



**EUROPEAN
INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY**



COVER PAGE AND DECLARATION

	Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.)
Specialisation:	Early Childhood Education
Module Code & Module Title:	EDUC400- Capestone Project
Students' Full Name:	Ganga Brahakmana Ekanayaka Mudiyansele Chalani Uresha Sandanayaka
Word Count:	4000
Date of Submission:	27/09/2023

I confirm that this assignment is my own work, is not copied from any other person's work (published/unpublished), and has not been previously submitted for assessment elsewhere.

E-SIGNATURE:

DATE:

27/09/2023

EIU Paris City Campus

Address: 59 Rue Lamarck, 75018 Paris, France | **Tel:** +33188320435 | **Mobile/WhatsApp:** +33607591197 | **Email:** paris@eiu.ac

EIU Corporate Strategy & Operations Headquarter

Address: 12th Fl. Amarin Tower, 496-502 Ploenchit Rd., Bangkok 10330, Thailand | **Tel:** +66(2)256923 & +66(2)2569908 | **Mobile/WhatsApp:** +33607591197 | **Email:** info@eiu.ac

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD IN ITALY.

By

Ganga B. E. M. Chalani U. Sandanayaka.

Capstone Project.

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

**Bachelors of Education Specialized with Early Childhood Education.
European International University.**

Abstract.

Introduction.

Research Questions and Objectives.

Review of Related Literature.

- Diversity.
- Inclusive Education.
- How professionals describe Inclusive Education.

Data analysis and presentation of Results and Findings.

Conclusion and Recommendations.

Reference.

Acknowledgment

Appendix

Abstract.

Diversity and Inclusion are well known values that are followed by almost all schools, workplaces and organizations . When we consider about Early childhood and school structures, there Diversity is a combination of staff, students and parents from different backgrounds, nationalities, races, genders, experience. The purpose of this capstone project is to provide a broad discussion of the concepts regarding diversity and inclusion specifically in the education structures and schools in Italy where we have a huge number of immigrant population living here and most classrooms are filled with multinational students as well as multinational staff and teachers which create a multicultural atmosphere inside the school. Diversity is not something new as every individual is different from each other. Some facts about diversity are easy to understand and visible and also easy to categorise. . Such

dimensions include gender appearance, skin colour , physical ability, dress code, age , nationality. Diversity can be deeper and selective too. Some characteristics can be stronger indicators than others. Such as two individuals who are the same gender and same age, but one may consider themselves quite young while others may consider old. Simply diversity refers to all the ways that individuals are different from one another. Here I pointed out how Italians treat other nationalities and their views about them specifically as teachers or workers who work in the education sector and also the view of the Italians parents towards the immigrant children and their parents and also the views about the inclusion from the immigrant parents about the schools and community they they involve. This Capstone project presents the survey of the questionnaire that I share with some selected individuals such as teachers and both immigrant and native parents. The aim of this project is to understand and recognize the diversity and inclusion in Italy especially in the education structures.

Introduction.

Diversity and inclusion are two important topics that we should consider when it comes to education structures. It will help individuals to work together for the betterment of the workplace. As I live in Italy as an immigrant, I thought it's nice to talk about and reflect about the diversity and inclusion here in this country, especially considering the immigrant children and education settings. Diversity is the representation of various people within an organisation; inclusion is making sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to have an impact on and contribute to every aspect of the workplace; and belonging is making sure that everyone feels safe and is able to bring their whole, authentic selves to work. Considering Diversity in the school settings is something nice as we all can experience the differences of children and their parents along with the school staff. It's wonderful when everyone is

considered and included in the setting and everyone is working towards a common goal. That gives the school setting an amazing atmosphere.

Research Questions and Objectives.

1. How do the Teachers in the Italian Education Structures consider Diversity and inclusion in their classroom?

Almost all the teachers are happy to have a multinational classroom despite the huge language barriers which might occur in the beginning. It allows the teachers to expose the students into different cultures and backgrounds and helps them to prepare the students to become better citizens. In Italy most of the government schools have numerous participation of other nationalities and when it comes to the International schools the diversity of the students and the staff are very high. As I work at a private school in Como city in Italy , and if I consider one class of 5th Grade with 20 children , the majority are Italian but it consists of 5 kids who originated from different other countries. I'm a part of this WhatsApp and facebook group called Milan English teachers. Where they post different job opportunities and events for English Teachers in Milan. So when I consider the opportunities posted there, I can see that recently most Italian schools are looking for teachers from different countries. They specifically say that so school settings prefer to have the diversity in their schools:

2. How do native Italian parents feel about the diversity and inclusion in the school community?

Most parents are happy that their children integrate with other children from different nationalities, especially when it comes to English speaking immigrant children so that it allows their children to learn and talk English. I'm a member of a few WhatsApp groups of parents and teachers.

