The Identity Construction in Arab-Islamic Education Systems Into the Experiences of People from Morocco and Syria Living in Europe

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In the last decade, Europe has welcomed numerous migrants and refugees from Arab countries. The presence of these migrants and refugees in schools has posed the challenge of unfamiliar realities for teaching staff. The issue has been addressed from the perspectives of sociology to psychology, providing insights into the nature of intercultural education. Few studies have delved into pupils' cultural backgrounds, and the history of one's country of origin is seldom regarded as a decisive factor in the formation of identity. The Arabic-speaking Moroccan and Syrian communities are the most significant and have interesting histories and education systems. Using Nussbaum's (2010) multifactorial analysis, this research aims to better understand the educational background of Arabic-speaking pupils, focusing on humanities and religious education of those from Morocco and Syria. The methodology embodies qualitative empirical research conducted in Europe that addressed the main factor identified by Nussbaum (2010). The results show the education experience of Syrian and Moroccan pupils was affected by their home country education policies, especially where minority and relationship issues with Europe, the West and Israel were concerned.

Keywords: Identity construction, Morocco, Syria, human and social sciences, religion

Over the past decade, Europe has seen a dramatic increase of migrants because of political upheaval in many Arab countries.[1] They have been welcomed in countries such as Germany, Sweden, and Italy (UNHCR, 2021). The inclusion of migrant pupils in European

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schools, particularly those from Arab countries, is sometimes challenging, and teaching staff have often faced new problems and unfamiliar realities related to language, culture and religion. This has prompted studies of inclusion in different European countries. Some of these offer a comparative analysis (Catarci, 2015; Immerfall and Pugliese, 2020)[2], while others focus on the role of religion in school interaction (Cummins, 2015)[3] and still others on language aspects. Some European projects addressed specific factors related to language and culture, such as the importance of mother-tongue tutors for migrated pupils (Zecca and Mazzei, 2018) and of a bias-free school-family relationship (Stock, 2022). These studies also revealed the need to deepen the pupil's cultural universe, previously identified by other scholars who have advocated for coexistence between different cultures (Fiorucci, 2011)[4]. However, as Zoletto (2017) and Jacob and Gardelle (2020) have already pointed out, various gaps exist in intercultural educational literature. These include a failure to consider economic and power relations between countries where the cultures affect identity construction and belonging, as well as the history, particularly the colonial history, of migrant pupils' home countries[5].

Within this general framework, this article focuses on case studies of Moroccan and Syrian pupils in Europe because those are the most significant Arabic speaking groups. The Moroccan community was built over decades of economic migration, while the Syrian one is more recent and was caused by the war in that country. Morocco and Syria are interesting as educational case studies because of the different ways in which each built its national education system after colonialism and the manner in which the concept of Arab and Muslim education and identity was interpreted and implemented. Past studies have determined that Morocco, identifying itself with the monarchy that has ruled it for centuries, conveys in its state schools an idea of belonging linked overall to the monarchy and to a tolerant interpretation of Islam (Chic, 2013; Hassani-Idrissi, 2015).[6] In Syria, however, republican and socialist sentiments have engendered an Arab nationalism aimed at inculcating Arab identity in a school built by and for the Ba'th regime that politically exploits religion to strengthen national unity (Landis, 2003)[7].

The present study thus seeks to carry out an in-depth multifactorial analysis of the educational contexts of migrant Moroccan and Syrian pupils, especially in the areas of the humanities and religion, in relation to their experience in European schools. It considers different historical and cultural elements to explain the significance of humanities curricula within

the society (Nussbaum, 2010). This approach examines both the past and present, considering how different civilizations respond to modernizing pressures. It seeks to determine how societies adapt based on resources internal to the specific cultural traditions that shape the pedagogical ethos and school curricula, despite the trend toward standardization resulting from globalization (Habermas, 2016).

The main research questions are therefore as follows:

1) What features and topics of the home educational system of Moroccan and Syrian pupils most influence their identity in relation to their interaction with the European educational systems of the host countries?
2) What feelings do they have on the values transmitted by religion and humanities?

These questions will be addressed based on the identified gaps in the literature. That is, by placing at the center of the analysis the colonial history, the contents of the humanities that refer to the relations between countries of departure and host countries, and the aspects of religion that tie in with these educational, social and political issues.

BACKGROUND

Historical and Cultural Reconstruction

Arab education's historical development can be divided into five educational periods: traditional (610–1453), Ottoman (1453–1830), colonial (1830–1942), independence (1942–1970), and globalization (1970–present).

In traditional education, humanities is called *'Adab*, a concept initially tied to Arab identity that evolved during the Abbasid period (750-1258) into a universal culture influenced by Indian, Iranian, and Hellenistic literature. Al-Ghazali's (1058–1111) classification of sciences contributed to the marginalization of foreign sciences like Greek philosophy. Consequently, the *'Adab* soon lost its intercultural meaning, and continued to do so through the Arab decadence period into modernity. During the Umayyad period (661–750), schools known as *kuttāb* spread (Gibb, 1986) and, in the Abbasid Caliphate, achieved near-complete literacy within the empire (Maherzi, 2019). This education played a crucial role in socializing diverse ethnic groups into the Islamic faith and way of life, allowing them to identify with Islamic civilization while preserving their specific ethnic identities (Gibb, 1986). Sufism also flourished in the multicultural Abbasid Caliphate (Leccese, 2017). It promoted the idea, with figures like Ibn 'Arabi, of God accepting all individualities within Divine unity, embracing human diversity (Stepanyants, 2003). However, Sufism faced opposition

from more rigid Islamic currents advocating a return to pure Arab Islam (Ventura, 2003; Leccese, 2017).

