

Let's play democracy!

Developing multicultural education and the case study of young immigrants in Italian schools*

1. Introduction

Migration is recognized as a crucial issue not only for political agendas, but also for political philosophy. On one hand, laws and policies have been enacted and transported in legal schemes in order to shape integration and equality. In particular, in Europe directives have been launched¹ in an effort to tackle explicit and implicit forms of discrimination within societies. On the other, in the last years philosophical debates upon different forms of citizenship apt to address the problem of pluralism in liberal, democratic societies have increased considerably². Within this discussion, one of the most contested issues concerns how liberal democracies should relate to ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities and their claims for recognition. Within political philosophy, three prominent lines of argument have been put forward, namely various liberal theories defended conceptions of individual rights, neutrality, and toleration³, while others focused on multicultural claims for group rights and recognition of group identities⁴. Finally, an intermediate position has argued for cultural claims to be interpreted and in favour of negotiations, intended as those forms of deliberation apt to promote a wider democratic outcome.⁵

To understand the debate about liberal justice and multicultural claims, the concept of public space is extremely relevant. Public spaces are those spaces where citizens and individuals living in a society are publicly visible. In this sense, public spaces not only are opposed to private properties and private homes, but are also to be considered as those places in which a political society produces and proposes its image, conception, and perception. For these reasons, the organization of public spaces always involves issues of recognition and identity. Indeed, in the definition of what is legitimate in public spaces, the boundaries of a society's membership and the demands of inclusion are at stake.

In the contemporary multicultural context of liberal democracies, schools

represent a fundamental public space in reference to which different kinds of claims of recognition are cast upon. For example, schools involve claims for the equal treatment of cultures, claims to equal rights which are already embodied in the democratic constitution, but from which minorities are excluded by some social practices and special norms. A paradigmatic case of such claims is that of the Egyptian private school which was closed down in Italy in 2006. In such a situation, the real problem was not concerned with safety requirements, as the political authorities claimed, but with the right of the Egyptian community to set up a bilingual private school. Moreover, schools are also public spaces in which strictly symbolic recognition is demanded. To make a well-known example, the acceptance of the wearing of the Muslim veils in public schools is a classical case in which minorities affirm their right to be publicly visible and require society to recognize them in their differences. Finally, it is important to mention the issue of the legal rights held by migrants regarding education. The question whether migrants are morally entitled to a range of legal rights, including rights to education for their children, has never been evaluated by systematic philosophical reflections⁶. However, it is a pressing issue, especially considering the need for normative criteria in the enforcement of immigration laws.

Given such examples, schools and education appear as a crucial dimension in contemporary liberal society and a necessary condition for inclusion and discussion of the justification of minorities' claims. Thus, understanding the potential of education in relation to the multicultural context is a pressing need. The present work focuses on the part played by multicultural education in the integration process and democratic development of migrant students. The issue under discussion is whether providing an educational program focused on civic values, respect, and public deliberation can be considered a useful and effective strategy towards social integration and political inclusion of students holding different cultural backgrounds and habits. On the basis of a research, carried out in the school year 2008/2009 by CeSEP, the Center of Public Ethics of the University Vita-Salute San Raffaele, it considers the potential of multicultural. In what follows, it will be described a program of multicultural education focused on civic values and democratic deliberation. The idea gained by working with young students in Italian schools is that discussing issues of cultural recognition, public spaces, and pluralism is not only possible, but also crucial for the development of

a shared public culture in complex democratic societies.

The aim of this work is to provide theoretical and scientific frameworks for enhancing multicultural education, intended as that discipline which not only seeks to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups⁷, but also to pursue an educated, autonomous citizenry able to live together respecting cultural differences and to discuss the organization of public spaces and their shape.

Given its scope, the present article is divided into two parts. First, a theoretical section is devoted to those ideas of liberalism, pluralism, democratic discourse in their relations to civic education. Reasoning among such concepts is essential to understand the framework within which the research takes place for such ideas shape and inform the educational program set up and conducted in the classrooms. In particular, the research design relies heavily on John Rawls's conception of liberalism. Second, the article proceeds by describing the outlook of the educational program and the results collected within the research. It is important to stress from the beginning that, in what follows, not all the data are going to be presented, but only some significant examples which show the effectiveness of the educational model. In this sense, the present work is neither a descriptive study of school integration, nor a work of normative theorizing only. On the contrary, it places itself on the boundary between the realms of theory and practice and it is to be considered a sort of experiment in *public philosophy*⁸, a down to earth application of philosophical reflections to a pressing and crucial problem which affects contemporary democratic societies.

