

Looking Beyond: Educational Challenges and Resources in The Suburbs”: Results of a Focus Group on Building an Educational Community

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Abstract

Educational interventions in suburban areas of large metropolitan complexes pose challenges in terms of their design and evaluation of effectiveness. In fact, there is a need to integrate the context-specific perspectives of educators and beneficiaries of interventions for understanding educational action and overcome multicultural fragmentation through the construction of meaning and identity, both individual and community-based, as well as environmental. This presentation will discuss the results of a focus group conducted with 10 educators from 5 associations operating in one of the most deprived neighborhoods of Rome, Italy. Among other things, the results highlighted a) strengths to be exploited, b) weaknesses and areas for improvement that need to be addressed as a priority. Among the former, educators identified: personal and professional resources, participation in pedagogical supervision and intervention, clear mission and vision, care for shared urban space, protection of actors in the field (educators and beneficiaries), agreement on the creation of an educating community with the enhancement of the expertise and multicultural richness of beneficiaries through the application of new educational protocols co-constructed with beneficiaries. Among the points to be improved, they identified the lack of partnerships and the difficulty of networking between associations, the lack of clarity regarding the role of the educator and the lack of continuity in educational activities and, of programs to evaluate processes, impact, and results. The perspective of educators has proven to be fundamental in defining the actions to be implemented for increasing the impact of educational interventions in the most disadvantaged suburban areas.

Keywords: educational community; suburbs; focus group; communities; multiculturalism