- WhatsApp group of kids English Playgroup- (in this group there are 261 participants who are from different nationalities but commonly who speak English. So in this group they share different English language opportunities, babysitting opportunities etc.. Considering the Italian parents in that group, I can see that most people are looking for English speaking babysitters from different other countries and to find events where other immigrants participate to integrate with them so their children get used to different languages and cultures.

3. How do immigrant parents feel about the diversity and inclusion in the school community?

Most of the immigrant parents are happy about their children's inclusion in the school community. They feel welcome among the Italian parents. What I understand while discussing with immigrant parents is that So far no major incidents about discrimination in the school community for immigrant children, but maybe among very small children of age 3-7 can happen talks about their skin colour or about the appearance of the body and so on. I personally had this experience with my son when he was 5 years old. Some friend has told him that his skin colour is chocolate and he had this kinda feeling that he's different from others in the class where the majority was Italian with few other nationalities. Before when he drew himself he used to colour using pink but once his teacher had asked him to colour using brown, not only for him but also for other two children from India and Sri Lanka too. So in that case he understood that his class has various nationalities and everyone is different from skin but as humans we are all the same.

- **Objectives.**

Objective of this project is to understand the diversity and inclusion in the Italian Education structures. One of my objectives was to give a reminder for both teachers and Native Italian parents how they are dealing with immigrant children and to reflect on my questionnaires and feel about how they accept the diversity of other people and to create a proper atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable and included and everyone is working for a common goal. So everyone in the community will feel empathy and connected. Another aim of this project is to make others understand, especially about the mental health of the immigrant's children. They face the danger of experiencing psychological stress, which could lead to the onset of anxiety, depressive, or post-traumatic stress disorder signs. During migration or because of parental expulsion, several families and their kids also go through terrible separations.

Diversity and Inclusion is not only considered for immigrants but many other different aspects in the society. I would like to share some of my experiences as a teacher which I came across about the above topic other than the immigration.

For example : one of my class of 5 year old students had a boy called Pietro who was partially disabled and was repeating for the second time in that class. And also another Muslim girl who was in the same class who didn't speak any Italian.

Review of Related Literature

- **Diversity.**

- Griffin and Moorhead define diversity as the differences and similarities between people who work for organisations. This includes things like age, gender, ethnicity, physical abilities, disabilities, race, and sexual orientation.

- George Herbert Mead has said “ Community is a mixture of unity.”
- Coming together for a similar goal and shared effort is both conceivable and, more significantly, it becomes powerful regardless of who we are, how we may appear, or what we may think. (Oprah Winfrey)
- Robert Forbes has said that diversity is the ability to think freely with others.

According to the different definitions and quotes from different people who describe the diversity we can understand that diversity is very important not only in educational settings but everywhere. I can personally say Diversity is like a fruit salad where different types of fruits are mixed together to make a delicious dessert. So differences of people creates a wonderful atmosphere if they work and respect each other. So when we consider Italy the majority is Italians, who account for 95% of the total population and the remaining 5% consider other nationalities. The Italian people are a really intriguing people. Italians are likely the European nation with the most diverse biological structure, that is, with the largest genetic variation between different regions of the nation, between different regional or ethnic populations. Every part of the country you can find communities consisting of people from different nationalities. So to talk about diversity I guess that Italy is the best country and an example for that.

Ex: As an immigrant myself and as an English teacher at a well known Private school, one of my classrooms consists of children from different nationalities and the majority is always Italian children. Mostly during the English period immigrants children who are very good in English become stars among the Italian children who are asking for help from them

Inclusive Education.

Inclusion is all about making sure everyone has access to opportunities that fit their needs and that they feel like they belong in the school. It's a process that requires everyone to be

involved, and it's up to the school to make sure they're meeting the needs and values of all the kids. Inclusive education encompasses not only students with special educational needs, but also those who may be at risk of being marginalised or excluded due to a variety of factors. It is based on the principle that all students have the same value and deserve to be included in the educational experience. . So I believe that every child in the classroom should have equal rights, opportunities, concerns and inclusion in the classroom community if they are immigrant children or native children despite their gender, skin colour or even if they have language difficulties or special needs or disability issues.

- **How Professionals describe Inclusive Education**
- Chris Darlington in 2003 described Inclusion as not a one-size-fits-all concept that is limited to matters of location. It is a process, rather than a state. Core values of inclusion include respect for diversity, the rights of others, the dignity of individuals, the fulfilment of individual requirements, strategic planning, collective accountability, professional growth, and equal opportunity.
- The concept of inclusion, as formulated by Peter Mittler in 2000 (p. 7), is based on the principle that individuals should be given the opportunity to make decisions according to their own preferences.
- The CSIE (2018), a group that works to make inclusive schools a reality, said that "inclusion" means making sure that everyone, no matter what their needs are, can be fully involved in the lives and work of the mainstream world.
- Being a special school survivor, Simone Aspis believes that inclusive education should provide opportunities for everyone to work together. She believes that learning is better when people with different abilities, skills, and goals can work together.

