

Transnational Families: pedagogical guidelines for teachers

Capacity building activity for Ukrainian local institutions to reinforce migration and socio-education policy for children, women and local communities

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Psychosocial and Cultural Integration Unit
Via Palestro 1, 00185 Rome, Italy – Tel. +39 06 87 42 09 67

Email: psycho@iom.int – Internet: www.italy.iom.int

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Edited by

Claudia Zaccai, University of Rome “La Sapienza”, Italy

Rossella Celmi, Coordinator of the Psychosocial and Cultural Integration Unit, IOM Italy

PREFACE

Under the auspices of the project, “Capacity building activity to help local Ukrainian institutions reinforce migration and socio-educational policy aimed at children, women and local communities,” schools were considered privileged spaces in the life of “children left behind” whose mothers have migrated to Italy. This pedagogical guide was created to reinforce tools and strategies for teachers using a psychosocial approach.

The psychosocial approach to migration proposed by the International Organization for Migration provides essential interpretive tools that account for the complexity of the migration process in all of its various facets (personal, social, cultural) in host and origin societies.

“Transnational Families: A pedagogical guide for teachers” is the result of a training experience with Ukrainian teachers from the “Borys Grinchenko” Postgraduate Pedagogical Institute, at the University of Kiev.

Theoretical reflection and the desire to create a tool for school personnel allowed IOM to promote a mindset of integration and skills exchange to improve the management of classes that include the children of migration.

The tools proposed are intended as a reference guide to complement already existing skills and favor psychocultural sensitization in a society that is being transformed by a strong migratory push. The aim was to help Ukrainian teachers see themselves as co-protagonists in the complex identity shift that occurs in children of migrant mothers and as well as help them recognize the educational potential in their daily interactions with pupils.

Analysis of the psychosocial dimension of a society in transition revealed a parallel between the transformation in the identities of children left behind as a result of their current situation and the transformation of the teachers’ own identities as they observe the phenomenon of migration, but could at the same time choose to become the main protagonists of it.

The guide stresses the importance of promoting positive a scholastic environment that provides children the opportunity to be heard and comprehends their difficult conditions.

This publication will be distributed to Ukrainian schools nationwide as requested by the Ministry of Education, which was a partner in the project.

Introduction

Today migration is a structural phenomenon in all countries. It is an issue of great complexity that it is not, as one would assume, a simple, linear movement: leave-return-leave again – return again, and so forth. For this reason, it is important to render it “visible” in the society of emigration and insert it as a *bona fide* component of school curricula from the primary to secondary level to educate students about this chapter of their national history.

Strong contradictions surround advances in transportation and facility of movement. As all barriers to the free circulation of goods and capital are progressively abolished, barriers to the free circulation of people become increasingly rigid.

The separation of children from their parents is often due to laws regulating entry and exit visas from countries of intense emigration and family reunification procedures in countries of destination. In the specific case of female Ukrainian migration in the domestic labor sector, we find an inadequate body legislation establishing minimum living and working conditions and standards for precarious work, not to mention insufficient legislation outlining the functions, rights and responsibilities in this sector, where human and civil rights, especially those of children, often go ignored.

Part 1: Transnational Families and School

CHAPTER 1: Contemporary International Migration

Today **contemporary international migration** is part of a transnational revolution and one could certainly argue that in the last few decades it has assumed dimensions and significance large enough to directly condition domestic and foreign policy in individual states. Large-scale migratory flows, for example the great transoceanic emigrations, have occurred in other eras as well. However, the current chapter in migration history presents some new and particularly interesting characteristics, leading many academics to refer to this as “**the age of migration.**”

Although the widespread nature of the phenomenon at the global level has produced diversity in migratory models, we can identify **several fundamental characteristics** that provide greater understanding of the role of international migration in the world system:

1. The ***globalization of migration***: An increasing number of countries are simultaneously affected by significant migratory movements, with increasing diversification of areas of origin. In other words, we observe a progressive growth in the number of countries affected by this phenomenon. Moreover, there is no net distinction between countries of origin and destination. Many countries, as in the Mediterranean area, are both territories of emigration and immigration. Another interesting aspect of the globalization of migration is that a larger number of countries of destination receive immigrants from diverse economic, social and cultural contexts.
2. The ***acceleration of migration***: International migratory movements have increased significantly in all major geopolitical areas of the world due in part to advances in mass communications and the speed of information circulation and transportation. But this acceleration of migratory flows has also led to a severe regulation of entrances on the part of host countries. One priority on the European political agenda, for example, is control of the external borders of the European Union. Many neighboring countries, including non-EU members like Ukraine, collaborate on numerous projects to manage operational cooperation along their external borders with member states. These projects regard both implementing joint border control with the European Union as well as training border guards to collect information on illegal border crossing techniques and human trafficking.
3. The ***differentiation of migration***: Host countries see an increasingly complex composition of migratory flows, with a wider array of types of migration and

diverse categories of migrants, such as economic migrants, frontier workers, seasonal workers, female migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, unaccompanied minors, unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, stateless persons, displaced persons, etc.