Modernity saw the Ottoman Empire conquer the Arab lands (from 15th to 19th century) excluding Morocco. In Mediterranean lands, the Empire left to local elites a great deal of freedom in territory management and educational structures continued to exist undisturbed as they had before. In contemporary times, Tunisia and Egypt instituted independent education systems, building the model of today's national supra-confessional education systems. More direct was the Ottoman control in the Middle East, where local education coexisted with imperial institutions, with some attempts to build a national education (Zani, 2005; Tamari, 2009).

Starting with the French occupation of Algeria (1830), however, colonialism interrupted these processes, building educational systems to form specialized servants with European values and thus contributing to the creation of nationalist elites (Anderson, 1991). In this period, although through different periods of time and in different ways depending also on the colonizing country, all the colonized Arab countries were characterized by the colonizer's language, culture, and identity assimilation and the development of resistance movements. Algeria is the most representative example of this phenomenon, with 150 years of colonization, a profound Frenchification of language and customs and a painful war for liberation.

As independent states were starting to be created (1942–1971), the basic structures of the independent national education systems were put into place. They were mostly based on western systems and with contents rooted in Arab-Islamic tradition (Zani, 2005; Kirdar, 2017). Egypt was one of the main leaders during this period, and it propagated, for the first time in Arab pedagogical history, the idea that one of the main educational aims was to build national identity. Arabization characterized all Arab countries with strong nationalist narratives, evident in human and social sciences. From Egypt, Nasser's secular pan-Arabist educational model was propagated (Zani, 2005), together with the Al-Azhar religious educational model that contributed to eradicating Sufism from pedagogy (Brown, 2011).

The 1970's–80's economic crisis and the oil boom in the Arab Gulf countries opened the time of globalization. In it, a new educational model developed from the Arab Gulf and specifically from Saudi Arabia, the only Arab country never colonized. The secular and socialist educational model based on Egypt's was replaced by a more religious and capitalistic model[8]. This new model emphasized a more religious narrative than humanities

and combined technological development with tradition and religion. The result was high-level education in science and foreign languages blended with many hours of Islamic education. Countless private fee-charging schools that have become widespread among elites in other Arab countries take their inspiration from this model, even in Morocco and Syria (Kirdar, 2017).

The two case studies fit into these five periods, sometimes detaching themselves from the general pedagogical trends, as the following paragraphs will show.

The Case of Morocco

Morocco was an Amazigh country conquered in 682 by Arabs. It detached itself from the Arab world in 788, when the Idrisid dynasty conquered it. Since then, independent dynasties, some of which were Imazighen, have governed it (Laroui, 1982; Gandolfi, 2011). The Arabization in Morocco is a never ending process. Thus, the Moroccan traditional period was characterized by the fact that the Arabic language overlapped and merged with the Imazighan language that people still speak today in some communities. Cultural mixing had also taken place from a religious point of view, combining Islam with ancient local beliefs. Sufi brotherhoods spread throughout the country, acting as mediators between popular religiosity and official Islam and constituting cultural centers and religious schools for local populations (Zani, 2005).

Morocco was never part of the Ottoman Empire and developed a unified educational system under the Alawide Dynasty. The different educational institutions functioned based on agreements between teachers and parents, and the king was the only supervisor (Partouche, 2014). The culture was homogeneous, following the Maliki School and allowing Sufi teaching. There is no evidence of ethnic tensions regarding education, as the Imazighen had their zawiya and schools. The Moroccan monarchy's authoritarianism overlapped with master-disciple authoritarianism which kept the country cohesive for centuries (Hammoudi, 1997). Thus, before colonialism, Morocco had a Muslim, traditional, and national education system, characterized by the popular Sufism of the Marabout brotherhoods (De Poli, 2007), independent from the Arabs and Ottoman Empires.

During the colonial (1912–1955) and independence periods, Morocco followed the Arab countries' general trend (Zani, 2005; Gandolfi, 2011).[9] Regarding the humanities, one of the main issues of the independence period was the assimilation of the Amazigh population into the Arab

Nation. It manifested itself through a historical vision that highlights the community of origin and the mixing of ethnic groups throughout history. History curricula link national history to the whole Maghreb and this Maghrebi unity was based on the common ancient Amazigh inhabitants. The European expansion into the world is treated negatively, being held accountable for the brake on development and the extermination of others (Hassani-Idrissi, 2015).

Regarding religious influences on the humanities and minority issues, as in other countries, the 1980s economic crisis affected the emergence of Muslim fundamentalism in education (Ennaji, 2005). It influenced substantial changes in the history curriculum, such as the exclusion of the question of Amazigh origins (Hassani-Idrissi, 2015). Schools worked to assimilate the Amazigh population and school curricula stressed that Morocco has one religion, Islam, and one language, Arabic (Ennaji, 2005). Radicalization of identitarian and religious issues occurred at the same time of the liberalization of policies. It is typical of the globalization period even if in Morocco it did not coincide with a significant scientific breakthrough. The recognition of Morocco's identity beyond Arab ethnicity emerged in the 1996 constitution, emphasizing the Muslim religion and monarchy as the foundations of unity (Ennaji, 2005). The 2000 National Charter of Education acknowledged Tamazight as an official language, promoting its use in primary education for nearly half of Moroccan children (Kirdar, 2017). In history, monarchy-based nationalism has supplanted the Unitary Maghreb approach, presenting Morocco as different from the rest of the Maghreb by a national identity whose strength enabled it to repel the Iberians and the Ottomans. After the terrorist attacks in the United States, the government mitigated the predatory image of the West in textbooks to avoid instilling hatred (Hassani-Idrissi, 2015). Ahmad Qustas, an influential pedagogue, was appointed Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs in 2002. He and other influential personalities such as Ahmad al-Tawfiq (b. 1943), who were affiliates of the *Būdshīshiyya* Sufi Brotherhood, influenced the spread of a tolerant and open-minded religious interpretation in education (Chic, 2013).