Data analysis and presentation of Results and Findings.

- Diversity and Inclusion in Early Childhood (completed by the teachers.)

I shared this questionnaire of 10 Questions with teachers who are my colleagues of Private school in the centre of Milan and some other teachers who work in different schools around Milan.

- Number of the teachers who received the questionnaire: 10
- Number of participants: 5

1st Question: How do you feel about the immigrants in Italy?

Che siano una ricchezza
8 days ago
A cultural and economic opportunity
13 days ago
Fine, but Italian traditions and language should be incorporated into their new lives.
21 days ago
Immigration gives societies to grow and expand however In Italy immigrants are not quite welcomed. Especially for burocracy the difficulties can be sometimes frustrating
21 days ago
The world is gradually becoming a global village so it's good that Italy is having to experience this wave so am happy about this.
21 days ago

The analysis of The first question revealed in that 3 them are happy about it and one teacher who's an immigrant herself finds difficulty in bureaucracy and thinks that Italy is not a friendly country for Immigrants and one teacher thinks though she's happy about immigrants in her opinion she think that Italian traditions and language needs to incorporate into the lives of immigrants.

2nd Question: As a teacher how do you treat the immigrant children in your class?

For this question every participant responded more or less the same thing. That treats every child in the classroom equally without any diversity and shows empathy specially to immigrant children to integrate with others to build relationships with other children.

3rd Question: what are the difficulties you face while working with immigrants children & parents?

The answer of every participant was “Language” . That’s the main problem basically every immigrant faces anywhere in the world. But Italy has many possibilities for immigrants to learn the language free of charge in the government community services and also in the churches. And most schools have after school clubs that help the immigrant children who need to improve the Italian language and there the teachers help with the school homework and curricular stuff.

4th Question: How would you react if a coworker says something racist, ableist or inappropriate to someone?

All the participants' answers were against racism and that they would react and correct immediately.

5th Question: How do you understand coworkers with different backgrounds?

Summary of all participants' answers was that main understanding comes from dialogues and cultural exchanges such as interchanging ideas or social facts about different countries.

6th Question: Why do you think that Diversity and Inclusion is important in your work?

All the answers of the participants were positive towards diversity and inclusion. As per their answers Embracing diversities results in empathetic, open minded societies who can relate well with the global world. Especially in school environments children interacting with peers from different cultures are considered to be more welcoming and practical problem solvers. These also affect their diverse and out of the box thinking skills

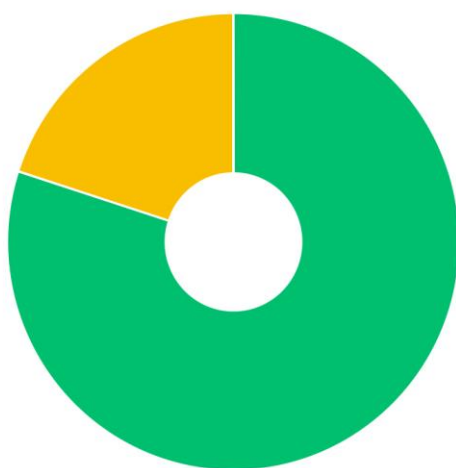
7th Question: how do you feel to work with colleagues who are different from your background and culture?

The analysis of the 7th question revealed that All participants like to work with colleagues who are different from their nationality and culture. It gives them the possibility to experience new ways and perspectives.

8th Question: Do you see any difference in Immigrant children and Italian children?

The analysis shows 80% that says they see a difference between Italian and immigrant children and 20% is for may be. When I discussed this with them their main concern was the language difficulties and maybe the didactic development in the beginning shows a difference between Italian and immigrant children. But with the time if those immigrant children get good support and if they are eager to learn there are situations that immigrants children did better than the Italian kids.

8. Do you see any difference between Italian and immigrant children in your class? Noti qualche differenza tra i bambini italiani e quelli immigrati nella tua classe?