4. The *feminization of migration*: In all regions of the world, women have assumed a significant role in the phenomenon of migration. Since the 1970s this has meant a significant increase in the incidence of females within migration flows and in immigrant communities. However, we must emphasize that women are often the drivers of the initial phases of the migratory experience.

5. The *growing politicization of migration*: Migration flows tend to be progressively regulated by migration policy in countries of destination. In fact, contemporary domestic and foreign policy, as well as bilateral and regional accords, are inevitably influenced by international migratory movements.

The European Union has considered contemporary international migration a matter of priority since the late 1980s. Migrant workers are structurally necessary to the economy of European countries from several points of view:

- Demographic: low fertility; ageing of the population;
- Economic: a future issue for highly-skilled and low-skilled workers alike;
- Social: young Europeans are increasingly less willing to accept low-skilled employment.

Migration does not occur by chance: it is provoked. It is structured and located in very specific historic periods. It is reductive to think of migration as the mere movement of the labor force from a less-developed country of origin to a more-developed country of destination, as if the question were nothing more than excess labor on one side and available employment on the other.

Migrants are not isolated individuals who react to the “call” of the labor market and bureaucratic regulations. They are social beings trying to improve their lives (as well as those of their families and communities) through an active migratory process.

Therefore, it is also important to interpret the decision to emigrate from the *subjective perspective* of the individual who chooses to migrate, rather than merely observe objective reasons that can all be traced to social, economic and political pressures that are so intense, they almost seem coercive. Only this subjective viewpoint will help us to understand what occurs within the family when a mother or father decides to emigrate, leaving his or her children behind.

CHAPTER 2 - The role of schools: integrating and interacting with the children of emigrants

Migration affects, and inevitably transforms, all spheres of life in host and origin societies.

What is the role of education in a rapidly changing society? Contemporary issues such as globalization, migration, the diversity of multicultural societies, as well as social, cultural, economic and political relations that take place a global level and inextricably link countries, present a great challenge to **Pedagogy**.

School is one of the fundamental agencies of socialization and is therefore the chosen location for mediation and implementation of useful strategies to help the children of emigrants through the difficult process of socialization in the absence of one or both of their parents due to emigration.

In a school where a significant number of pupils are the children of emigrants, one must ask the question: How can we ALSO respond to their needs?

This is not a simple matter of the right to attend school, but also of identifying and making pedagogical, didactic and cultural teaching tools available to accompany and sustain these students as they achieve the level of education they desire.

- What does it mean to guarantee students who are the children of emigrants equal opportunities in scholastic success?
- What are the pedagogical models and strategies that can serve as best practices for their reception?

More than just bureaucratic procedures and education legislation, **reception** is a multi-faceted term and a concept that also refers to inter-personal relations, attitudes, and non-verbal communication (*relational level*); to emotions and feelings (*emotional level*); and to knowledge and teaching methods (*Cognitive level*).

Various aspects should be considered in educating students who are the children of emigrants:

- Administrative-bureaucratic: The collection of documentation related to the family and legal situation;
- Educational: Educational course curricula. The specific abilities and needs of the children of emigrants. Collaboration with centers for extra-curricular activities;
- Communication: Information and communication between the school and the family. Non-verbal aspects of communication;
- Relational: The teacher-student and student-student relationship and interactions in the classroom;
- Social: contact with agencies and associations on the territory.

The significant presence of children with emigrant parents in schools clearly indicates a need to reflect on ways of perceiving, experiencing and facing the issue of children left behind in an institution's day-to-day activities. Educators should also examine the new responsibilities of academic personnel in the fields of formal and informal learning.

New responsibilities of teachers:

- **Accept** working with other teachers at a cross-cutting level.
- **Introduce** participatory educational approaches based on listening and dialogue to promote reciprocal respect and shared learning in the classroom, where *teacher* and *pupil* are engaged in the same search for knowledge and awareness.
- **Continuously evaluate** available educational tools;
- **Incorporate** educational activities designed to respond to the specific needs of the children of emigrants, not as a marginal part of the school curriculum, but as a central component of it;
- **Be willing** to shift methods from a traditional, frontal teaching curriculum to a more interactive approach;
- **Create** forms of interdisciplinary collaboration;
- **Agree** to improve professional abilities through training and continued research of study materials, work proposals, and forms of educational cooperation;
- **Develop** empathy towards pupils to create a relationship of reciprocal trust and reduce the anxiety, diffidence and distance between teacher and student;
- **Monitor** and organize moments of socialization between classmates to create social cohesion and solidarity;
- **Experiment** with different forms of interaction with the local context and with the institutions and organizations active in the world of migration. Seek out potential opportunities for collaboration.