The Case of Syria

Arab Muslims conquered Syrian lands in the 7th century and renamed them *Bilad al-Sham*[10]. They were always part of the succeeding Muslim empires and never corresponded to present-day Syria. They were a mosaic of confessional and ethnic communities that felt a sense of belonging to

their specific geography and the region as a whole, developing a stratified identity.

From 1516 to 1918, the Ottoman Empire dominated these lands (Trombetta, 2013). Teachers fell into two categories: those who embraced imperial culture and supported the empire, and those who upheld local traditions, often including Sufi influences. These educators represented various religious perspectives and power structures, creating a delicate balance between the empire and local elites (Tamari, 2009).

Even here, education followed the common trend during colonialism and the first period of independence, with a strong emphasis on Arab identity. Syria's history, education and political culture immediately identified as anti-Zionist and anti-American with the first war against the newborn state of Israel in 1948 (Zecca, 2018). In 1958, Egypt and the Baʿth party announced the birth of the United Arab Republic. The political dream of breaking down the colonial boundaries and unifying all Arab people in a single state lasted only three years, but the influence of Egyptian educational policy has continued until the present (Trombetta, 2013). It established an academic orthodoxy that reduced Islam to Sunni orthodoxy (Landis, 2003), and the Syrian regime radicalized it in a context that was much more heterogeneous than Egypt.

In 1963, the Baʿth party took power in Syria, initiating an independent socialist policy. Within the party, religious minorities that traditionally were excluded from power gained prominence. Protests began in 1964 due to economic grievances, with some involvement from the Muslim Brotherhood. The Baʿth party's secularism did not resonate with many Muslims, who associated the Ba'thists with minority groups like the Alawis, Druze, and Ismailis. The decision to abolish religious teaching in state schools was highly unpopular. In 1967, the government established the current public education system, nationalizing religious and foreign private schools (Trombetta, 2013). The educational system was primarily oriented toward promoting Arab identity, sidelining minority languages and cultures, a characteristic that persists to this day.

In 1970, Hāfiẓ al-Assad led a "corrective revolution" within the Baʿth party, taking control of Syria. He belonged to the Alawi religious group which was not recognized as Muslim by many. This lead to accusations from the Muslim Brotherhood that the regime favored Alawis. The economic crisis in the late 1970s intensified resentment (Zecca, 2018), religious tensions escalated, and religion regained political prominence. The return of the religious class to schools solidified the relationship between

pan-Arab nationalism and Sunni Islamic orthodoxy in Arab pedagogy. On the other side, it hindered open discussions of religious and ethnic diversity, while radical Islamic factions grew among marginalized populations (Landis, 2003). The implementation of economic liberalization policies, in common with the whole Arab area, was not followed by political and educational liberalism. Schools served as tools for regime propaganda, shaping generations to identify with the party, ready to combat external and internal enemies, including the West, Israel, the Muslim Brotherhood, and ethnic minorities.

In 2000, Bashar al-Assad took his father's position and launched modernization and technological development plans in all areas. They included schools with the implementation of English and technological and computer sciences. With these plans, the government chased global economic development, following the "Dubaization model" (Trombetta, 2013). Unfortunately, the modernization applied only to scientific disciplines. Starting from 2011, the civil war led to the national education system's fragmentation. The government, Daesh, and rebels autonomous organization, Arab and Kurds, provided each one with its education (Kirdar, 2017), representing different narratives coexisting in the same country.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The works of Nussbaum (2010), Habermas (2016), Bourdieu and Passeron (1970) and Anderson (1991) are essential to understand how the home educational systems of Moroccan and Syrian pupils influence their identity in relation to their interaction with host European educational systems. The educational systems of origin are analyzed first using Nussbaum's (2010) multifactorial analysis. The exploration of traditional values draws upon Habermas's theoretical framework (2016), while the influence of colonialism and nationalism on identity and education is analyzed through the concepts developed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1970) and Anderson (1991).

In her work *Not for Profit* (2010), Nussbaum analyzes the role of humanities in Western and Indian education systems. She looked at their core values, the cultural and religious traditions they inspire, and the weight given to them in the educational organization. She found that recent government policies favoring technical knowledge have diminished the quality of humanistic education, in a conflict among profit-driven versus inclusive, globally responsible education. Thus, the author advocates for

a resurgence of humanistic culture in education to foster critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding. Nussbaum's (2010) theorization on how history teaching influences pupils' identity construction is relevant for this research. In her opinion, rhetorical and nationalistic history teaching promotes oppression and exclusion, while social history builds responsible citizens, sensitivity to justice and openness to diversity. Moreover, history teaching with a social perspective counteracts the tendency to exclude minorities by teaching authentic facts about them and helps the ability to decentralize one's point of view. To create intercultural inclusion, she considered vital to find in each pedagogical tradition the authors and perspective that go in this direction. She identifies the active pedagogical method in the Western tradition in those approaches that go from Socrates to Dewey. The author admits that she does not know about Arab education, and despite there being extensive pedagogical literature referring to her work,[11] no studies on Arab countries' education use her approach and methodology of investigation. Thus, this study also looks at this, especially in the background analysis.

