Abstract

The paper summarizes the results of a qualitative study that aimed to identify the positive outcomes and opportunities, as well as the risks related with migration and living in a multicultural context. Research consisted of a 7-year longitudinal case study, during which the life-stories, conflicts, crises, and problem-solving strategies of 23 young people of Italian origin with migration experiences - some of which were still living in southern Germany and some of which had returned to southern Italy – were observed. The sample was composed of both adolescents with intellectual disabilities or other psychological and social disorders and adolescents who seemed to have benefited from living and growing up in a different culture. The results suggest that education can play an important role in determining whether subjects experience enrichment and growth or increasing difficulties or mental illnesses and social disorders. Therefore the paper takes the position that education can be an effective preventive measure against the mental health issues experienced by young migrants living in complex societies. Given the research results and the ongoing phenomenon of globalization, intercultural education, as developed and applied in a European context, might be the most appropriate method. The paper proposes further research to verify the application of the intercultural approach as a preventive measure against intellectual disabilities and other psychological and social disorders.

Keywords

Identity, Risk factors, Protective factors, Intercultural education.