School –Family: building a relationship

A fundamental element to guaranteeing equal opportunities for academic success among the children of emigrants is the school-family relationship.

How can families pass on their life experiences when they are suffering from intense psychological distress and often perceive messages of rejection from their children?

Schools can support families in their educational role by constructing a dynamic school-family relationship, which entails sharing *with* parents and not working *for* them.

In the migratory process, relationships within the family structure often change and transform and become necessarily different from those of the rest of the “sedentary” community. Referring to the culturally traditional family as the only identifiable

model negates the value of these new experiences and hinders the necessary reciprocal recognition between the families of emigrants and the school.

Teachers play a fundamental role in collaborating with families to prevent the insecurity that ensues in children following drastic changes in family life. School in general must reassure children and their families that all expressions of family culture are considered equally important.

CHAPTER 3: An educational process within the school curriculum

Cross-cutting Educational Paths

The objective of the “**Cross-cutting Educational Paths**” idea coincides with the general aims of education. The goal is not simply the theoretical learning of concepts, knowledge and abilities; this type of education also aims to modify individual and collective attitudes and behaviors.

This process entails learning the concepts, languages and procedures that contribute to greater self-awareness and awareness of reality, to understand it critically and to become an active participant and agent of change, interacting with it.

“Cross-cutting Educational Paths”:

- Offer models of identity that are essential to helping young people develop a sense of who they are and what their role is in society, with special attention to children from diverse family histories and cultures;
- Make the world seem comprehensible, familiar and close by. Create conditions for coexistence and awareness of one’s identity through dialogue with others;
- Allow for reflection on the self and on one’s own history;
- Teach younger generations to decipher linguistic and cultural codes as well as non-verbal language. These symbols help the individual develop the fundamental values required to become adults capable of autonomous and critical thought.

From elementary to secondary school

First of all, this technique is a way to re-establish a balance between cognitive and socio-emotional-relational objectives and to favor interdisciplinary coordination between school subjects.

“Cross-cutting Educational Paths” are inserted into normal school curricula, becoming veritable “textbooks,” in and of themselves. It is not therefore a question of applying educational activities in stagnant, fragmentary or episodic compartments (non-communicative), but rather of identifying **themes implemented in a cross-cutting educational curriculum** of all teaching disciplines.

The diversification of objectives, content and teaching strategies, according to the level and category of the school, will allow teachers to address various problems without excessive simplification.

Cross-cutting Themes

Main themes must include **cross-cutting issues** that either refer to intense emotional or ideological matters (such as identity, gender issues, migration, development, racism, etc.), or more seemingly neutral questions (such as nutrition, clothing, play, shopping, communications, etc.).

All of these themes allow for reflection on past and present society, calling on the disciplines of history, geography, sociology, anthropology, economics, and psychology to address the themes of diversity, exchange, collaboration, conflict, use of resources and economic and political inequality.

Thematic categories and cross-cutting teaching units

Educators can plan a certain number of **thematic categories**, each of which treat a different issue from year to year, addressing an array of fundamental concepts, many different areas of concern, and various disciplinary approaches.

The teaching units are outlined to unfold in specific paths which differ according to educational level and category, from elementary to secondary school.

One could apply the following criteria to planning the **Cross-cutting Educational Units**:

- In **Elementary Schools** – Describe the main issues through analysis and comparison of several cases;
- In **Middle Schools** – Analyze the different causes of the problem and identify possible consequences, such as, for example, the processes of transformation connected to them;
- In **Secondary School** – Theorize about the problem, including the individual and collective responsibilities connected to it and prospects for the future.

Choice of themes

Selection of content could be erroneously considered a marginal moment in the teaching activity. This logic however must be revisited and reversed because the aims of all teaching must be those of educating students to analyze the complexity of phenomena on a case-by-case basis, learning to comprehend the variables that determine them.

It is important place the **culture of the boy/girl** at the center of decisions about which themes to address, in order to guarantee effective learning. This entails:

- Working with the diverse **family cultures of students**. Starting from the individual/family culture of each student means **searching for and finding** the culture linked with the local indigenous community... and also the one linked with the emigration experience.

- Promote the child’s family culture, which may not necessarily coincide with that of the rest of the community of origin to provide **various perspectives on the “same” reality**.
- Discover the **different perspectives** of these students and create themes out of them

CHAPTER 4: Teaching Activities and Proposals

Word Association: In this classroom activity pupils form a circle with their chairs. The teachers must guarantee a safe atmosphere which will allow students to freely express their creativity.