Among the diverse factors Nussbaum considers important to take into consideration in the multifactorial analysis of educational systems (humanities, educational policies, minority, etc.), religion and tradition have a central role. It is therefore useful to set Islamic religion topics within the broader debate on religion's role in today's world, and the Habermas theorization (2016) can be useful to this end. In his opinion, contemporary secularism excludes religion from the public sphere and deprives society of essential resources in the foundation of meaning. In opposition to this, and to build a cohesive and inclusive society, Habermas proposes the *neutralizing translation*. This is the transposition of religious values onto a secular signification system so that people can rationally discuss and enhance them within society (Habermas, 2016). Among the diverse Islamic traditions (Ventura, 2003), this work identifies Sufism as tending most toward peaceful world coexistence. The idea is that in the countries where Sufism has cultural and spiritual power and influence the education systems attempt to build what Nussbaum (2010) defined as *world citizens*. The greater is Sufism's exclusion from the theological, cultural, and political scenario, the greater is the education systems' tendency toward building close nationalist or Islamist identities. Sufism is a current often little considered by media and research but representative of an open and tolerant vision of Islam (Ventura, 2003, 2019) with important relationships with politics and education (Stepanyants, 2003). The Sufi religious phenomenon is widespread

and multifaceted, and there are important relationships between mysticism and authoritarianism in education, overall, in Morocco (Hammoudi, 1997). This country has a strong national unity based on the relationship between monarchy, Sufism and politics (Chic, 2013; Leccese, 2017).

With regard to the relationship between social issues and education, Bourdieu and Passeron (1970) criticize the French education system for merely reproducing the existing social order. Their critique extends beyond France and serves as a key reference in the critical analysis of education's role in contemporary society as it is capable of providing general axioms. The most important of these axioms is that every education system performs for the society of which it is part the irreplaceable task of reproducing specific cultural values and social relationships. These concepts could be useful to show whether and how Arab education systems tend to reproduce existing society, assuming that there are opposing drives (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). This social and cultural reproduction acts through the educational system structure itself, through selectiveness and language policies and, as Nussbaum (2010) underlines too, through humanities contents. When pupils cross the Mediterranean to arrive in European countries, they enter a new educational system that aims to reproduce European social structure and values. The two different *habitus* meet in pupils, mixing or clashing, determining their relationship with the legitimate culture of their home and host country.

To better understand the *habitus* built by education in colonized countries, the present work refers to Anderson's (1991) theorization. He considered national belonging the weakest of belongings as it is not based on a blood tie (as ethnicity or family), a religious choice, or the sharing of daily life (as village community or subcultures). Instead, it is based on the accident of being born in a given territory, defined through arbitrary borders established for political reasons, with compatriots often speaking other languages and believing in other faiths. With them, the common belonging relationship is built through imagination. This imagination works through the creation of original myths and national traditions, and thus through a historical reconstruction of the past that seeks to give legitimacy to the nation itself. These processes worked in education systems that aimed at building the new national community imagined by the nationalist Arab elite nurtured by colonial education itself in all Arab countries, including Syria and Morocco.

The present study explores educational systems and experiences referencing some factors identified by Nussbaum (2010) as central. These

include politics, humanities, religion, and the treatment of internal minorities and migrants. These factors also deal with the debate on religion's role in contemporary society (Habermas, 2016), the role of education systems in social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970), and nation-building (Anderson, 1991).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used derives from Nussbaum's (2010) multifactorial analysis. Among its factors, this work focused on humanities and religion studied through qualitative field research on the experiences of Arabic-speaking pupils, parents, and teachers gathered through 40 semi-structured interviews with a narrative approach (Atkinson, 2002; Erben, 1998), carried out in Italy, Germany, and Sweden.

The participant sample was based on the country of departure and arrival, educational role and paths, and additional information, such as belonging to a minority (Table. 1). While the majority of the participants were Syrian and Moroccan, additional participants from different Arab countries of origin were included to understand how the results could be generalizable to the entire area and which are instead the peculiarities of the case studies.

In Italy, the outreach was to international students at the University of Calabria and Arab cultural mediators in the city, as well as to head teachers and teachers through the internet, Facebook and word of mouth. As for interviews abroad: in Sweden, the University of Gävle selected people among the participants in a course to become supportive teachers. In Germany, the NGO Back on Track did the same within the first course they organize for migrants to become teachers in Germany and among their own volunteers.

The interview methodology—a semi-structured interview with a narrative approach—gives freedom of expression to the interviewees, taking inspiration from the analysis of educational biographies of migrants and refugees in Europe.[12] It was based on the interviewees' narration, who were first invited to tell their educational story without further specification. After this spontaneous narrative the predetermined questions were asked if they were not sufficiently covered, based on the interviewee's narrative and thus changing based on what needed to be explored more, using the

Table 1.

