

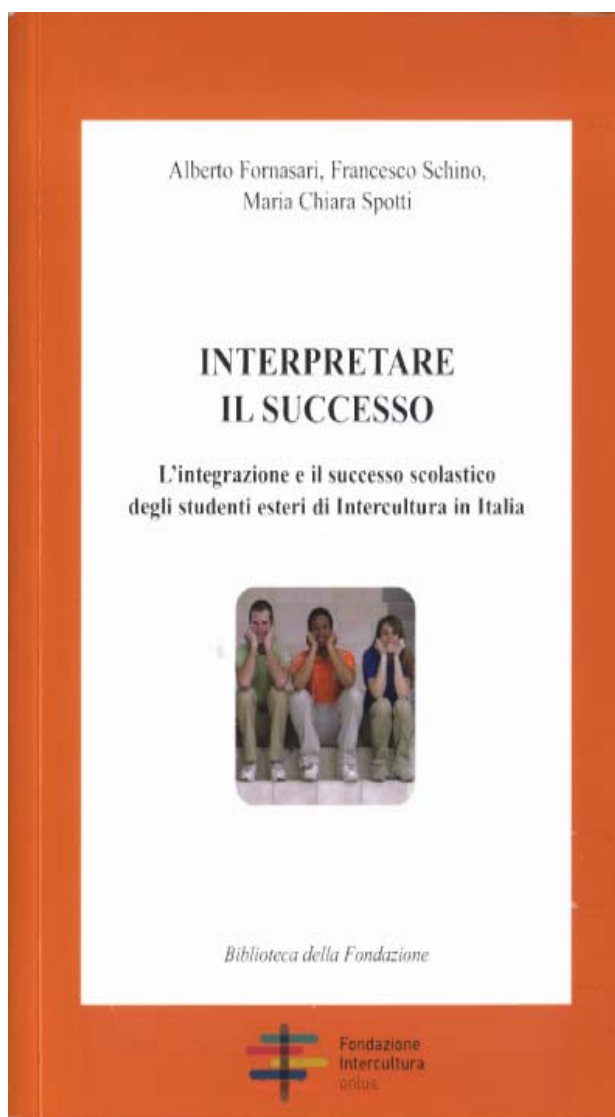
## FOR A PEDAGOGY OF POINTS OF VIEW

**Adrian LESENCIUC**

Department of Military Sciences and Management, Faculty of Aeronautical Management, “Henri Coandă” Air Force Academy, Brasov, Romania

**Abstract:** *This article aims to present the book Interpretare il successo. L'integrazione e il successo scolastico degli esteri di Intercultura in Italia, written by Alberto Fornasari, Francesco Schino and Maria Chiara Spotti. The book is one of the most important works in the field of intercultural education, reflecting the results of a study regarding the school success of foreign students in Italy.*

**Keywords:** *intercultural education, school success, weak thought, pedagogy of points of view.*



### 1. INTRODUCTION

A recent great work in the field of intercultural education is the one of the Italian researchers Alberto Fornasari, Francesco Schino and Maria Chiara Spotti, entitled *Interpretare il successo. L'integrazione e il successo scolastico degli esteri di Intercultura in Italia*, published in 2011 at Fondazione Intercultura Onlus, Colle di Val d'Elsa.

Fondazione Intercultura, born in 2007 out of an association with the same name, has a unique patrimony of international educational experience (meaning the integration within the Italian education of students from more than 60 countries), and aims at deepening the formative aspects of a multicultural society *in statu nascendi*.

This work reveals the cumulative experience of this foundation in relation with foreign students in Italy, assessing both the difficulties of integration and their opportunity to benefit from *Intercultura* programmes, trying to focus on school success by measuring the parameters of integration – related to curricular activity and to the student's activity within the host family – in two regions: Emilia Romagna in North and Puglia in South.

The purpose of the research is to identify ways of increasing school success knowing/deepening the mechanisms of foreign

student adaptation to Italian educational system.

The authors, covering a wide range of knowledge and interest in research: Alberto Fornasari – expert in communication and in multi-/intercultural processes, Francesco Schino – specialist in socio-anthropology and Maria Chiara Spotti - specialist in linguistics, provide the study with a complex multidisciplinary perspective.

Moreover, the main author, Alberto Fornasari, has published numerous studies regarding the aspects of foreign students' adaptation and of their integration in a multicultural Italy, such as: "The others among us: The concept of <borders> in Italian teenagers. A study for *Fondazione Intercultura*" (2011), regarding the possibilities of understanding the „other” concept and of reference to „otherness” concept, in an *Intercultura* study from 2008 (The European Year of the International Dialogue), measuring attitudes and behaviors of Italian and European students Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany and Puglia, or „To interpret success: The success in schools and the integration of foreign students in Italy” (2012), focused on the effects of intercultural education, trying to build a scientific foundation for re-interpreting the status of foreign students, despite the preconception/misconception that they are problematic, inadequate, even a threat to the proper functioning of the Italian school.

The latter study is done as an extension of the book *Interpretare il successo*, providing keys of interpretation and understanding school success in a multi- and intercultural society.