2. The Potential of Education

When we talk about civic education we refer to those educational strategies and set of rules which are to prepare young individuals living in a country to become good and politically engaged citizens. To put it in Gutmann's words, civic education is "the cultivation of the virtues, knowledge, and skills necessary for political participation."⁹ Although it is true that schools are not to be regarded as the only institutions to raise civic characters¹⁰, it is also true that schooling is one of the most appropriate methods to prepare future citizens who are to participate in political life for it holds a great democratic potential and deliberative instruction.¹¹ Schooling is crucial to the primer development of individuals'

capacities to reflect upon common issues, it is fundamental in learning to discuss and socialize with interlocutors holding different political and moral views. It is essential in shaping one's civic identity. Indeed, it is usually at school that individuals meet persons holding different ideas and points of views for the first time and are confronted with the possibility of creating a community with them. For these reasons, following Gutmann's account of democratic education, it is possible to argue that, within its aims, schooling needs not only to teach students the content of the different subjects covered by their curricula. It needs also to educate individuals to be able to participate in the on-going, collective deliberation carried within a society to shape its forms and the relations among its citizens.

In this sense, the primer goal of a democratic educational model is to prepare future citizens to critically evaluate competing conceptions of the good life and the good society, to judge among different normative sets of principles and images of justice in order to participate in "conscious social reproduction."¹² Civic education is also a means to achieve a higher-order view on oneself for it enables individuals to consider their own positions, ways of life, and moral commitments and, thus, to critically reflect upon them. The argument holds that if civic education can provide the basic capacities towards democratic deliberation and evaluation of competing normative conceptions, it enables individuals not only to judge and discuss those views held by others, but also their own, to question their justification and legitimacy. In this sense, the acquisition of autonomy, which in this respect means the ability to scrutinize and assess one's ends and conception of the good life, is to be considered part of the educational enterprise. However, this does not mean that civic education necessarily aims at the production of autonomous citizens. As Rawls sees it, civic education needs to teach students to become independent members of a society, capable of being motivated by a society's political conception of justice¹³. To put it in Kymlicka's words, "the promotion of personal autonomy [is] the indirect consequence of civic education, not [...] its direct and explicit purpose."¹⁴ Independency is a prerequisite for normative judgment and critical thinking which civic education within a liberal framework seeks to develop.

Given the scope of civic education, it is necessary to ask whether and to what extent the presence of migrant students in contemporary schools changes its task

and in what manners. If migrant students are not to be considered as temporary residents, but future citizens of the receiving society, what kind of civic education is to be expected to work for their integration? Moreover, it is important to note how the issues of education and integration in pluralist societies concern not only migrant students who arrive in the receiving country. It also affects those resident students who are to confront themselves with those very migrant students. It is not only a matter of school life for it is not a problem concerned only with the way students behave towards each other at school. Rather, it is a problem related with the development of those capacities necessary to confront oneself with diversity in general, in one's social and political relations.

In the school year 2008/2009, CeSEP, the Center of Ethics and Public Affairs of the University Vita-Salute San Raffaele, has realized a research project about the potential of multicultural education working within the urban area of the city of Milan, in the north of Italy. In the project "Interculturalità e Valori civili nelle scuole secondarie di primo grado milanesi", ten Middle School classes¹⁵ were involved and two hundreds and eighteen students, aged between twelve and thirteen, coming from twenty-three different countries, participated. The aim of the project has been that of not only analyzing the state of social integration within the context of one of the most important city of the north of Italy, where migration has increased considerably in the past few decades¹⁶. The project's pursue has been also that of shaping an educational model based on some considerations of normative political philosophy, namely on liberalism, respect and democracy, to foster social integration among students. The idea has been that of modelling schools as sites for encounters between students from different cultures exercising common interests, political values and fraternization; to provide students with organized spaces and methods to reason, reflect, and discuss upon their different ways of life, usages, and values. In this sense, the project aimed to defend and stress the importance of schools in the multicultural development: "liberal citizenship requires cultivating the habit of civility, and the capacity for public reasonableness in our interaction with others. [...] Precisely these habits and capacities [...] need to be learned in schools, for they are unlikely to be learned in smaller groups or associations [...] which tend to be homogenous in their ethno-cultural background and beliefs."¹⁷

Reflecting on the role schooling should have, the project presented education as the most important medium for developing democratic capacities for future citizens of contemporary societies who are to be able to exercise their human citizenship and rights. For these reasons, the educational model has focused on the development of civic values, starting from the political principles stated by the Italian Constitution, and on students' deliberative capacities.