	Interview Date	Country of departure	Host country	Sex and age	Educative status	Educational paths (with transit countries)	Peculiarities
Int.1	15/02/2020	MOROCCO	Italy	male adult	Out of education	all in Morocco	pivotal interview
Int.2	22/02/2020	MOROCCO	Italy	male teenager (13 years)	Pupil in middle school	Morocco-> middle school in Italy	pivotal interview
Int.3	04/03/2020	MOROCCO	Italy	female adult	Parent of 16 age pupil	(her son) Morocco-> middle school in Italy	pivotal interview (with linguistic mediator)
Int.4	15/01/2021	JORDAN	Italy	female adult	Parent	School in Jordan-> university in Italy	born in Italy
Int.5	19/01/2021	SYRIA	Italy	male teenager (17 years)	Pupil	Syria 2 years of elementary-> Lebanon elementary and middle-> high school in Italy	
Int. 6	19/01/2021	SYRIA	Italy	male young adult (20 years)	Pupil	Syria until middle school-> middle school in Lebanon-> high school in Italy	
Int.7	22/01/2021	LIBYA	Italy	female teenager (16 years)	Pupil	Libya -> Italy in 3rd middle school	Amazigh
Int.8	5-12 /01/2021	PALESTINE	Italy	Male adult	Educator in Finland	elementary in Italy-> from the 4th of elementary in Israel (Arabic school then University)	born in Italy
Int.9	13/02/2021	EGYPT	Italy	male young adult (25 years)	Student	Egypt-> high school in Italy with a scholarship	
Int.10	22/02/2021	MOROCCO	Italy	male adult (33 years)	Student	Morocco-> in Italy from the 4th grade of elementary school	
Int.11	09/03/2021	SYRIA	Italy	female teenager (16 years)	Pupil	elementary in Syria-> 1 year of elementary in Armenia -> Lebanon-> in Italy in middle school	Armenian Christian
Int.12	10/03/2021	ALGERIA	Italy	female young adult (26 years)	Student	Elementary and middle school in Italy-> Algeria in secondary school	born in Italy
Int.13	11/03/2021	MOROCCO	Italy	male young adult (21 years)	Student	Morocco-> University in Italy	
Int.14	1-9/03/2021	TUNISIA	Italy	male youung adult (28 years)	Student	Tunisia-> University in Italy	
Int.15	11/03/2021	TUNISIA	Italy	female young adult (28 years)	Student	Tunisia-> University in Italy	
Int.16	19/03/2021	EGYPT	Italy	male young adult (20 years)	Student	Egypt-> middle and high school in Italy	
Int.17	05/05/2021	SYRIA	Italy	male young adult (18 years)	out of education	3 years of elementary school in Syria-> some middle school in Lebanon-> professional high school in Italy	with linguistic mediator
Int.18	05/05/2021	SYRIA	Italy	female young adult (20 years)	Out of education	elementary in Syria-> 2years of middle school in Labanon -> 3rd grade in Italy	
Int.19	05/05/2021	SYRIA (Aleppo)	Italy	male young adult (23 years)	Student	Syria-> high school and university in Lybia	Kurdish
Int.20	11/05/2021	SYRIA	Italy	female young adult (20 years)	Pupil	Syria until middle school -> in Lebanon middle school-> in Italy middle and high school	

(*Continued*)

Table 1. Continued

Int.21	11/05/2021	SYRIA	Italy	male teenager (18 years)	Pupil	Syria-> Lebanon in 4th of elementary-> Middle and high school in Italy	
Int.22	11/05/2021	SYRIA	Italy	female teenager (16 years)	Pupil	Syria elementary-> Lebanon elementary -> Italy middle and high school	
Int.23	11/05/2021	MOROCCO	Italy	male young adult (19 years)	Out of education	Morocco until middle school	with linguistic mediator
Int.24	11/05/2021	MOROCCO	Italy	female young adult (21 years)	Out of education	Morocco until first year of high school	with linguistic mediator
Int.25	11/05/2021	MOROCCO	Italy	Male adult	Out of education	Morocco until middle school	with linguistic mediator
Int.26	11/05/2021	MOROCCO	Italy	female young adult (23 years)	Out of education	one year of primary school in Morocco	with linguistic mediator
Int.27	11/05/2021	LIBYA	Italy	male and female teenagers (15/16)	Pupils	elementary in Lybia -> middle school in Italy	Pakistani
Int.28	27/10/2021	EGYPT	Italy	male young adult	Student & teacher of Italian in home country	Egypt -> Master degree in Italy	Al-Azhar school
Int.29	02/11/2021	SYRIA (Homs)	Italy	male young adult (28 years)	Student	Syria-> Lebanon at the end of high school-> University in Italy	
Int.30	08/11/2021	EGYPT	Italy	male young adult (20 years)	Student	Egypt -> high school in Italy with a scholarship	
Int.31	29/11/2021	SYRIA	Sweden	female adult	teacher	all in Syria -> training course for teacher in Sweden	Kurdish
Int.32	29/11/2021	SYRIA	Sweden	female adult	teacher	all in Syria -> training course for teacher in Sweden	
Int.33	01/12/2021	SYRIA	Sweden	female adult	teacher and parent	all in Syria in UNRWA school for Palestinian -> training course for teacher in Sweden	Palestinian born in Syria
Int.34	01/12/2021	SYRIA	Sweden	female adult	teacher and parent	all in Syria in UNRWA school for Palestinian -> training course for teacher in Sweden	Palestinian born in Syria
Int.35	10/03/2022	SYRIA	Germany	female adult	teacher	all in Syria -> training course for teacher in Germany	with linguistic mediator
Int.36	11/03/2022	SYRIA (Homs)	Germany	female adult	teacher and parent	all in Syria	Kurdish
Int.37	12/03/2022	SYRIA	Germany	female adult	teacher and parent	all in Syria (Damascus) -> her children begin school in Turkey	
Int.38	15/03/2022	SYRIA	Germany	female young adult (21 years)	Student and volunteer teacher in Germany	in Syria until 1st year of high school ->in Germany wilkommen classe in the the 3rd year of middle school and then high school	
Int.39	15/03/2022	SYRIA	Germany	female young adult (25 years)	Students	in Syria until first year of high school in refugee school for people from Golan -> in Germany high school	German/Syrian (Circassian)
Int.40	18/03/2022	SYRIA	Germany	male adult	Teacher	all in Syria, university also in France, working as a normal teacher in Syria and in Lebanon as a teacher with refugee	Christian

pre-established interview structure as a guideline. It was composed of the following 14 questions:[13]