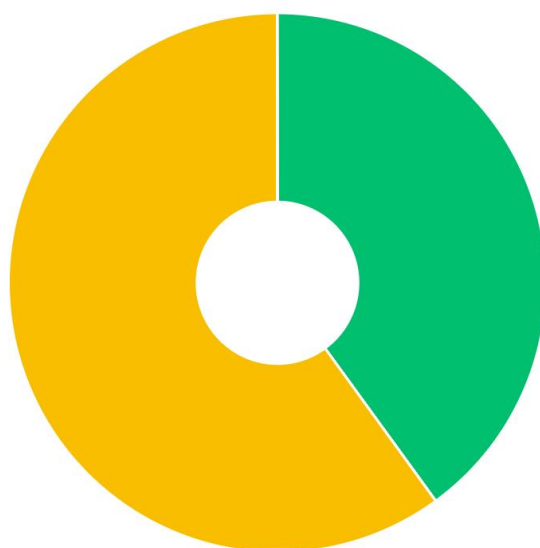
Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Yes	80%	4
No	0%	0
Maybe	20%	1
Altro (specificare)	0%	0

9th Question: Are there any challenges immigrant children adopting to the Italian classroom culture?

The analysis of the 9th question revealed that 80% of the immigrant children face challenges and 20% might be challenging or not.

9. Are there any challenges with regards to immigrant children adopting to the Italian classroom culture? Ci sono delle sfide per quanto riguarda l'adozione da parte dei bambini immigrati della cultura scolastica italiana?

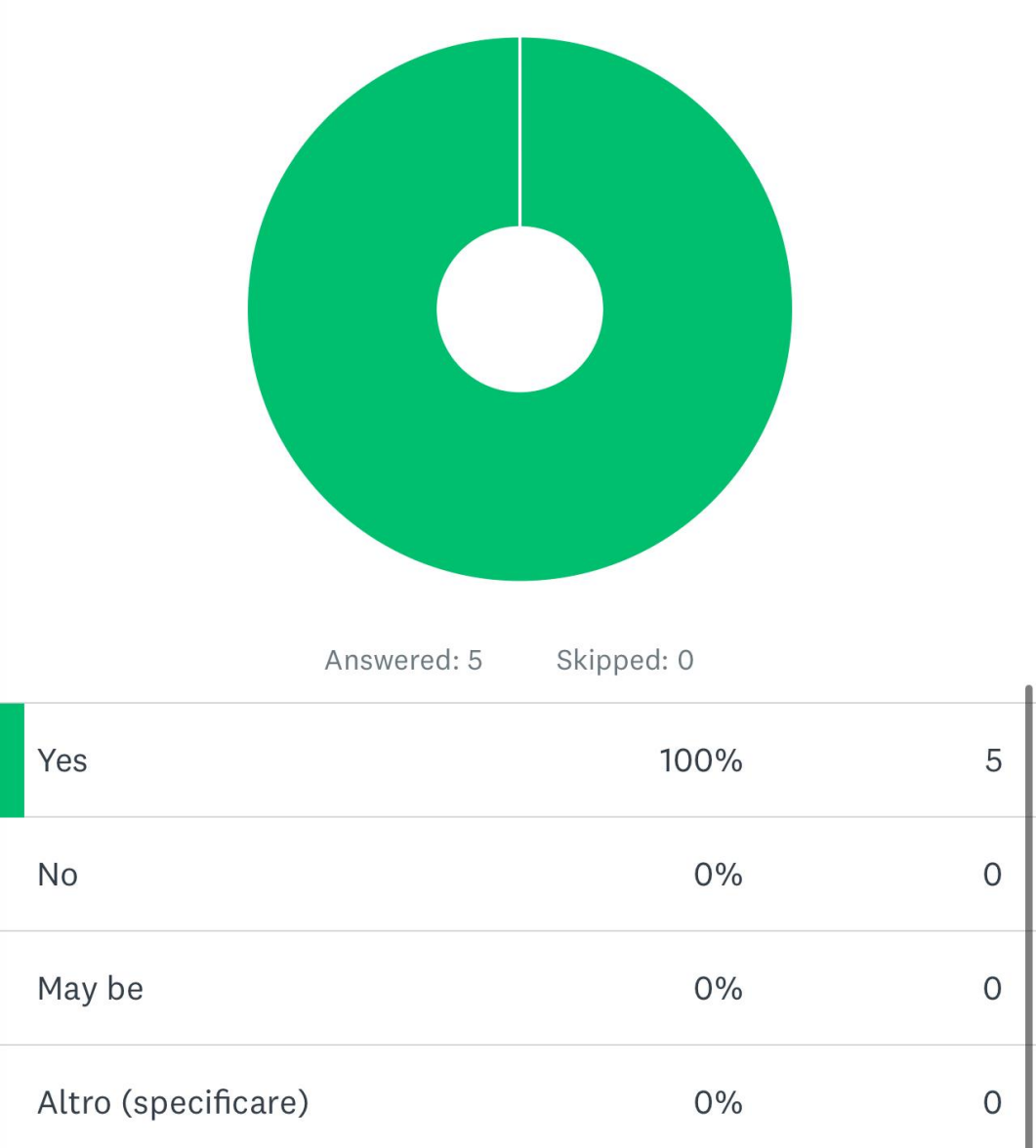


Answered: 5 Skipped: 0			
Yes	40%	2	
No	0%	0	
May be	60%	3	
Altro (specificare)	0%	0	

10th Question: Are you happy to have a inclusive class as a teacher?