Word Association: Migration is	Word Association: Children Left Behind are...	Compare two words
Ask students to name two words related with migration	Ask students for two words describing a child left in the home country	Select two of the words provided by the students that are most similar to create a connection between migration and children left behind
Game: Eye of the Cyclops₁	Suitable for the Children Left Behind session	Comparison of experiences
Form pairs that will embark on an imaginary journey; one of the partners is the guide, while the other pretends to be blind. The student who assumes the role of the guide becomes the other’s “mind’s eye.” Have each student take a turn at playing both roles.	Ask students what it feels like to take an unknown journey, accompanied by someone else, to sensitize them to the idea of being unfamiliar with different customs, languages and cultural behavior	Have individual students share their feelings with the group
Combination Game₂	Suitable for the Children Left Behind session	Comparison of experiences
Ask students to walk freely around the room, without bumping into each other. When the teachers says stop, the students must align themselves according to who feels: Good or Bad Ugly or Attractive Happy or Sad Migrant or Child Left Behind	Ask the children how it feels to be labeled, to have to choose a side. Discuss the feelings and behaviors of who leaves and who stays in the origin country	Have individual students share their feelings with the group

1Source: *Strumenti per il lavoro psicosociale ed educativo. 83 Giochi Psicologici per la conduzione dei gruppi*. Di Sabina Manes, 2008 Franco Angeli

2Source: *Strumenti per il lavoro psicosociale ed educativo. 83 Giochi Psicologici per la conduzione dei gruppi*. Di Sabina Manes, 2008 Franco Angeli

Gender Identity and Female Migration

The formation of gender identity is a theme that regards emigrant families in particular where the main figures of identification for children – the mother and father - are often missing. Addressing *gender identity* in a “Cross-cutting education unit” can stimulate discussion both for students and teachers.

It would be particularly interesting to overlap the theme of **gender identity** with that of **migration**. Female migration is a very relevant issue in contemporary international migration.

Emigration touches all spheres of society. Emigrating means leaving one’s family and community behind as well as one’s traditions, ways of living, feeling, acting and thinking, one’s language and religion as well as all other social, political and mental structures of society, characteristic structures of the individual and the society... in short, one’s history.

For this reason the study of **migration with a gender approach** cannot be anything but **interdisciplinary**: sociology, anthropology, political science, history, economics, geography, demography, statistics, psychology, pedagogy and law are all essential to building a **general and profound comprehension of this phenomenon**.

Planning the **Cross-cutting education unit** on “Gender Identity and Female Migration.”

First Cycle for Elementary School:

Being female, being male

An educational program with several units that explores what it means to be female or male on the physical level as well as with regard to behavior, habits, tastes, language, etc...

Migration:

Comparisons and stories about migration.

- Is there an emigration experience in your local community?
- And within your family?
- What does it mean to emigrate?
- Why did migration occur and with what goals?

- Who migrates, the females or the males in the family?

Second Cycle for Middle Schools:

Becoming Female and Male

A multi-phase unit that examines the social factors that influence the development of gender identity, for example family upbringing, the expectations of others, gender relations and social role, etc...

Migration:

- What social and family factors influenced the decision to emigrate?
- What does emigration mean when it is the woman or man leaving? Why the woman? Why the man?
- What changes in family life?
- In the absence of one or the other, do the roles of the man and woman change within the family?
- What new relationships develop between the family members left in the home country and the person who has left? If it is the woman who has left? The man?

Third Cycle for High School:

Females and males in real life and in the imagination

An educational program with several units on themes like woman and man in literature and art, feminists movements of the 1900s and 20th century, official and real rights of women in Ukraine and in the world, the relationships between boys and girls today, etc...

Women and men in the reality of emigration and the imagination:

- What is the history of Ukraine as a country of emigration in the 20th and 21st centuries?
- Male migration?
- Female migration?
- Where have they gone and what are the work opportunities they've found in the country of immigration? As a woman? As a man?
- What is the perception on the female migrant in Ukrainian society? And in the host society?
- What is the role of advertising, and what forms of expression in language represent Ukrainian female migrants? And male Ukrainian migrants?

Create Stories

The *Migration and Children Left Behind* story workshop is a tool to create narrative or arts and crafts projects on migration and children left behind.

The workshop consists in asking students (elementary, middle and high school) to create individual stories, or objects with the available material (colored paper,

crayons, fabric, glue, stones, feathers, pencils, string, etc), from the point of view of a migrant or child left in the home country.

The creation of the story or object occurs in three phases:

- Phase One: individual construction (30 min)
- Phase Two: comparison of individual stories and objects, pairing off into small groups, comparison of work (15minutes)
- Phase Three: creation of a new story or new object out of the meeting with others that occurred in Phase Two.

Story example:

Andrey is a child who does very poorly in school. He shows no interest during class and is often absent. His mother left for Italy a few years ago and his father takes care of him. When he is at school, he prefers to play with his friends...

Analyze the stories or objects created by the students to identify the psychosocial needs of the *main characters*, starting from a few anthropological bases:

- The relationship between generations (parents/children/grandchildren/grandparents)
- Gender identity (difference/similarities between males and females)
- The significance the community attributes to life changes
- The relationship between rich and poor

Final discussion on the group work and definition of migrant and child left behind.