The project addressed two main questions which constituted the study's lines of research. First, is it possible to think of schools as sites for democratic development and fraternization through deliberation and communication in pluralistic societies? Second, is a civic attitude teachable? How is to be organized an educational model viable to teach civic values and respect to young students holding different cultural backgrounds and views of the world?

3. Liberal Principles and Recognition in Multicultural Education

Given the aim, the purposes of the project, and its lines of research, the idea has been that of starting from Rawls's *Political Liberalism*¹⁸ in finding principles and political values apt to shape a model of civic education to address students of schools with a high percentage of migrants. In particular, despite the convergence of comprehensive and neutral forms of liberalism on civic education and its enforcement¹⁹, the project has been structured from a rejection of the former²⁰ and an acceptance of the latter. As a matter of fact, the project has been shaped drawing from Rawls's conception of liberalism as a distinctively political doctrine whose principles are to shape the political life of society only. In this sense, principles of justice are limited to politics and their justification is independent of any competing conception of the good one may endorse.

In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls's problem is to define a stable and just society of free and equal citizens profoundly divided by reasonable, though incompatible doctrines about how to conduct one's life. Thus, political liberalism argues for a "priority of the right over the good"²¹ when it comes to those normative principles which shape the life of a democratic society. Claiming the priority of the right is not only to refer to the idea that principles of political justice should set limits to permissible ways of life, but also to argue that claims made by citizens of liberal democracies in the public arena cannot appeal to beliefs which transgress the limits set by the political conception.

Since the normative principles of political liberalism are committed to neutrality and their justification does not depend on any conception of the good for the political conception of justice it defends is *freestanding*²², an educational program consistent with political liberalism teaches students only how to become good citizens. On this account, schooling is not meant to foster any idea of the good life unless it is necessary to good citizenship for its aim is only to develop liberal democratic skills and deliberative capacities. In this sense, the project has mainly focused on those ideas of justification and *public reason* which are crucial to the structure of political liberalism.

According to Rawls, the possibility of a political conception of justice is based on public justification and, thus, on the reasons reasonable citizens²³ may hold in accepting the conception of justice. Public justification is the liberal ideal which states that a political conception is legitimate only if it is reasonable from every individual's point of view. And legitimacy is strictly linked with a moral criterion of reciprocity which applies not only to the use of political power²⁴, but also when citizens explain their particular political views to one another²⁵. Such a criterion is crucial to Rawls's idea of *public reason* which is a standard for political dialogue between citizens in pluralistic liberal democracies. *Public reason* requires citizens to be able to justify their political claims and ideas to one another using publicly available values and standards. Moreover, it is committed to a *duty of civility* which recommends citizens not to justify political decisions on fundamental issues with partisan values that could not be publicly redeemed and, thus, it imposes on them a duty of respect and civic friendship²⁶. Indeed, Rawls believes there is a "natural duty of mutual respect which asks [individuals] to treat one another civilly and to be willing to explain the grounds of their actions, especially when the claims of others are overruled."²⁷ And the ideal of citizenship imposes to all citizens living in a society a "moral duty [...] to be able to explain to one another on [...] fundamental questions how the principles and policies they advocate and vote for can be supported by the political values of public reason."²⁸

Given such a framework, the educational model set for multicultural education within the research has had its core in the development of students' deliberative attitudes and in showing the importance of trying to provide reasons to one another, reasons endorsable from everyone's point of view. In particular, attention

has been focused on the need to consider everyone's point of view in the decisions making process which affect the life of those very individuals living in society.

Moreover, through the practice of discussing issues of toleration and recognition, the particular subject of integration and migration has been introduced. In this sense, the crucial point of the project has been that of presenting and discussing the problem of public spaces, understood as a symbolic context, and of claims concerning the legitimation and justification of certain cultural practices which highlight the public visibility of certain cultural traits. In short, the focus of the educational program has been that of public spaces in the distribution of equal recognition of all cultural identities present within the public and institutional contexts. It is important to note that what is at stake in considering claims concerning the visibility of cultural traits is the standard of normality to be accepted in a society and, thus, it is a question which affects directly and indirectly both minorities and majorities. For these reasons, discussing public spaces and their organizations at schools where migrant students learn side by side with resident students is peculiarly interesting and useful.