The analysis shows that every participating teacher likes to have an inclusive classroom with diversity. The analysis shows 100% of the participants enjoy an inclusive classroom.

10. Are you happy to have inclusive class as teacher ? Is Inclusivity aim of yours as a teacher? Sei felice di avere una classe inclusiva come insegnante? L'inclusione è il tuo obiettivo come insegnante?



- **Diversity and Inclusion in Early Childhood** (completed by Immigrants parents)
- Number of people shared with : 10

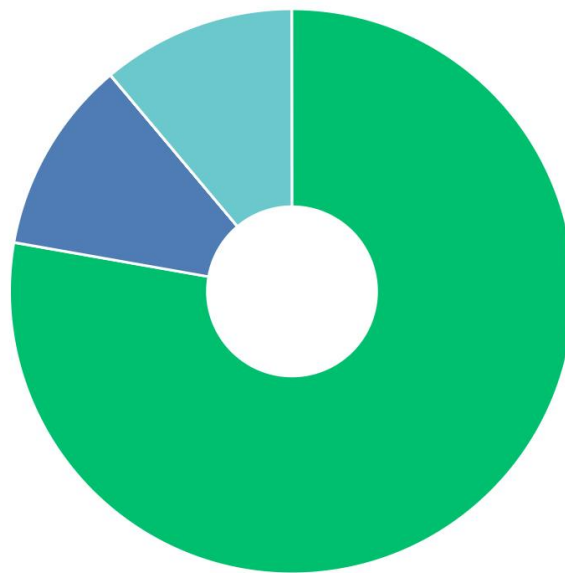
- Number of the participants: 9

This questionnaire which I made includes 8 questions which covered different aspects concerning immigrant parents.

1st Question: Are you happy to be an immigrant parent?

The analysis of the first question shows that 77.78% of them are happy to be immigrant parents and 11.11% are not happy about that and 11.11% are neutral about their decision.

1. Are you happy to be an immigrant parent?



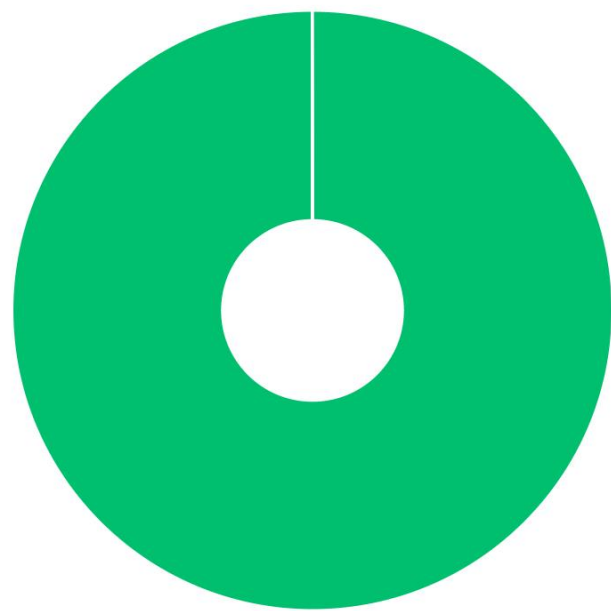
Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

Yes	77.78%	7
No	11.11%	1
May be	0%	0
Other (please specify)	11.11%	1

2nd Question: How do your children treated in their school as immigrants?

The analysis shows that everyone is happy about how their children are treated in the school system in Italy.

2. How does your children treated in their school as immigrants?



Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

Accepted among other children.	100%	9
Discriminated by other children	0%	0
Other (please specify)	0%	0

3rd Question: How does the school teachers treat your children?

Everyone's answer was positive towards teachers and mentioned that teachers of their children work with their children with a good understanding and are very caring and helpful.

4th Question: Do you feel that you are welcome among the other parents?

This question required Yes / No / Maybe and if they had to write anything regarding this. Every parent was happy about their inclusivity in the parental community and they felt welcome among other parents.

5th Question: what are the challenges your child facing in school as an immigrant child?

