

## **II generation of immigrants and its integration in the Italian labour market**

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Theme: International Migrations and Migrant Populations

### **Introduction**

The integration of the immigrant children is one of the most relevant subjects focusing the attention of the scholars as well as of the policy makers of the EU. Even if it is a relatively new subject (at least in some countries), it increased its importance especially in the recent years due to the growing weight that the immigrant children are taking in the young population of the majority of European countries. This is firstly due to the immigration flows arrived during the last three decades. A large number of immigrant children, in fact, is entering in the labour market and their contribution in terms of new workers is intended to increase rapidly over the next years. In addition to the quantitative aspect, the transition from the I to the II generation presents, from a more qualitative point of view, important elements of discontinuity for instance in the different expectation system because for the II generation it is more difficult to accept the “subordinate integration” often occurred to their parents. Of course the integration of the immigrant children in the labour market has strong implications on the more general integration process in the receiving society considered from its multiple aspects and understanding the relationship between the migratory dynamics and the labour market is fundamental also in terms of economic and financial costs on the welfare state when it is called to intervene in favour of the so-called “*failed immigrants*”.

It is well known that Italy – old emigration country (even if the phenomenon is still present) - has become an immigration country during the last decades registering nowadays just over 5 million of foreign residents (8.2% of the total resident population). Because immigration is a « young » phenomenon, Italy is only now starting to face the entry in the labour market of the II generation immigrants. This happens without any previous experience and not still having elaborated any specific inclusion policies in this field. More than the rapid and consistent quantitative increase (in the immediate future) it is important to point out that the II generation is characterized by a higher education level (compared to their parents) and this higher level allows them to aspire to

professional positions denied to their parents<sup>1</sup>: from peddler to plumber to professional (Portes A., Rumbaut R.G., 2001).

Considering the Italian context, our main purpose therefore is to answer the following questions: in a vertical perspective, which are the differences between the professional inclusion patterns of the I and of the II generation of immigrants? In a horizontal perspective, which are the differences between the professional inclusion patterns of the II generation of immigrants and the Italians of the same age? Which are the factors influencing these differences?

### **Methodology and Data**

The strong interest caused by this phenomenon, paradoxically, does not correspond to the availability of information and data that are still poor especially when we try to make international comparisons. The main reason is that the majority of the international datasets does not register the country of birth of the parents of the interviewed individual. This important lack of information is only partially filled by the survey: *Programme for the International Assessment for Adult Competencies* (PIAAC) (OECD, 2013), which is, anyway, not suitable for our analysis because it doesn't make the difference between the I and II generation. The only effective data source is the OECD study: *Equal Opportunities? The Labour Market Integration of the Children of Immigrants* published in 2010. Without commenting (in this abstract) the interesting results of this study, it is important to specify that only some of the OECD countries have been observed and Italy is not one of them. In addition, at the moment, there is not yet a consolidated scientific literature on this specific aspect concerning the Italian context.

For our analysis we used the micro data of the *Indagine continua Forze di Lavoro* (Labour Force Survey) conducted on a regular base by ISTAT (Italian National Statistical Office) that enabled us to analyse different variables such as: age, gender, nationality, education level, possible attendance of professional education, type of job, economic activity sector, etc.). This survey is longitudinal and the sample used by ISTAT is composed by nearly 77 thousand families representing the whole labour force. To proceed in our comparative study (between Italians and immigrants and between the I and the II generation) we disaggregated the original sample in 4 subsamples: 1) I generation immigrants; 2) corresponding Italians; 3) II generation immigrants<sup>2</sup>; 4) corresponding Italians<sup>3</sup>. After a first descriptive analysis, whose aim has been to describe the

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<sup>1</sup> Also because of the non-recognition of their degree acquired in the origin country.

<sup>2</sup> We took into consideration the II generation *lato sensu*, consequently also the generations 1.75, 1.5, 1.25 (Rumbaut R.G., 1997) who received all or part of their education in Italy.

<sup>3</sup> For a more complete and detailed description of the methodology see the final paper.

distribution of each group per gender, age, origin country, degree of education and economic sector of activity, the intent of this study has been to bring out the differences between the 4 subsamples by using proper statistical tests. Couple comparisons were carried out using the Student's T test in case of normal distributions, or alternatively the Mann-Whitney Test. After isolating the statistically significant differences among the 4 subsamples, the following phase has been to understand which characteristic (gender, age, qualification, family typology, etc.) significantly influence the behaviour of each group determining the observed differences among the groups.

An attempt then has been made to underline the possible correlation between the selected characteristics and, for instance, the employment and unemployment rates or the specific distribution among the economic sectors of activity. In case of normal distributions, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used for this purpose; in any other case Spearman's one was applied.

It is known that a Bivariate Correlation between the observed characteristics and the employment and unemployment rates might be influenced by other confounding factors and, as a consequence, it might not be direct. In order to analyse the influence of such factors, due to the complex Correlation Matrix among the possible determinants of the above mentioned parameters, the choice of a Multiple Regression Analysis represented the most appropriate option.

Finally, after a broad exploratory phase of a descriptive and inferential type, a Linear Regression Model was built to understand the factors that influence the behaviour of each group; afterwards a classification analysis (by Segmentation Trees) was performed attempting to organize in a hierarchy the contribution that any single aspect (if statistically significant) gives to the phenomenon investigated in this study.

## **Main Results**

Due to the complexity of the phenomenon, the results are often controversial. For instance following OECD study on European countries (with the exception of Switzerland) the success of the immigrant children in terms of labour is, generally speaking, less effective. This gap is partially the consequence of a lower education level reached by the immigrant children compared to the children of autochthonous parents. However relevant gaps exist between the different countries even after considering the gaps in the average level of education. In particular, if we consider the gender it is possible to observe that the girls born in the receiving country by immigrant parents (II generation) reach largely better results than the immigrant girls (I generation). This leads to strength the hypothesis that an important factor of integration in the labour market (and not only) is represented by where these individuals were born (origin or destination country) and, above all, where they went to school. At the same time, this phenomenon is not observed for the boys born in

the receiving country. They register, in fact, slightly worse results than the immigrated boys even taking into account their weaker education level.

Concerning the Italian case, we observed several interesting results revealing significant differences between the I and the II generation modalities of integration in the labour market and a contemporaneous convergence, at least on some aspects, of the behaviour of the II generation of immigrants to that of the corresponding Italians. At the same time some differences linger suggesting the influence of other hindering factors.

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