Students were asked to discuss cultural recognition to develop their capacities to interact towards each other civilly, with respect to each one's ideas and identity, in an effort to reach an agreement upon normative principles concerning how students are to behave in school. In this sense, the project asked students to see themselves as citizens of a peculiar kind of society, that of their class, in need of principles to regulate the behaviour of its members. In this sense, the project's educational model has not been thought to promote policies of cultural recognition or multicultural principles *per se*, but to engage students in discussing these very claims and those issues of value conflict and stability connected with them. Since the "fragmentation objection"²⁹ to multiculturalism holds that practices of cultural recognition undermine the unity of political communities and, thus, that multiculturalism, as a normative enterprise for public policies, is something to be sceptical about, the project's model of multicultural education combined the needs of reconciling the legitimate demands of unity and diversity by cultivating a common sense of political community and respect. To promote a shared sense of belonging, it is necessary to set up a political inclusive identity which a variety of culturally diverse citizens may be able to share. However, to shape bonds of affinity and identity citizens may endorse in their relations towards

one another, recognition of diversity is not to be silenced, but to be discussed upon using the resources of political liberalism and its reliance and trust on civic values. For these reasons, the notion of civic respect is crucial to the research.

Drawing from Rawls's work, it is possible to identify civic respect as a political, liberal account of mutual respect. Civic respect requires for citizens to acknowledge the fact of reasonable pluralism and, thus, the need to endorse *public reason* in debating principles of justice. Moreover, civic respect is a kind of *recognition respect*³⁰ that is owed to individuals *qua* citizens. As Darwall points out, recognition respect is a kind of respect which is owed by individuals solely in virtue of some features they possess. In contrast with *appraisal respect*, recognition respect is not concerned with considerations of qualities a person might have, but is due to individuals in their sharing citizenship. In this sense, civic respect is the expression of how citizens are to interact among each other in a fair society and, in turn, an education based on it teaches students the skills and concepts necessary for them to cooperate and discuss together.

4. Research Design

The research project “Valori civili e interculturalità nelle scuole secondarie di primo grado milanesi” covered a year of study, from September 2008 till September 2009. The project was divided in four main steps: collection of beginning surveys; a first theoretical educational activity; a second practical educational activity; collection of ending surveys.

The program provided the students with two different training sessions, one in which university professors of moral and political philosophy explained to them, in an interactive way, several general topics and concepts, such as what is to be considered a society characterized by the fact of reasonable pluralism, the concept of civic respect, and the basic political principles of the Italian Constitution. Following Rawls in starting from the fundamental ideas expressed by the public political culture of a society, it has been decided to focus students' attention on the first twelve articles of the Constitution of the Italian Republic which are general principles addressing individual rights to liberty, equality of opportunity, social security, and condemning discrimination, violence and attitudes contrary to reciprocity among citizens.

The second training activity, on the other hand, has been structured in a practical manner. Students have been asked to focus on different problems concerning cultural identity, the relation among different rights, solidarity and respect. Through the discussion of examples and practical situations, students had to exchange their ideas and views in order to write a “Chart of Civil Convivence at school”. Every class had to complete a Chart on its own, divided in five articles prescribing behaviors and attitudes to be held at school.

In order to understand whether the two-stages educational program is efficient in developing students’ capacities to deal with issues of integration, their deliberative abilities and capacities to reason from the point of view of the public, a survey concerning was submitted to students at the beginning of the program, before the attendance of the two training activities. The survey concerned not only students’ experience with cultural difference, but also their knowledge of civic values. The exact same survey was submitted to students again at the end of the research, after the two training activities, in order to check whether their political and civic understanding had improved. In this way, it has been possible to test the educational program, its results and merits with respect not only to migrant students' integration, but also to the general understanding of civic values among all the students who participated in the program.

4.1. The Surveys

The surveys prepared for the project have been divided in three main sections. A first section was devoted to collect personal data concerning students’ age, gender, country of birth, level of parents’ education, faith, places where they meet and interact with friends holding different cultural background. A second section was devoted to collect data which specifically concern students’ perception of cultural diversity. The survey asked students whether they have ever been witnesses of episodes of injustice related to discrimination; whether they thought there is more respect for cultural diversity at school compared to what they hear and see watching television, or outside school, or at home. Finally, a third section was devoted to address precisely the problem of integration and civic values. Students were asked to argue whether they thought that discussing issues of cultural difference is of any help towards integration; whether having a set of rules is fruitful in accomplishing a shared basis for living together; whether they know

what a Constitutional framework and political institutions are and why it is important for a country to have a Chart of citizens' rights and duties.