I can summarize the data that I received from this question as follows;

No challenges	Bullying	Language difficulties	Appearance
5	1	2	0

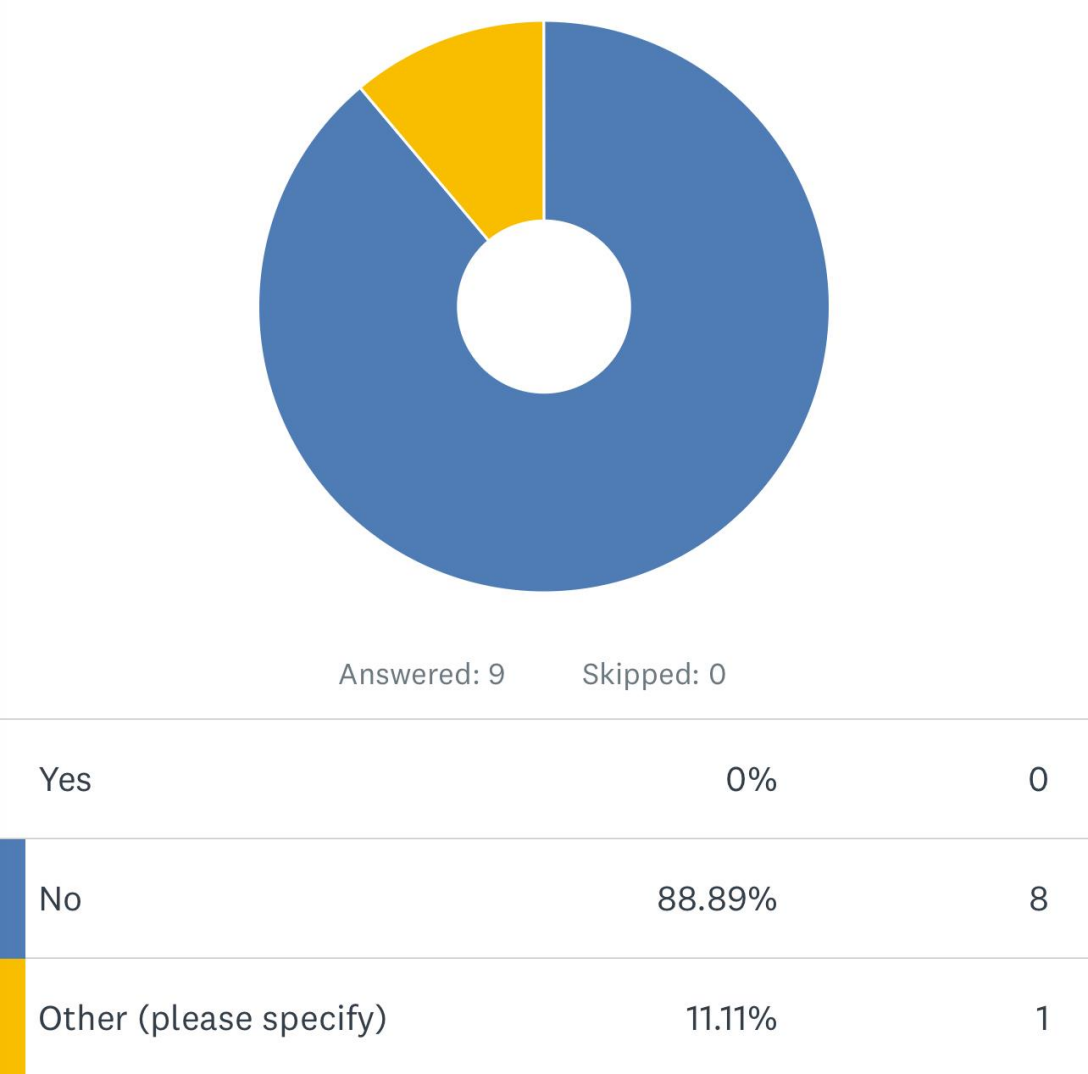
6th Question: Have you ever experienced discrimination or racism because of your background? How will you deal with it?

When I analyse this question it shows that 7 of them said they haven't experienced such situations but one parent had responded saying she faced that experience once and she ignored it without any problems.

7th Question: Does your child struggle to make relationships with other children in school?

The analysis of this question shows that 88.89% of their children does not have any difficulties creating friendships among other children and 11.11% said that sometimes they struggle due to various problems.

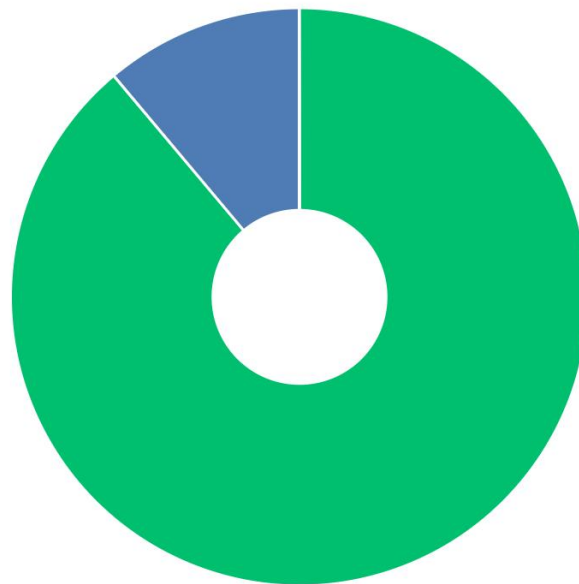
7. Does your child struggle to make relationships with other children in their school?