## **2. THE RESEARCH DESIGN. PARTICULAR DATA**

In a world that allows the free movement of things, ideas and people, fear of foreign (stranger) should be abandoned. Starting with such a requirement and taking into account the social, ethical, pedagogical and political fundamentals of interculturality, the authors emphasize the main purpose of the research:

*(...) la Fondazione Intercultura ha trovato interessante ed utile promuovere una ricerca finalizzata a ricercare i casi di successo scolastico degli alunni esteri frequentanti per un anno le scuole italiane con il programma di Intercultura, a ricostruirne le storie personali e a far emergere le scelte educative e didattiche, di scuola e di aula connesse a tali risultati (Fornasari et al., 2011:11).*

Determining the level of foreign students' school success in Italy for a better integration, the focus should rely on the appropriateness of research design, as long as school performance is influenced by parental expectations, self-esteem, social life, host family, educational policies, students' relations with classmates and teachers.

In this respect, the authors have proposed to find more about foreign students within classes and in their extra-school life. In addition, the focus on good practices (as is stressed by the title) leads to a mixed research methodology, both quantitative and qualitative, combining techniques, procedures and instruments as follows: questionnaires for foreign (target group) and Italian (control group) students, interviews with teachers, focus-groups, qualitative interpretation of curriculum etc.

Mentioning some particular relevant data collected during the current research, meaning positive and negative aspects, such as: the good organization of the Italian school (implying even severity), the openness of Italians (classmates, teachers, host families) for contacts with foreigners, the inappropriate ratio between theory and practice – the most negative aspect noticed, the existence of teachers unprepared for the contact with foreign students etc., we can consider a realistic perspective of the authors on problems that need to be identified and exploited (positive aspects) or removed/diminished (negative aspects).

Through this blunt and correct identification of positive and negative aspects of Italian school, at a certain level of preparedness for intercultural society, the research became more relevant regarding

identification of good practices for increasing foreign students' school success.

Adding the fact that linguist aspects are barriers in assessment:

*Certamente l'ostacolo della comunicazione in italiano rappresenta un fattore di svantaggio che può incidere in una certa misura sui progressi e quindi anche sulla valutazione finale (Fornasari et al., 2011:192),*

a balanced interpretation is recommended in this case.

### 3. WEAK THOUGHT'S PERSPECTIVE

The analytical flexibility is the most important aspect of this study. Being born in a country where issued the weak thought (*pensiero debole*), as deconstructive thinking, within the logics of included middle, based on a weak ontology of truth notion, as weight loss of philosophical thinking, as interpretative way for multi- and intercultural post modernity (Vattimo, 1983/1998:10-25, 1993:184), the authors do not hesitate to analyze within *pensiero debole*.

The (self-)centered and monolithical thinking specific to Italian educational system should be deconstructed and reconstructed, should be decentered and recentered.

The new perspective is a plural one (the plural perspective being a weak perspective); Fornasari's proposal (Fornasari et al., 2011:206) should be taken into consideration as a very important contemporary perspective on intercultural education: a „didactics of points of view” (*didattica dei punti di vista*).

In such a frame of interpretation, the whole perspective on intercultural education is changed:

*Quando parliamo de nuove educazioni, intendiamo un gruppo di tematiche specifiche, con finalità educative in parte comuni, che si inscrivono dentro un progetto didattico complessivo, che vuole „dotare gli studenti di strumenti di orientamento, di metabolizzazione e di critica del cambiamento, di costruzione*

*della propria identità individuale e collettiva”. (...) L'educazione interculturale rappresenta il contenitore globale delle nuove educazioni, lo „sfondo integratore” all'interno del quale trattare i contenuti delle educazioni che scegliamo come importanti per il nostro percorso. (Fornasari et al., 2011:207).*

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, not the apparent issue of success is important. Moreover, the school success does not coincide with school's success. In Habermas' terms (1997), we can distinguish between success-oriented actions and understanding (consensus)-oriented actions.

Success-oriented actions are a set of instrumental activities, subjected to a monological, linear logic, subjected to preferential rules and formalities regarding the communicative agreement.

Starting from the weak thought perspective, the Habermas notion of success is inappropriate; besides, understanding (consensus)-oriented actions make possible the „didactics of points of view”.

The definition of success and the definition of school's success within this book are clarified:

*La scuola di successo si basa in larga misura sulle idee di Socrate. Il docente pone domande, ma lascia agli allievi il compito di progettare investigazioni adeguate per rispondere alle domande (Fornasari et al., 2011:365).*

The projection on the success of interaction<sup>1</sup>, on the success of real intercultural

<sup>1</sup> The school of success, in Fornasari's terms, is related to interaction and integration, sharing without dividing the school's success to the individual success of each student: „Innanzitutto, la scuola del successo formativo non coincide con la scuola della promozione facile, che comporta un miglioramento di contenuti e metodi didattici, La scuola del successo per tutti vuol creare in nclasse le condizione che redano possibile, a ciasun alunno, di avere successo nei processi di appredimento” (Fornasari et al., 2011:364).

communication within the Italian school and not a detailed list of keys regarding school success makes *Interpretare il successo. L'integrazione e il successo scolastico degli esteri di Intercultura in Italia* one of the most important works in the field of intercultural education.

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