3Source: Connecting Stories, Ricerca-azione nell'ambito delle rappresentazioni sociali sullo straniero, Connecting People, ETNA, Interculture International Foundation ESN, IOM Psychosocial Unit, Department of Psychology, University of Cagliari, October 2009

CHAPTER 5: The School Library

Why read? Why make boys and girls read?

It is important to reflect on the Pedagogy of Reading – on the importance of stories, which with their plots, always hide an exhortation to build one's own life story and live it as a central character within a larger Story.

Books push us to reflect on the value of stories and their constant presence in our existence. Stories, methodically sought out and encountered in everyday life, have the fundamental function of becoming reflections and companions to our experiences, our fears and our doubts. We must consider ourselves main characters of our own stories, with the possibility of constructing our own personal existential path.

The realm of the story, the fable, the literary experience, holds a place above judgment. Stories are told through dialogue, listening, individual and collective reading and informal discussion where the student-reader becomes protagonist.

Where reading leads us to imagine other paths, other life stories, different from those that seem already laid out for us.

School libraries are unequalled as a place to activate Pedagogy of Reading strategies that:

- promote interest and curiosity in books;
- bring books closer to the life experiences of students;
- interest children in educational reading and promote reflection and discussion on several central themes such as the importance of passions, and the need for guidance through life, fear and growth.

The school library is of vital importance. There is no doubt, however, that it must reflect the needs of the school's pupils who use it as well as the realities of the society in which it is located and the culture of the time.

Work together to build a “Migration Corner”

The construction of a space dedicated to themes linked to migration within the school library should include two sections:

- Fantasy books section – “Fairy tales and fables,” “Myths and Legends,” “Novels and Stories,” “Mysteries,” “Science Fiction,” etc...
- Informational volumes such as social science textbooks (sociology, anthropology, psychology,...), history, geography and religion texts as well as those on language, art, literature, etc...

It is important that everyone participate in the creation of this space, which must develop in conjunction with the activities each class has selected to address this theme. From the beginning, this space must appear open to change, growing day by day, accepting the suggestions of students and teachers alike. In this way, it can ultimately preserve the memory and document an entire period of activity on the theme of migration.

Reading Promotion Activities within School Libraries

Reading workshops - methodology

- In creating a project, it is important to identify its objectives, methods and the procedures;
- Formulate a calendar of meetings in the library; it is fundamental that the workshop guarantee a regularity and duration of at least three months;
- Have the children identify the aim of the workshops, events and practices through which to realize it;
- At the end of the workshop, encourage students to create discussion and writing groups.

Example: “Fairy tale reading workshop”

Fairy tales not only entertain children, they also allow them to recognize themselves in the story, favoring the development of individual personality. They contain several layers of meaning and enrich children's lives in several different ways. One book does not do justice to the quantity and variety of the contributions made by these stories to children's lives.

The workshop is accompanied by the "Reader's Diary," in which the child will record all of his or her impressions. Reading, in this case, is also integrated with the idea of placing children in the conditions to produce their own fairy tales.

Reading Paths

Reading is the most representative example of how dreams originate and intersect in the collective imagination. It is one path that can be followed but it is only one of the many possibilities, constantly crossed and intersected by others. A path that unites, connects, links texts, stories points of apparent disjuncture and separation, and draws constellations.

In this way, books too become a part of the children's lives, of their present reality, in an ocean of stories in which there is no longer a separation between school and experience, between study and free exploration. The teacher and librarian can therefore become the navigator on this unpredictable and fascinating adventure.

A "Reading path for elementary school"

A child's world is rife with "Discoveries:" all that adults take for granted is revealed before their eyes as mysterious and worthy of further investigation. Emotions, more than anything, inspire the greatest curiosity and provoke the most disturbing questions to which adults often cannot find a sufficient answer. Stories about fear, about encounters with different contexts, the difficulties in family relationships become, in this sense, pretexts for talking about oneself, about one's own fears and aspirations.

"Reading path for middle and secondary school"

Adolescence - the in-between age. Adolescence is a time of biological, intellectual and emotional development. In limbo between childhood and adulthood, adolescents are metaphorically similar to the heroes from myths to comic books, from Ulysses to Spider Man, characters who will accept no compromises, but choose to make their own choices, though they are often torn between conflicting identities.

Mix Genres: A fundamental strategy for promoting reading in middle and secondary school. Music, film and comic books all tell stories, just as traditional books do. Building multimedia bibliographies provides children the opportunity to enrich their cultural frame of reference and fosters their curiosity.

CHAPTER 6 – "The Art of Narration"

In one of the most beautiful scenes of *The Odyssey*, Ulysses sits down – incognito – as a guest in the court of the Phaeacians. A blind bard entertains the other guests with his song. He sings “acts of heroes, the stories whose fame reach as far as the infinite sky.” He sings of the war with Troy, tells of Ulysses and his exploits. And Ulysses, hiding his face in his large purple mantle, cries. He had never cried before, especially not when the facts that he now hears narrated actually occurred. Only now, hearing the STORY, or HIS LIFE STORY. In hearing his own story, Ulysses is moved and appreciates the full concept of its meaning.