8th Question: Do you think that your child has equal rights and possibilities in school as other native children?

The analysis of this question shows that 88.89% think they have the equality as other children and 11.11% that's basically just one parent thinks the opposite way and feels that his or her children are not treated in the same way as others.

8. Do you think that your child has the equal rights and possibilities In schools as other native children?



Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

Yes	88.89%	8
No	11.11%	1
Other (please specify)	0%	0

- **Diversity and Inclusion in Early Childhood-** (Completed by Italian Parents)
- Number of people shared with: 10
- Number of Participants: 8

This questionnaire which I made consists of 6 questions and I shared with some of my students' parents and parents of my son.

1st Question: What do you feel about immigrant children?

The answers of all participants were positive towards immigrant children and their families. Basically they all mentioned that they feel them as children without any discrimination and want to help them feel at home here in Italy despite all the language and cultural barriers.

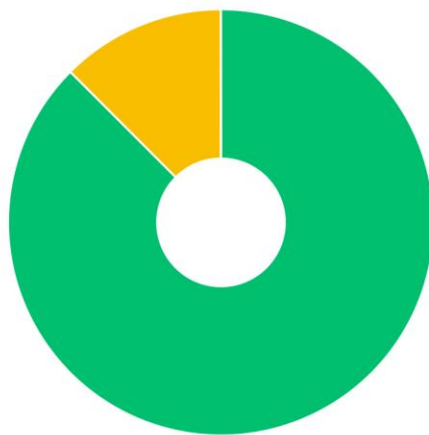
2nd Question: How does your child treat the immigrant children? Does he /she see any difference between them?

Analysis of this question's answers shows that their children don't see any difference in immigrant children and they integrate with them the same as other Italian children.

3rd Question: Do you like your child integrate with immigrant children?

The analysis of this question revealed that 87.5% of Italian parents like that their children create relationships with immigrants and 12.5% are not quite sure about that decision.

3. Do you like your child integrate with immigrant children?
ti piace che tuo figlio si integri con i bambini immigrati?



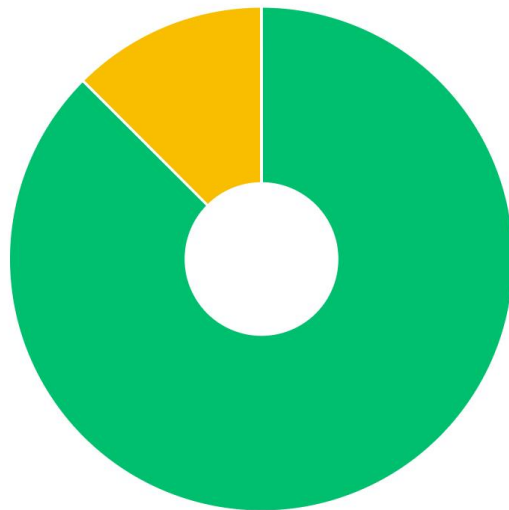
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0

Yes	87.5%	7
No	0%	0
May be	12.5%	1
Other (please specify)	0%	0

4th Question: What are the problems that you think your child will face while integrating with immigrant children?

Analysis of this question revealed that most Italian children struggled with the language difficulties to integrate with immigrant children and as a count it's 87.5% of the respondents while 12.5% , basically one parent mentioned that cultural barriers might affect them. No one mentioned body colour which should be appreciated.

4. What are the problems that you think your child will face while integrating with immigrant children? Quali sono i problemi che pensi che tuo figlio dovrà affrontare durante l'integrazione con i bambini immigrati?



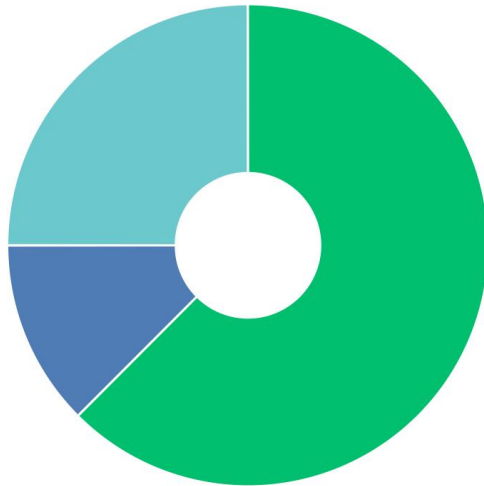
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0

Language (lingua)	87.5%	7
Appearance (aspetto del bambino)	0%	0
Culture (cultura)	12.5%	1
Body color (colore del corpo)	0%	0
Other (please specify)	0%	0

5th Question: Does your child has an immigrant friend in school?

