other teachers and use all the same media, in particular for communication (Kovács Cerović et al., 2022). In order to support the

use of “devices, tools and platforms made available by the school” tutorials can be developed, which must be accessible and written in a way and/or in a language which children and parents can understand (US Department of Education, 2021). Schools should offer low- and no-tech material (UNICEF, 2020), “such as print packets” (Diallo, 2020) for children who cannot be reached with e-learning. Furthermore, support to children and parents can be given via “online systems, peer support and hotlines” (Choi and Chiu, 2021).

3. *Home-schooling*: The transfer from learning at school to learning at home needs “new content, new pedagogy, and new ways of monitoring and assessment” (UNESCO, 2020). Consistent teaching strategies that foster active participation, collaboration and the development of socio-emotional skills are considered very important (US Department of Education, 2021). Collaborative roles and relationships also with teachers are a positive consequence of the increased autonomy of the students in the context of home-schooling and must be kept long term, in virtual and hybrid models of schooling as well as in presence. Indeed, higher student activity is measured in relation to choice of “learning content, methods, activities, organization, and timeframes” (Kovács Cerović et al., 2022). This allows a major respect for differences, which should be accompanied by a general attention to individualisation (Kovács Cerović et al., 2022). The diversity of ICT gives great support, though it must consciously capitalise on technology (Choi and Chiu, 2021).
4. *Ongoing exchange*: Interaction between students and teachers as well as among peers is the basis for successful learning (Popyk, 2021). In the context of the pandemic, it is even more important as it provides feedback and guidance, both for students and for teachers (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2020) and reestablishes the socialisation space, which is so very important to children, in particular those who don’t have (many) other acquaintances outside school, such as many migrant children (Popyk, 2021). Doing so, the well-being of children is favoured and strong school-community relationships maintained (US Department of Education, 2021). Indeed, exchanges can become institutionalised collaborative spaces where students and teachers as well as further stakeholders regularly meet towards potential participatory policymaking – for example, in relation to school practices (Kovács Cerović et al., 2022). Exchange can and should be favoured at different levels and with different aims, during and after the pandemic (Kovács Cerović et al., 2022).
5. *Learning process*: School closure forces society to “reorganize education” (Zhao, 2020), in order to further guarantee quality education under the changed conditions. This is seen as a chance by numerous authors to re-think education as a whole and to make long-lasting changes. Innovative education is described as an education which is driven by students (Wehmeyer and Zhao, 2020), in which teaching goals and learning goals match with each other, in which students can potentially design their own learning, offered maybe at some point from different institutions at once (Kovács Cerović et al., 2022). Learning must shift from reciting, repeating and remembering knowledge that is meaningless for the students into more participative formats, such as project-based learning, which allow them to learn content that is relevant to them and related to their experiential world in a cooperative and problem-centred way (US Department of Education, 2021; Zhao, 2020). Furthermore, the pandemic makes evident the importance of developing critical, social, emotional and academic skills and to foster “safe and supportive learning” (US Department of Education, 2021).
6. *Teachers’ resources*: In order to cope with their tasks, teachers need resources. Some of the most important resources they (should) have at their disposal are their own skills and a supportive network. This being the case, among the most important areas for profes-

sional training are digital competence and trauma-informed care (US Department of Education, 2021), as well as methodologies for facilitating dialogic learning processes (Baraldi et al., 2021) as well as intercultural competence, considered as including anti-racism and reflections on linguistic dominance (Kasper, 2021). Teachers have also made evident, particularly during the pandemic, how they themselves must be supported also in relation to their general well-being, “including rich opportunities for social and emotional learning and physical care – resources they can then model and share with the students and families they serve” (Kasper, 2021). Sup-

port is also needed in the direct context of their profession – for instance, through collaboration in multi-professional teams – such as with “school-based mental health professionals, counselors, social workers, psychologists” (US Department of Education, 2021). Resources available for teachers originate also in communities of practice as well as in the wider local network. However, time is a condition for capitalising on resources, in particular for professional learning, community connection, self-care and self-reflection (Kasper, 2021). A re-organisation of the allocation of time and an enlargement of staff might be necessary (Kasper, 2021).

5. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to propose a theoretical framework which on the one hand can show how migrant students are vulnerabilized, bringing to light the central factors which produce it, and on the other hand can offer a possible strategy to overcome it. The interplay between empirical data and theory in the first part of the article allowed us to tailor the theoretical discussion, enabling a deeper analysis of the problematic issues, embedding them in a broader context evolved over time. In the second part of the paper, recent data has served as illustrative examples and for a test case of the theoretical proposal, making the proposal more tangible.

In this article, it has been shown that behind the discrimination of migrants there is a whole system of power-relations which hinders the fulfilment of the democratic core principle of equality. Furthermore, it has been argued that such a matrix of inequality, which vulnerabilises systematically most of the inhabitants of the planet, could be counteracted by the emergence of the discourse of *inclusion*. The specificity of this concept has been explained and compared first to

the problematic concept of *integration* and secondly with the promising concept of *dialogue*. Finally, the potential that dialogue has to fulfill the vision of inclusive education in an inclusive society has been discussed, offering an egalitarian logic suitable for rethinking both interrelated spheres.

Further research is needed in order to understand how a culture of dialogue can be spread both inside and outside school. Considering education to be a key strategy in this regard, important objects of study are learning materials and training programmes for students and teachers/educators.⁷ Furthermore, it is relevant and urgent to guide and supervise scientifically the changes made to social and educational practices with a negative impact on migrant students, in order to understand the specific challenges and opportunities of the dialogic turn.

⁷ For this purpose, the EU Commission has funded the project KIDS4ALL (Key Inclusive Development Strategies for Lifelong Learning) which develops free dialogic learning tools for young people and for their teachers and educators, combining the buddy-system with lifelong learning.

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