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School as a resource of integration
and acculturation or a place where
inequality is maintained?

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- Have you experienced being in a multicultural-multiethnic class?
- What do you think about this experience?
- Is school important for integration? Why?
- Does school actually help the integration process?

The potential of school

- A student who is well-integrated into the education system both academically and socially has more chance of reaching her/his potential.
- Students from migrant backgrounds, however, face a number of challenges in this respect that can affect their learning and development.
- ✓ The UE underlies the importance of investing effort into helping children and young people from migrant backgrounds to become well-integrated into the education system and through this into society

The reality of facts: PISA Results

- OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)
- Aim: Evaluating the quality, equity and efficiency of school systems
- *Excellence through Equity: Giving Every Student the Chance to Succeed*

Bad news

- Across OECD countries, a more socio-economically advantaged student scores 39 points higher in mathematics – the equivalent of nearly one year of schooling – than a less-advantaged student.
- Although poor performance in school does not automatically stem from disadvantage, the socio-economic status of students and schools does appear to exert a powerful influence on learning outcomes.

In Italy

- Immigrant students score 48 points lower in mathematics than non-immigrant students, on average – well above the OECD average score difference of 34 points.
 - As in most other countries, this difference reflects disparities in socio-economic status
 - even after taking socio-economic status into account, the performance gap that is associated with an immigrant background is still 32 points
- Language barriers are also an obstacle to learning. Among students with an immigrant background, those who speak Italian at home score 19 points higher than those who do not.

The reality of facts: PISA Results

Good News

- The concentration of immigrant students in a school is not, in itself, associated with poor performance
- 6% of students across OECD countries – nearly one million students – are “resilient”, meaning that they beat the socio-economic odds against them and exceed expectations
→ it is possible, but **it is up to the individuals**
- Some second-generation groups have been found to even outperform native-born students (Chiswick and DebBurman 2004).
- Programmes that offer more learning opportunities to immigrant and minority students by providing a longer school day or by encouraging students to participate in smaller study groups.
→ **policies and practices have an impact on both equity and performance**

Why there is such a disparity?

- advantaged families are better able to reinforce and enhance the effects of schools
- students from advantaged families attend higher-quality schools
- schools are simply better-equipped to nurture and develop young people from advantaged background
- schools tend to reproduce existing patterns of socio-economic advantage
- Structural characteristics of educational systems can act as “sorting machines” by differentiating the student population and thus affecting students’ opportunities to learn (Hao and Pong 2008).
- When parents lack familiarity with the host country’s education system, their children’s educational prospects are negatively affected, especially in countries where family influence on scholastic outcomes is very pronounced
- Language barriers → differences between first and second generations
- And? Other ideas?

The role of social stereotypes

- An important part of our identity – who we are – is related to group belongingness
 - **Social Identity:** the part of an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group (Tajfel, 1979)
- The groups which people belong to are an important source of pride and self-esteem.
 - Individuals are motivated to maintain a positive social identity
 - what others think and believe about our group is important for our self-concept and self-esteem

The role of social stereotypes

- Negative characterizations of one's group can be threatening, especially in chronically evaluative environments
 - Because people subjected to widely known negative stereotypes about the intelligence of their group are aware of these negative characterizations, they may worry that performing poorly could confirm the stereotype of their group.
 - This situation can create chronic stress at school and, if too severe, this stress can undermine performance
- **Stereotype threat** (Steel et al., 1995)

The role of teachers

- Ethnic minority groups or immigrants have relative poor academic achievement, especially in mathematics, when compared with children of majority groups or native students (see also, OECD, 2012).
- Several studies have demonstrated that this gap increases across the school year
- Could you guess why?
- Teachers' expectations negatively affect students' opportunities to enhance their learning (e.g., Entwisle & Alexander, 1988; Good & Nichols, 2001; Madon, Jussim, & Eccles, 1997).

Teachers' expectations and self-fulfilling prophecy

- Teachers' expectations tend to be self-sustaining because expectations may affect perception, causing some teachers to be more likely to see what they expect and less likely to notice the unexpected.
- Teachers' continuing interpretations of ambiguous classroom behavior may consistently operate in ways that confirm their original expectations.
- In turn, teacher expectations may affect student performance because teachers decide what students are assigned to learn and judge how well they do.
- Teachers' expectations may also influence students' expectancies and behaviors.
- The self-fulfilling prophecy is more powerful among immigrant students or from lower economic background (Jussim et al., 1996).
- Students with poor academic records are more susceptible to the prophecy than students with good records

Implicit ways to express beliefs about students

- The language used by teachers to describe students' achievement can reflect their expectations and ideas about students.
- Without being aware of doing this, teachers describe students with immigrant origins using more abstract, stable negative characteristics, and more concrete, situationally bound positive qualities than students belonging to the national majority (Menegatti, Crocetti, & Rubini, 2017).
- Thus, students of the immigrant minority are consistently described in a less favorable way than other students in areas that go beyond mere performance, namely motivation, global learning achievement, and social behavior.

Reducing the Racial Achievement Gap: An Example of a Social-Psychological Intervention

- Intervention aimed to increase self-affirmation and self-worth and, in turn, achievement performance of disadvantaged groups (African Americans; Cohen et al., 2006).
- Students in the treatment conditions were asked to report their most important values and to explain why they selected such values. This was done three times during the academic year.
- African Americans in the affirmation condition earned higher fall-term grades than did those in the control condition (no effect for European Americans)
- The treatment benefit was stronger for previously poorly performing students than for highest performing students, who benefited less from the intervention.

Reducing the Racial Achievement Gap: A Social-Psychological Intervention

- The intervention also buffered African American students against the impact of an early decline in performance by interrupting a downward trend.
- The intervention eliminated the activation of the racial stereotypes in intellectually evaluative situation among African American students
- Placing importance to individual and group values could reduced the psychological availability of the stereotype.
- This then could have changed African Americans' perception of the level of bias in the environment, and their interpretations of academic success and defeat, over the long term.
- A psychological intervention, although brief, can help reduce what many view as an intractable disparity in real-world academic outcomes