1. Introduce and describe yourself.
2. Tell me about your educational experience from kindergarten up to now.
5. Can you explain to me the composition of your class regarding ethnicity and religion?
7. What were the most important topics in history? In the other humanities?
8. What did you do during religion class? Did you speak about other religions?
11. How was colonialism dealt with in your home and host countries' schools?
13. What was the identity that the school tried to transmit to you? Are they more interested in Islamic, national, or Arab belonging?
14. What about the differences with your experience in Europe? Do you think schools are more interested in Christian, national, or European belonging?

Regarding the consent of the interviewee, all participants were given an authorization form where they indicated their permission to record the interview and also state any restrictions they had, such as remaining anonymous[14]. The place of the interview was chosen in agreement with the interviewees, most preferring quiet places. The interviews were conducted primarily in Italian in Italy and in English in Germany and Sweden, given that most participants were proficient in those languages. However, in cases where individuals lacked sufficient skills, interviews were conducted in Arabic with the assistance of a linguistic mediator (Int.3; 17; 23–26 and 36; see Table 1). Given the choice between Arabic interviews with a mediator and English interviews without one, the latter was preferred[15].

After the transcription and anonymization of the interview, the analysis began with a deductive coding approach with the MaxQda software, selecting the speech's relevant parts reflecting the multifactorial analysis factors. The codes used were: humanities (divided in subcodes: Arabic language and literature, history and geography, philosophy, citizenship or national education), religion, identity, colonialism, minority and language issues, economic issues. The material was analyzed by a comparison between Moroccan and Syrian interviews, considering the interrelation of codes. During the analysis of the contents, concepts and opinions were underlined that were broadly reflected in the majority of the interviews.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

The narratives of the interviewees unraveled biographically from kindergarten to latest educational experiences. The following sections compare these experiences on humanities and religion, thus the values they transmitted, the habitus and the identity (ethnic, national, religious, world citizen) they aimed to build. The different excerpts include information about the participant's country of origin, interview's place and language.

Religion

Most interviewees did not complain about religious education or the widespread religious preschools and the Islamic Religious class. On the contrary, many people regretted the traditional education equity concerning economic and ethnic differences. The interviewees frequently used the word *normal* to say that religion is not a fundamentalist teaching or something different from the Catholic or Protestant religion classes in Italian or German schools. Indeed, Islamic religious classes are characterized in all the interviews as moderate, aiming for peace between people and to form tolerant and open Muslim identities in pupils.

> So in Islamic education we also study how the first religions of the world were born, the prophets sent by God to make peace, up to the Islamic things, which is the last religion, so we also know about other religions, we are not closed only to the Islamic religion, no. Then any child who wants to know more, there is the school library, the books, there is the possibility in the school (Int.01, Moroccan, Italy, Italian)

In Morocco, typically, respect and tolerance toward others seem to be taught together with information about all the world religions, with Islam presented as capable of understanding and including all the others inside it. As in the other Arab countries, in literary high school pupils studied Islamic philosophy which was deepened through discussion of contemporary problems. Students who criticized schools for being under government censorship on political issues appreciated the freedom of debate during these classes:

> I did it when there was Ben Ali; he was a dictator, so everything was filtered [. . .]. The professors do not talk about politics [. . .] We study Islamic philosophy in which we reasoned on the Quranic verses. It was a beautiful subject, which I adore because we study the real principles of Islam, not, for example, how . . . because all that I studied . . . I can interpret it, therefore . . . respecting also the current society's changes, because what the extremists say now does not exist in Islam (Int.15, Tunisian, Italy, Italian).

The situation seems a bit different in Syria:

> It is somehow taboo, like no one talks about it [. . .] both these religions, the Alawi and the Druze, are secret, so the people themselves do not talk about it. So my school was about Circassian children, who were Sunni, and then there were Alawi children [. . .] We knew they were Alawi, but we never, never, never talked about religion items [. . .] even if some teachers are Alawi; they use the schoolbooks and do not say anything about their religion. [. . .] The system is also not so open to asking questions that are, more or less, new or controversial . . . Maybe it came up if someone asked and I did not notice, and the teachers did not answer or said like 'stay with the script of the book' or something; there were sometimes questions where the teachers said something like this 'do not ask unnecessary questions' (Int.39, Syrian, Germany, English).