It is clear that, given the research design so defined, its results are to be considered qualitative in character. Moreover, it is important to stress that the research's main purpose is neither explanatory nor descriptive. Rather, its focus is the evaluation of strategies in multicultural education.

4.2. The first Educational Training

In the first educational activity, students have been provided with a general overview of the project's topic and fundamental issues connected with cultural diversity. The meaning of civic values, respect and reciprocity were presented and discussed. First, a theoretical framework has been exposed in explaining the shape of a multicultural society, intended as a normative concept which describes a society in which various groups with different cultural backgrounds live together peacefully, respecting anyone's identity as long as it is not in contradiction with the values of the Constitution. Particular attention has been cast upon the concept of dignity in outlining how, in a democratic society, all individuals living in it are to be treated with equal respect.

Second, addressing the problem of whether a multicultural society is possible, students were asked to reason among a specific problem of identity recognition. In particular *l'affair du foulard*, the contested acceptance of the Islamic headscarf in French state schools has been proposed for discussion³¹. The point of addressing such case was not only to treat a problem of recognition and a classical example in the literature upon toleration, but also to focus students' attention on a case of school regulation.

During the discussions in class, the harsh conflict upon competing ideas was not denied. On the contrary, students' attention has been focused particularly on those reasons supporting different instances: on one hand, those reasons concerned with individual freedom to wear a traditional outfit showing a cultural belonging were presented. On the other, those concerned with harmonizing relations among students via the eradication of public cultural practices which may constitute a division and a source of conflict were considered. In particular, students were asked to judge upon the issues and to confront the French solution with the Italian one, in which students who are Muslim can wear the headscarf at

school as long as it does not cover their faces and it does not hinder their participation in school's activities.

The third part of the first educational activity had been devoted to the fundamental principles of the Italian Constitution. The significance and meaning of the Chart has been explained, and the focus had been set on rights and duties Italian citizens have towards each other. In particular, the ideas of equality and reciprocity were discussed and presented in details.

Finally, in the first educational activity, the complexity of democratic deliberation was shown to students in the explanation of what it means for a normative claim to be justified on the basis of reasons “nobody could reasonably reject”³², to put it in Scanlon's vivid form.

4.3. The Second Educational training

In the second educational train, we set up a practical activity in which students were asked to discuss problems of justice, equality and respect. We suggested an interactive classroom activity using some case studies as bases for role playing with debates and group discussions. We asked students to see themselves as legislators seeking for an agreement among principles of civil convivence at school. Students of each class have been divided in five groups discussing five different examples involving questions of appropriateness in the relations among fellow students. Each group had to reason about such cases and come up with a principle of justice suited to address each of them and a normative directive apt to regulate the behaviour of all the components of the class. Finally, each group had to present the principle found during the deliberative process, to explain the reasons why the group had chosen it, and, finally, the class all together had to accept or modify all principles presented by each group.

The scope of the second educational activity has been that of increasing students' democratic attitudes, internalizing the processes of democratic deliberation, and discussing issues of convivence from the point of view of *public reason*. Moreover, the organisation of such game and role play permitted the transmission of participatory dispositions, political attitudes and values in an active manner with its positive effects in the process of learning. Indeed, much research in social psychology suggests that a significant source of attitude change is role playing behaviour, as individuals come to adopt attitudes and cognitions consistent with the behaviours that they are acting out.³³ As Finkel and Ernst

notes, “the successful transmission of political attitudes, values, and participatory dispositions [...] is likely to require [...] factors related to credible and likeable instructors, active methodology, and an open environment for political discussion.”³⁴

5. Data Collection

In order to analyse the sample of students who participated in the research, their differences in culture and habits and, thus, to understand whether the educational model is to be considered effective, in what follows I shall focus on the general data concerning students' personal details. Sketched a picture of the group of students, I will turn to the interpretation of the data concerning students' learning and comprehension of civic values and respect.

Given a total sample size of 218, the number of Italian students involved in the program corresponded to the 69,37% of the total, whereas the non-Italian students were the 30,73%. Non-Italian students came from all continents, except Oceania, for a total of 22 different countries, as table 1 shows in details.