Not only because the events narrated are painful, but also because when he lived them directly, he had not grasped their importance. It is almost as if, while acting, he was consumed by the context of the events. It is almost as if, he had always been trapped in the present of these actions, breaking the temporal series of before and after. Now, however, in the bard’s account, the discontinuous timing of those events unfolds in a story.

Only now is Ulysses able to recognize himself as the hero of this story. Fully appreciating the significance of the narrated story, he finally understands who the protagonist is. Therefore, before hearing his own story, Ulysses doesn’t know who *he is*: the bard’s story, another man’s account, finally reveals to Odysseus his own identity. And he pulled his purple mantle over his face and cried.

(Cfr. Adriana Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi. Tu che mi racconti. Filosofia della narrazione*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1997).

The way of thinking and feeling that helps children (and in general all people) to create a version of the world in which they can imagine, at the psychological level, a place for themselves, a personal world, is a pedagogical issue of fundamental interest, in particular when dealing with children suffering the trauma of separation from their parents.

To this end, it is interesting to consider NARRATION as a mode of thought and its function as a vehicle to create significance.

We build the analysis of our cultural origins and the beliefs that are dearest to us in the form of stories. It is not only the “content” of these stories that attracts us, but also the skill with which they are narrated. Even our immediate experience, what happened yesterday or the day before, we express in the form of story. What is even more significant is that we represent our entire lives (to ourselves and others) in the form of narration. Quite probably, narration has the same importance for the cohesion of a culture as for the structure of an individual life.

Feeling comfortable in the world and knowing where you fit in your own life story is even more difficult today due to the enormous increase in migratory movements. It is not easy to help a child/young person create a story that inserts him or her into the world, beyond the world of the family and community, if one or more parents have left Ukraine for Italy, Spain, Portugal, etc...

School, this *pied-à-terre* outside the family, must be able to help students and if narration is to become a tool to aid the mind in assigning significance, it requires work on the part of all academic personnel (teachers, educators, psychologists). It must be read, created, analyzed, understood as an art, perceived as fundamental to the growth of children.

Appropriate training is therefore fundamental for the **adults** who will be running NARRATION workshops. This training can be conducted through meetings with narration specialists, or in a collegial context, and should include the following methods:

- Learning techniques of narration: this must adapt to and interest the various age groups of children/young people;
- Learn techniques for creative reading and reading aloud with interruptions at the right moments, including requests for analysis and comparison with the subsequent phases of the story;
- Use words in expressive forms of communication, with high and low tones, rhythms, pauses, restoring to language the musicality that the rush of television has destroyed;
- The importance of language, values, artistry and originality of the chosen stories.

Why a Narration Workshop?

Stories can be a useful tool for the real reconstruction of the emotions and mechanisms of social and family life of children and adolescents who are experiencing moments of great physical and psychological distress. **Narration** has a strong capacity to penetrate consciousness in the real and dream world of childhood.

Stories that *save* lives

It is with and in narration that life is deconstructed, reconstructed, remixed, and re-ordered; stories symbolically unfold it and transform it, moving it, opening paths and connecting lines, giving it meaning.

Storytelling helps us to grow

It is a continuous exercise in the exploration of the world and human possibilities, allowing for imaginary experimentation.

Recounting

Narration is the word, the word passed on for generations from the oldest to the youngest. The stories of families, communities, traditions, and customs of one's own country: a multitude of shared stories. Narration has the role of cultural and experiential transmission and it is here that myths and legends belong specifically to each family and every people.

My Story-Your Story

To *narrate* means telling your story and asking your listener for an ardent identification with a “perspective” that is different from your own. Narration is able, perhaps more easily than other expressive means, to inspire a process of identification that captivates the listener and directly propels him or her into the lives of the characters as if he or she were one of them.

Storytelling

In **storytelling**, which requires the refinement of listening abilities, a special relationship of complicity is established between the speaker and the listener. The relationship between speaker and listener is not passive. The narrator reacts and interprets the small and large reactions of his or her “audience.”

The Poetry of the Spoken Word

The rhythm of words, the timing of the stories, pauses, colors, gestures, the different ways of accentuating the various episodes of the story, the ritual with which each narrator surrounds him or herself, are all part of the art of narration. This telling of personal stories, myths, and travels inspires children’s fantasies.

Proposal for a Narration Workshop

Leaving – Returning: the journey

Adventure has always accompanied human beings in their moments of freedom. But travelling has also always included migrations of individuals and peoples. Within a journey, the real adventure hides the most secret dreams, unspeakable fears, profound reflections on life and what we can do to improve it, and like in a mirror, everyone can see him or herself.