In the strict Syrian education system, the Islamic religious class was not considered oppressive by the interviewees. Notwithstanding, it did not reflect the social reality of religious pluralism, transmitting only a moderate Sunni interpretation of Islam even if pupils belonged to many different religious traditions and schools. Even in Morocco, Sunni is the only Islamic interpretation, but it is coherent with the country's religious homogeneity. For Syrian pupils, attending schools with Christian pupils is the norm, and they had their religious class, in a coexistence without discrimination as it is also in Egypt and Lebanon, since Christianity is perceived as a part of the Arab identity. The other religions of the world are not even mentioned. In all countries, religious teaching avoided non-Sunni Muslim currents or dealt with them quickly and from a Sunni point of view. In Syria, the issue was avoided. Interviewees explained it as a way of defending peaceful coexistence between people with different religious belonging. If families talked about these topics, their conversations were never reported in schools, and parents prohibited pupils from asking about their classmates' religious classes. Many respondents took a defensive attitude and talked more about multiculturalism than censorship. They genuinely believed in multiculturalism and peaceful coexistence and it was even essential for them to stress this point to deconstruct the imaginary that equates all Syrians with Isis fundamentalists. However, they found it difficult to admit that the government has explicitly forbidden talking about religious differences in schools, considering it a crime against national unity, and above all they were unable to discuss if this law contributes to or weakens the level of tolerance in Syria.

In interviews conducted with pupils from Morocco, on the other hand, no such problem ever emerges, partly because of the religious

homogeneity of the population. Most importantly in their testimonies, the religious class in Morocco was very similar to those they witnessed out of curiosity in Europe, both classes in which students can freely ask questions about anything that does not convince them or that they do not understand.

Human and Social Sciences

Regarding human and social sciences, the historical background played a significant role in participant responses:

> We were always proud of Morocco [. . .] the monarchy of Uthman arrived only in Algeria and Morocco was not taken, and always this part of our history that every year that we did it the whole class started to shout 'yes we won against Portugal'. [. . .] We also did the dates of what happened, when our king was kicked out of Morocco, they made him go into exile . . . the people did . . . Let's say they united to make the king come back, they fought with France and Spain, it is a beautiful history that we have (Int.13, Moroccan, Italy, Italian)

As it is possible to read in this example, Moroccan pupils continued to perceive the importance of colonization in a history curriculum that tells less about an Arab nation and more about a multi-ethnic one kept unified and cohesive by the monarchy, which emerged as the national identity's protector and the real protagonist of the history program. In Syria, the Ba'th party's strategy is different:

> The most important thing in geography is the Arab countries. You have to know all the Arab countries, all 100% necessarily compulsory. You have to know the map, every country, all the Arab countries and a general big map of the Arab countries altogether [. . .]. From the first year until graduation every exam every year of geography you have to draw this thing [. . .]. They do not teach you the history of Europe, not one thing, of America nothing, zero, of Asia a little, of the Arab history or middle east everything, yes so. You have to know everything and they teach you the history of North Africa where there are Arabs, they are all Arabs, and the Middle East, all Arabs (Int.19, Syrian, Italy, Italian).

The teaching of history emphasized the Arab over the Syrian nation. Pupils felt Arabism more than in the other 22 countries, as can be understood by comparing interviews. Syrian pupils talked about colonialism, or imperialism, as the whole history program's primary topic. They considered the period between the Abbasid Empire's end (1258) and today as imperialism, passing through the modern Ottoman and contemporary French and ending with the Palestinian lands' Israeli occupation. Kurdish pupils' experience with history teaching was particularly

conflictual since the obsession with Arab identity has questioned their Kurdish identity. They thought that they could not learn about minority history because the regime wanted all the population to be Arab, thus, recognizing and telling minority history seemed to be a dangerous step toward political recognition.

Another subject involved in identity building is citizenship. The most corresponding Arab designation is *tarbiyya madania,* as it is called in Algeria (Int.12), or *tarbiyya al-mouwatana*, citizenship education, as it is called in Morocco (Int.13):

> Yes, Civic should be . . . maybe we did some definitions, some . . . what is racism, how to behave with people, what does our religion say, even an ethical thing we did, maybe you are on the bus you find an old person you leave your seat, you find a person in difficulty you help her (Int.13, Moroccan, Italy, Italian).

In Morocco, as in most of the countries considered, civics in primary school is taught inside the all-inclusive Arabic language teaching, including history, geography, and religion. Interviewees talked about a subject that focused on the right way to behave with other people to be a polite child and then a good adult citizen. They did not experience any contradiction between its values and those transmitted by religion and their families, stating that they learned at school the good values and behaviors shared by all these three entities and with whom they agree. It is not the same in Syria:

> The kids have to copy this information without thinking. It is political but . . . we start in school to learn not to think, not form opinions and personality also and we grow up with these things. [. . . We learn what his . . .] What he does, what the father does, what the government did for us as people, Syrian people, and we have to talk about the right things about him. He does not make a mistake, he is our leader, and you cannot . . . I ask 'everyone makes mistakes, every one of us has a negative and positive side and I want to know his negative side.' 'NO! You cannot ask me so' (Int.38, Syrian, Germany, English).

Syrian *Tarbiyya Wataniya* could be translated as national or nationalistic education and is a separate subject, compulsory in all private and minority schools, and the mark for which counts in the general grade. However, people did not recognize its importance and have had a negative experience with it. Its contents were described as continuous praise of the ruling family's prowess, accompanied by foreign policy topics such as the war against Israel. Differently from the other countries analyzed, pupils did not study the typical civics topics such as how to behave

politely, racism, and so on. There were no songs or plays, and the subject was experienced as dramatically different from the Italian one. Teachers did not have a specific degree but the Party chose them among its more loyal members to dictate its ideology and recruit new members. No one in school could contest them; all the information had to be learned and repeated without thinking or discussions. Pupils' consideration of these teachers was much worse than the one they had of religious teachers, who had a degree and allowed discussions and dialogue. They considered religious teaching useful to live peacefully inside society, contrary to nationalistic education, which they considered helpful to prepare pupils to fight against national enemies. Kurdish pupils were among those that most hated nationalist education, as their claim for cultural rights has been considered a threat to the nation. The brightest students were not good at this subject because they believed rote learning denied their own identities.