Countries	Students	
LATIN AMERICA	23	It is important to note that the number of students whose family comes from a non-Italian country, but were born on the Italian territory is considerable. Given the total of non-Italian students participating in the research (sixty-seven), the number of students born in Italy is twenty-three which corresponds to the 34,35% of all non-Italian students. This is an interesting datum for the number of migrant children born in Italy has been increasing in the past years ³⁵ . Not only second-generation immigrants represent a consistent phenomenon in Italy, but it is also peculiarly important in relation to the problem of education. In particular, it is crucial when considering issues such as that of the recognition of citizenship to those born on the Italian territory and their right to vote. If it is a fact that the number of newborn coming
Peru	12	
Ecuador	7	
Brazil	1	
Colombia	1	
El Salvador	1	
(non specified)	1	
ASIA	22	
Philippines	11	
China	5	
Sri Lanka	4	
Bangladesh	1	
Turkey	1	
AFRICA	15	
Egypt	9	
Morocco	2	
Mauritius	1	
Angola	1	
Tunisia	1	
Somalia	1	
NON-ITALIAN EU	7	
France	2	
Moldavia	2	
Serbia	1	
Ex-Yugoslavia	1	
Germany	1	

Table 1: Students' countries of origin

from non-Italian families is high and that they will be engaged into the political process of the receiving society they live in, it is also true that the task of education in providing tools of political understanding becomes more and more essential.

Coming to students' expression of religious belonging, the data collected show that most of the students declared to hold a Christian-Catholic faith (71,5%) The second largest group is composed by those students who declared not to belong to any religious affiliation (16,9%) In a minor percentage, students were Muslim (3,6%), Christian-Orthodox (1,8%), Buddhist (1,3%), Coptic of the Orthodox Church of Alexandria (0,9%), Jehova's witnesses (0,45%), and Induist (0,45%). Finally, some of the students did not answer the question (2,75%). See table 2.

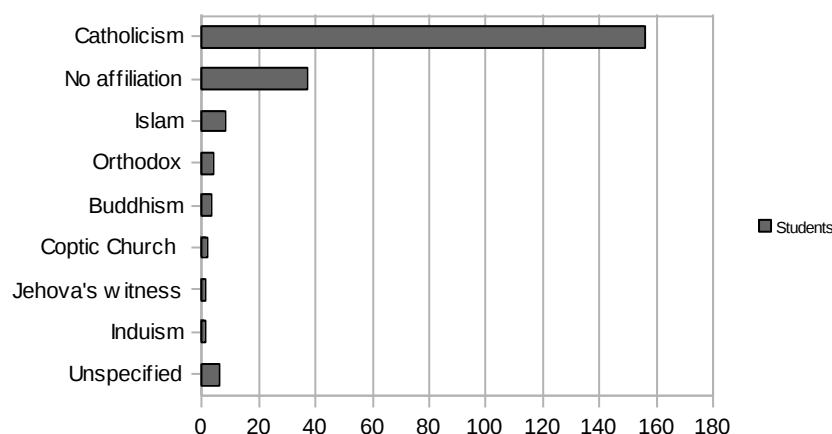


Table 2: Religious Affiliation

Turning to the collected data concerning students' knowledge of public discussions and civic values, the analysis of the data gained from the second and third parts of the surveys has been difficult and challenging. In order to check knowledge and comprehension of civic values, students were asked to answer some open questions. Since open questions require long answers they are difficult to analyse, categorize, and interpret in the proper manner. Indeed, in answering open questions, each student expressed his or her opinion defending different and personal claims. In this sense, answers are complex and articulated and do not fit into any interpretative framework. For these reasons, it has been decided to focus mainly on the vocabulary employed by students in their answers. Confronting the different choices in the usage of words, it has been possible to test their

comprehension and internalization of concepts. In particular, a set of specific words of special interest to political philosophy, liberalism, and civic values has been selected. Drawing from such set, which comprehends terms such as those of “rights”, “justice”, “duties”, “principles”, and other similar expressions, it has been possible to verify the effectiveness of the educational model and its merits in developing civic attitudes and political understanding. Moreover, attention has been focused on the arguments students provided in their answer. One of the most interesting point which the analysis of surveys has risen concerns students' improvements at constructing argumentations and at explaining opinions with coherence and adequacy. The change in the kind of reasons students used to support their claims has been determining to test positively the educational model. In this sense the analysis has focused not only on the content of students' answers, but also on the way those very answers were articulated.

Starting with some general considerations, confronting answers at the beginning surveys and those at the ending surveys, a general increase of appropriateness in the usage of words has been registered. Furthermore, the overall number of students answering either not to understand the question or to find it impossible to respond is considerably diminished at the end of the project.