Phases of the journey and their meanings

- Departing means **telling of** sadness;
- Distance
- Detachment means **telling of** leaving the family;
- Adventure;
- The unknown means **telling of** knowledge and the intrigue of the unknown;
- Fear;
- Punishment;
- Adaptation to new situations;
- Memory of return means **telling of** distress and desire for return;
- Challenges to overcome;
- Recognition;
- Return means **telling of** return, reunification, the joy of reunion, rediscovery of family places;

“The Game of Stories and Cards” - creating an infinite number of travel stories with children.

Design playing cards with the children. On each write a word (one of the steps of the journey) and create a relevant illustration. Each word (phase) is loaded with countless storytelling opportunities in a game with endless variations, because each word does not have a sole meaning, but is open to many interpretations. In a unique, “fairy tale-esque” way the child is inspired to tell about his or her world, to tell his or her story. Each word enters in immediate contact with personal experience and helps shed light on the child’s identity.

Mix the cards!

Take care to have the children invent the rules of the “Game of Stories and Cards.” Through the game, children - alone or in the group - will work to create their stories, structuring them around the cards that they’ve chosen: having, losing, finding, doing, undoing, redoing in yet another way, creating, destroying, recreating relationships with beings and things, indefinitely. During the narration game, the child constructs networks of analogies and correspondences with the concrete reality of his or her experience. Be, have, do, take, give, love, hate, live, die, are all verbs that assume meaning through their narration.

Part III: Multi-functional service for families and the world of school: information, support and consultation for teachers and the families of children of emigrants.

Chapter 7: Cultural dynamics in the family’s migratory experience

The Migratory Experience: affects every dimension of human existence.

EMIGRATION and IMMIGRATION are the two inseparable sides of the same coin, and one cannot be explained without the other. It is the same life story.

TO EMIGRATE means to leave your history behind. It means leaving your family and community behind, not to mention your traditions, ways of life, ways of feeling, acting and thinking, your language, your religion as well as all the other social, political and mental structures characteristic of the person and society... in short, your culture.

IMMIGRATING to the host country means facing a reality about which you may have information but with which you have no *experience*. The migrant lives in the absence of a *shared history*, a condition that is accentuated by the perception of marginalization. It is not the *silence of emptiness* generated by the sudden interruption in continuity, but the absence of *witnesses to one’s past, one’s history*.

It means living in a country with its own culture, different from “yours,” with its own, different traditions, different ways of life, ways of feeling, acting and thinking, its own language, its own religions, its own social, political, mental and societal structures, structures characteristic of the peoples and society of immigration.

The family life of migrants is therefore inevitably traversed by different cultural experiences and the unit is forced into a daily contact with a reality that is different from it. Members of the same family live simultaneously in different social environments, often on opposite ends of the world.

We can affirm that the cultural **identity of migrant families is the** combination of many different experiences of belonging to different cultural realities, which are at times in opposition with one another.

In this sense, migration is a potentially, but not necessarily traumatic experience, to the extent to which the migrant, forced by an external, unfamiliar, different reality, must come to terms with his or her own identity, and have the ability to deal with abandonment and loss. And also with separation, a feeling that prevails in the migratory experience and which hits doubly hard in families where parents are separated from their children.

Separation

The concept of separation is not exclusively the prerogative of the psychology of the formative years. The cyclical return of this experience, in the course of a person's lifetime and not only in the lives of the migrants, leads us to consider separation as an experience which is at once painful but vital, and as such is a fundamental category to examine for a more complete interpretation of the defensive attitudes and mechanisms set in place by families of migrants to cope with the migratory experience.

Coping with separation

When faced with feelings of separation, or the internal and external uprooting both for individuals - such as the children - who remain at home as well as for the ones who leave, we react according to our own life experiences. It is in the ability to cope with separation that we see the ability of the adult/parent to maintain, through a dynamic and vital relationship with their children in the country of origin, the unity and continuity of family identity which is in a state of transformation: I am here, but I am not here. Not finding this balance between the "two worlds," far away and close at the same time, would mean succumbing to loss and suffering.

Parents and children: close and far. One reflects the other in the emigration experience

Parents in emigration

Losing the points of reference represented by the family and socio-cultural bonds means challenging the *continuity* of one's identifying bonds. And maintaining one's role as a parent is fundamental to that *continuity* even if one's children are far away.

The double in the life of the migrant

Those who emigrate find themselves faced with a sort of *double absence*: absence from the world they've left, and, initially, also absence from the world in which they live. This double absence from the country of origin as well as from the country of immigration means a non-participation in the daily life of each of these countries.

In emigration, the individual is immersed in a perturbing reality, which evokes *double-ness*, or ambiguity, in countless and varied images: the double country, double language, double culture, double socialization and therefore, *double belonging*. Contrasting word pairs become an integral part of the individual's daily life: near/far, included/excluded, internal/external, accepted/rejected, same/different, etc...