Of the participants 62.5% said that their children have immigrant friends and 12.5% (1 parent) said they don't have and 25% of the participants which is 2 parents said that they are not sure about that.

5. Does your child has an immigrant friend in school ? tuo figlio ha un amico immigrato a scuola?



Answered: 8 Skipped: 0

Yes	62.5%	5
No	12.5%	1
Sometimes	0%	0
Other (please specify)	25%	2

For this Analysis I want to add my personal experience with my son who's in the second grade of a public school here in Italy and his best friends are an Italian boy and a Brazilian boy. But he has this group of friends that he frequently meets and we arrange playdates and stuff among them and there are Italian , African, Moroccan, Chinese, German children. As a mother I'm really happy that he's included like this among other children without any discrimination.

6th Question: What can you do to make immigrant children to be inclusive in the school environment?

Every participant responded saying that they would invite home for playdates and birthday parties.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Finally I can say, considering the analysis of my 3 questionnaires, that Italy is an immigrant friendly country and specifically when we talk about the educational community of Italy in most structures including Teachers , parents and children they respect each other without any discrimination and racism, they enjoy a diversity and inclusive atmosphere and support everyone.

Global migration caused diversity to become a hot topic for academic study and debate in every area of education. Additionally, teachers of young children working in multicultural educational settings need to educate kids on the value of acceptance as well as cultural diversity and variation.

There are a number of suggestions made by the recommendations for working in linguistically different educational settings that teachers may want to take into consideration. They must first show their appreciation for various cultures and acknowledge the advantages of diversity of languages. For instance, a teacher can urge the students to create presentations to share with one another the distinctive characteristics of their respective cultures and languages. Second, childcare professionals ought to promote active participation from all kids. Thirdly, teachers should explain language to various kinds of pupils, including speakers of other languages, using tangible ideas and experiences. By using real objects, pictures, or movements, the use of vocabulary can be explained in a clear and concise manner. Fourth, vocabulary practice should be prioritised in order to aid The learners' language growth. The rise of global immigration and classroom diversity requires early childhood educators to promote family involvement and collaborate with parents to improve children's development and learning. To summarise, the growing diversity in environments for early childhood education necessitates that instructors develop their skills in inclusive approaches to learning, identify stereotypes, and confront prejudices in order to advance social justice. Because misunderstandings have a detrimental effect on teachers' professional practise in diverse classrooms and lead to the impartial approach to teaching, teachers' personal views and experiences as individuals should be carefully evaluated in the reflection process. To give children equal opportunities and ensure

successful learning outcomes in diverse pupils, early childhood educators must address language-related, sexual orientation, and economic diversity challenges. My suggestion is that teachers should get training about diversity and inclusion, by doing this can promote harmony among the staff, can help individuals to learn values of others, develop interactions across cultures. We have the opportunity to enjoy the advantages of a more effective and cohesive work team through diversity and inclusion training in schools.

Reference

- www.easylama.com
- The module EDUC400 - Research Methods in Education and the social sciences.
- The module EDUC220- Inclusive Education by open university .
- The Module EDUC240- Interplay between leading and Learning (working with diversity in services for children and young learners)
- <https://chalkypapers.com/topics/early-childhood-education-research-topics/>
- Chan, A. (2011). Critical multiculturalism: Supporting early childhood teachers to work with diverse immigrant families. *International Research in Early Childhood Education*, 2(1), 63–75.
- <https://www.sijm.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/11mazzei-et-al.-n.-116.pdf> - Diversity and inclusion management-an analysis of practice developed in Italy.
- <https://surveysparrow.com/blog/dive> - Diversity and inclusion questions.

Acknowledgment

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my loving husband and my two sons for their patience and support throughout this project and during the whole study program. Especially for my husband for his continuous encouragement.

I want to remember my mother who was always available to babysit my sons and help me throughout the degree specifically while I finish this project and other assignments. And also

I would like to thank all my colleagues at school who took their valuable time to fill the questionnaire and helped me with the survey.

I also want to thank the few Italian and Immigrant parents of my students and parents of my son's friends who took their time to fill the questionnaire and helped me with the survey. The journey of doing this project and completing my degree has been a very beautiful learning experience and I'm proud of accomplishing it.

Appendix

- Questionnaire of Diversity and inclusion in Early Childhood which was filled by the teachers.

<https://it.surveymonkey.com/r/CLVNQDF>

- Questionnaire of Diversity and inclusion in Early Childhood which was filled by the Italian parents.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/J72XXK6>

- Questionnaire of Diversity and inclusion in Early Childhood which was filled by Immigrant parents.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/G96NC96>

- The analysis diagrams using

<https://mobile.surveymonkey.com/web/surveys/409267352?from=surveys>