In particular, considering the change in students' perception of civic values, it is possible to claim that, in the ending surveys, the number of students who answered positively to the acceptance and importance of principles of justice to regulate a pluralistic society is greatly increased. For example, let us consider the question in which students were asked to think whether a set of rules is helpful in bettering the relations among individuals holding different cultural backgrounds. The number of students who held that rules are generally negative has decreased significantly: if at the beginning surveys, they were sixty-three (29,58% of the total students), at the ending surveys they were twenty-seven (12,67% of the total students). Similarly, considering the question whether public discussions are a useful method toward the reach of an agreement, from the beginning survey to the ending survey students' answers have changed considerably. If the data collected at the beginning of the research showed that generally students were skeptical about discussing issues of social and political convivence, the data collected at the end of the research were completely different. Indeed, in the first case most of the students argued for discussions to be unprofitable and inapt to solve any kind of

problem. At the end of the program, on the contrary, students claimed for discussions to be necessary and important in addressing circumstances of conflict and in need of settlement. However, what is really interesting and intriguing for the purpose of the research and its experience is connected with the words and arguments students employed in their responses. First of all, the answers to this question - which is crucial to the project considering the importance devoted to public discussion and *public reason* in the teaching activities - at the ending surveys are more sophisticated. They denote a clearer, deeper, and more complex vision of the problem of a pluralist society in which individuals holding different cultural backgrounds and moral principles are to live together peacefully. In particular, students employed in their answers a substantive use of words such as “agreement”, “rules”, “common point”, “compromise”. Moreover, at the beginning surveys students who saw discussing political issues positively argued in favour of it stating that discussions are necessary to find mediation among competing claims. At the ending surveys, on the other hand, the argument in favour of debating such issues were sustained by the idea that discussions are the only possible solution to conflict for they permits individuals to express and confront their ideas and, thus, to reach an agreement on shared principles and rules to live together civilly and harmoniously. In this sense, at the beginning of the project, students defended discussions mainly on the basis of instrumental reasons. On the contrary, at the end of the project, discussions were treated as valuable means *per se*, fair in character and outcome. These examples do not constitute all the data which confirm the positive results of the experience and of the educational model. However, these are among the most relevant examples of the data collected and represent an important test for the effectiveness of the model.

Another example which is of particular significance is constituted by the answers to the question concerning the role and importance of a Constitutional Chart. Since the educational program heavily relied on the Italian Constitution and its basic principles, an important test for the research has been that of students' comprehension and understanding of what a Chart in which citizens' rights and duties are presented is. It is important not only to note that, from the beginning to the ending surveys, the number of students not able to provide an answer decreased impressively (they were a hundred-and-three at the beginning and forty-

one at the end of the project). But it is also fundamental to consider the terms used to describe what a Chart is and its task in providing rights and duties. As it is possible to see in table 3, at the ending surveys students employed in a more substantive way expressions as “law”, “justice”, “duties”, and so on.

Table 3	“I don't know”	“Rules”	“Law/ Laws”	“Rights/Du ties”	“Justice/ Eqaulity”
Beginnign surveys	103	38	48	30	13
Ending surveys	41	50	84	50	41

Finally, in confronting the answers students provided with regard to the Constitutional Chart, the change in students’ attitude towards the idea of citizenship is of great relevance and importance. Indeed, the data collected at the beginning of the project showed that students regarded a Constitution as necessary and fundamental in securing the order of the society. In particular, the most defended argument was that of the necessity to prevent a form of anarchy inevitably connected with the circumstance of individuals living together on a same territory without a system of laws. At the ending survey, on the contrary, students argued for a Constitutional Chart to be essential for the construction of a just and fair society in which everyone is respected and recognized as a distinct individual with her or his own identity.

The data collected, and in particular the idea of citizenship students demonstrated to have interiorized, show that the educational model is a viable tool to teach civic values in pluralist societies, and that the research experience is to be considered extremely positive.

6. Conclusions

I attempted to report the experience carried on within the research “Interculturalità e Valori Civili nelle scuole secondarie di primo grado milanesi”. It is important to stress that the research has always been intended as an experience for political philosophy in the realm of practice. If *public philosophy* is “to address public affairs [...] working on the pressing political problems of our

times [...] in contrast with the dominant theory-building approach”³⁶, it is proper to characterize the research as an experiment in *public philosophy* for it is an attempt to use political philosophy, its methods and reflections, to address an explosive problem of contemporary societies. In this sense, it is also important to stress that the research is not descriptive. On the contrary, the data are a test for the effectiveness of an educational program which is normative in character. In this sense, the data are irrelevant in capturing the status of integration of students in the urban area of Milan. However, they provide some important evidence for the efficacy of the model of multicultural education set up within the research.