Emigrants and, by consequence, their families live in intense social conflict. The societies of origin and immigration often consider them marginal individuals and non-citizens for whom solidarity is expressed, but not respect or acknowledgement. In search of recognition, emigrants often make economic concerns central, attempting to construct an image around them, as symbolic manifestations of their newfound wellbeing. It is the expression of a desire to be recognized as successful members of one's group in the country of origin and immigration. The desire to return, to return wealthy, to become figures of prestige in the origin country. By consequence, their children receive and show off material items in their communities, the "luxuries" that they can afford. This is how the *mythologization* of the migratory experience and the country of immigration occurs.

The children of emigrants left at home

The children's experience of the parents' country of immigration is mediated by the stories parents bring home. The *child's perspective* overlaps with the *parent's perspective*. Inevitably, the life stories of their parents abroad assume a *mythical* quality in the *perspective* of the children.

The children did not participate in their parents' decision to emigrate and generally they do not understand the motivations expressed by the grown-ups to justify their choice. The phase that precedes emigration, whether forced or voluntary, is a tormented phase in family life, fraught with doubts, fears and distress.

At times, the children witness disagreements between their parents, as well as bitter family arguments; at other times they share situations of anguish or panic with their parents and can become the target of their parents' aggression, when adults unleash on their children the stress they are unable to contain; still other children (with their own difficulties and depression) are ignored by their parents, who become completely absorbed by their own problems.

One cannot underestimate the fact that for the children of emigrants left at home, the world as they know it is strongly impacted by their parents' migratory experience.

And if a child is forced to face an event as dramatic as the emigration of his or her parents, which he or she "did not choose," the reaction will be to consider emigration as something imposed from on high – by the grown ups.

The hostility and blame felt towards both parents can reach levels of high intensity and can manifest in various ways. Children tend to feel excluded and think that their parents are only worried about themselves. In the case of adolescent children, the situation is even more delicate.

Adolescence is the best and worst time for every experience, including the experience of emigration within the family unit. We must remember that in this period of life, the main concern is the search for and consolidation of a sense of identity; the introduction of an event such as emigration at this stage can greatly disrupt the sense of identity.

“Training Sessions” for parents:

How to analyze this emigration experience as parents to prevent uncertainty and a sense of temporariness within the family? How to meditate on this migratory experience, rich in ambiguities, for their children left at home? What are the methods of family communication? How do they usually provide explanations to their children?

From this emerges the need to organize “Training Sessions” for parents, both for parents who have already emigrated and those preparing to leave.

The aim of this training would be first to breakdown the taboos surrounding parents who emigrate alone, leaving their children behind. This measure will help break the isolation of their condition and support them in their difficult role of “distant parents.”

A multi-functional service managed by a multidisciplinary team comprised of education experts, psychologists, social workers, educators and social caseworkers specialized in themes inherent to emigration and the problems of the children of emigrants left at home. This service would create an appropriate and protected area of support for teachers and the families of children of emigrants that safeguards the rights of minors.

Aims of the Service

- **Promote the rights of minors** and their unique psychological and physical needs for growth;
- **Provide updated information** on existing services in the territory, facilitating families' access to them (ex. A "Pocket Book:" for parents and one for children);
- **Offer school information** and orientation;
- **Offer support activities** for effective school insertion;
- **Offer school progress support activities** for the children of emigrants;
- **Offer specialized consulting services** to teachers, educators, and psychologists working with the children of emigrants (A "Guide for Professionals").
- **Organize "Training Sessions"** for teachers as well as parents.

The beneficiaries

A service that acts as a Centre-Resource for all family members of emigrants:

- To families going through particularly difficult moments;
- To families that are dealing with problems linked to the emigration of one or more of its members;
- To families dealing with the problems linked to separation and divorce;
- To separated parents;
- To parents and children together;
- To children and families that serve as legal guardians to minors in the absence of their parents;
- To the children alone;
- To local social and healthcare services;
- To all educational entities at the territorial and city level

A Service that acts as a Centre-Resource for school personnel:

- **Concretely favor** the right to education and training for the children of emigrants left in the home country
- **Provide a permanent service** for integrated planning between the school and outside partners;
- **Create a space for research and experimentation** of new forms of social and cultural integration;
- **Document and collect** specific experiences within the school and the local territory, promoting promulgation and the exchange of results;
- **Promote and promulgate** the educational and training experiences of teachers and caseworkers, documenting projects implemented, material produced and results obtained.

A service that acts as centre-resource to construct a relationship between the school and territory:

- Identify entities outside the school with whom to interact, starting from the local contexts in the territory where families who have experienced immigration have made a significant impact; exchange with such partners will facilitate recognition and comprehension of these effects.
- Collaborate with local institutions, NGOs, cultural associations, etc., to create cooperation and exchange networks between the world of school and the territory in order to share and promulgate meaningful experiences and to jointly promote initiatives in the local territory that aim to sensitize the public to the problems of the children of emigrants left in the home country.

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