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¹ Directive 2000/43/EC of 29th June implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of race or ethnicity and Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a General Framework for Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation.

² See, Benhabib, 2004; Cohen, 1999; Galston, 1991; Macedo, 1990; Okin, 1992; Rawls, 1993; Walzer, 1983; Young, 2000.

³ See, Barry, 2001.

⁴ See, Kymlicka, 1995.

⁵ See, Galeotti, 2010.

⁶ See, Carens 2008.

⁷ See, Banks, 2008.

⁸ See, Nussbaum, 1998; Sandel, 2005.

⁹ Gutmann, 1987, p. 287.

¹⁰ “Town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people's reach, they teach men how to use and how to enjoy it.” (Toqueville, 1840, p. 46)

¹¹ See, Gutmann, 1987 , pp., 3-16.

¹² “Political education prepares citizens to participate in consciously reproducing their society, and conscious social reproduction is the ideal not only of democratic education but also of democratic politics.” (Gutmann, 1987, pp. 39-45)

¹³ Rawls, 1993,pp. 199-200.

¹⁴ Kymlicka, 1999, p. 93.

¹⁵ The educational system in Italy is organized into two stages. Primary school lasts five years. Until middle school, the educational curriculum is uniform for all: although one can attend a private or state-funded school, the subjects studied are the same, except in special schools for the blind, the hearing-impaired, and so forth. Secondary education (*Scuole Medie*) is further divided in two stages: "Medie Inferiori", which correspond to the Middle School grades, and "Medie Superiori", which correspond to the High School level. The lower tier of "Scuole Media" corresponds to Middle School, lasts three years, and involves an exam at the end of the third year; "Scuole Superiori" usually last five years and requires an exam at the end of the final year to graduation.

¹⁶ http://www.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20091021_00/

¹⁷ Kymlicka, 2001, p. 304)

¹⁸ Rawls, 1993.

¹⁹ For a fruitful and clear discussion on the differences and similarities of comprehensive and political liberalisms in regards to civic education see, Gutmann, 1995, pp. 557-579.

²⁰ See, Galston, 1995.

²¹ Rawls, 1988.

²² See, Rawls, 1993, pp. 12-13.

²³ According to Rawls, reasonable citizens are those citizens who, on one hand, accept that political society is a fair system of social cooperation, arranged for mutual benefit. On the other, they are subjected to the *burdens of judgments* whose action leads to reasonable pluralism which is a constituent and eliminable feature of contemporary societies. It is important to note that, according to Rawls, disagreement does not result from a failure of reason or a failure to reason. On the contrary, it is precisely because individuals' reason can deliver moral and political values that disagreement arises. (See, Rawls, 1993, p. 49-51)

²⁴ “Our exercise of political power is fully proper only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all citizens as free and equal may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and ideals acceptable to their common human reason.” (Rawls, 1993, p. 137)

²⁵ To argue that citizens owe to one another to supply reasons for their political actions, Rawls holds two arguments those of legitimacy and civility. Since the project on multicultural education has focused mainly on the problem of fair relations among citizens who are to consider

themselves free and equal, in this paper I shall concentrate on reciprocity which, according to Rawls, is a primary and non-derivative obligation of citizens.

²⁶ In the last years, some critics have argued that political liberalism cannot coherently be articulated. First of all, it seems that addressing reasonable pluralism only, Rawls's view is not really effective for it does not take into account pluralism in its radical form. As Scheffler points out, political liberalism "appears to presuppose a society in which liberal values are already well entrenched." (Scheffler, 2002, p. 146) Moreover, political liberalism has been criticized also for its ambitions to do without both a metaphysical (Hampton, 1989) and epistemological foundations. (Raz, 1990) Although the critiques outlined above may be very sounded, addressing them is beyond the scope of the present article. In this respect, this work is not concerned with political liberalism as such, but with the effectiveness of using its principles for the development of a multicultural model of education.

²⁷ Rawls, 1971, p. 179.

²⁸ Rawls, 1993, p. 217.

²⁹ Shorten, 2010.

³⁰ See, Darwall, 1977.

³¹ For a discussion of the case of the Islamic veil in French public Schools, see, Galeotti, 2002, pp. 115-136.

³² Scanlon, 2002.

³³ Zimbardo and Leippe, 1991.

³⁴ Finkel and Ernst, 2005, p. 341.

³⁵ <http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/news/istat18mar2010.pdf>

³⁶ Tully, 2009, pp. 3-5.

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