DISCUSSION

Personal educational biography intersects with the history of education. Examining the differences and similarities between Morocco and Syria in the humanities, social sciences, and religion offers a comparative perspective.

Concerning religious education, many interviewees regret traditional education equity, since it offers everyone the same education and identification without stifling particular identities and making class differences that emerge from the literature (Gibb, 1986; Maherzi, 2019). Confronting literature (Zani, 2005; Kirdar, 2017) and interviews in the whole region between secularist authoritarian regimes and radical Islamist parties, institutional religious teaching mainly spreads a moderate Muslim identity, which includes respecting other people. Moroccan interviews revealed a transposition of religious values onto a secular signification system, reflecting also in the way they experienced the intertwining between religion and humanities that pushes to rationally discuss and enhance positive religious values for coexistence within society (Habermas, 2016). Not one of the interviewees linked this educational religious policy to the collaboration of Sufi brotherhood in the government (Chic, 2013) but rather to the monarchy's unifying force, whose role is well explained in the literature (Hassani-Idrissi, 2015). However, the situation in Syria is different. Consistent with the literature (Landis, 2003; Kirdar, 2017), the restriction of

religion teaching to Sunni orthodoxy clashes with Syrian religious pluralism, reflecting the regime's Arabist ideology aimed at building a homogeneous Arab-Syrian identity in which the numerous and different belongings lose importance. To this end, specific religious belief, especially that to which the president belongs, should not be discussed to avoid the Sunni majority perceiving a difference between them and the political power. Censorship has created an atmosphere of fear and silence around religious differences, and unresolved misunderstandings have grown, becoming conflicts that divide the population and make it impossible to raise the possibility described by Habermas (2016).

While this in no way calls into question the Syrian people's deep tolerance, demonstrated by their statements in which it is impossible to find racist or discriminatory attitudes, pluralism and tolerance cannot be fully engaged in the multicultural Syrian society. This taboo teaches pupils to be silent on controversial issues rather than to talk about them openly, teaching more fear than tolerance. Religion teaching does not deal with other religions except for Christianity. There seems to be a hesitancy to speak about Judaism, despite its being an Abrahamic religion too, so much so that the interviewees always avoided the topic. Despite this, they still consider religious teaching useful to live peacefully inside society.

Just as religious teaching is limited to orthodox Sunnism, humanities are mostly concerned with the Arab tradition, excluding the important influences from neighboring civilizations. There is no trace in Arab schools of the *Adab* in its universalistic meaning of the Abbasids' golden age (Gibb, 1986; Maherzi, 2019). The two case studies differ in how the issue of internal minorities intersects with that of national and religious identity. Moroccan interviewees mostly confirmed that the national identity reproduction (Anderson, 1991; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970) works quite peacefully, with the humanities tending to teach open-mindedness respecting internal traditions and those of other peoples (Nussbaum, 2010). In recent decades there has been a gradual integration of Tamazigh culture within the official one and a recognition of the value of multilingualism and multiculturalism (Gandolfi, 2011; Ennaji, 2005). It is not the same in Syria. There, the Arab identity transmitted by schools refers to the ancient *Bilad as-shams,* so Arab people living in the neighboring countries are considered compatriots and internal minorities as dangerous to national unity. Comparing interviews and literature (Landis, 2003; Trombetta, 2013; Kirdar, 2017; Zecca, 2018), it is possible to argue that the proposed identity is an identity mutilated

by foreign powers through the common homeland's division into different states. The symbol of this identity threatened by foreigners is Palestine, and the regime considers it imperative to convey its anti-colonial ideology and willingness to fight against colonialism and Israel to pupils as an embodiment of struggles fought by their ancestors to maintain their own identity. The legitimate culture transmitted by history teaches pupils to defend the motherland against external and internal enemies, which are minorities who claim their rights. Syrian history teaching aims at reproducing Arab identity as loyalty to the regime in the struggle against imperialism, without any possibility of questioning this correlation. These differences are visible also in the civics subject. Moroccan interviewees said it deals with how to help people, thus contributing to the education of citizens with an open mind, without racist prejudices, and sympathetic to the weakest (Nussbaum, 2010). They also link the subject's contents to a hegemonic interpretation of Islam in Morocco (Chic, 2013; Leccese, 2017). Finally, Moroccan civics looks pretty similar to that of Italy: no one complained about it and conflicts or contradictions did not emerge. So this discipline works as a well-functioning Moroccan identity and cultural reproducer (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970), playing the role assigned to it without provoking resentment, a sense of oppression or protests. In Syria, on the contrary, interviewees experienced it as a violence. Like other humanities, it is used in a rhetorical and nationalistic way (Nussbaum, 2010) in an obsessive attempt to build the pan-Arab nationalists' imagined communities (Anderson, 1991).

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The present work opens the investigation of Arab education based on Nussbaum's (2010) multifactorial approach, producing new insight on religion and humanities' narrative and on the feelings they produce in pupils. It shows how distant historical periods influenced contemporary education in countries like Syria and Morocco, despite their similar educational development in colonial and early independence times, showing how ancient culture and tradition still have an influence despite the standardization brought by globalization.

Regarding religion, interviews confirm what it is possible to find in the literature (Kirdar, 2017; Landis, 2003). Following very different processes, religious teaching in all the considered countries has produced the same result: a homogeneous Sunni teaching that contributes to national unity

and the reproduction of national identity, beyond particularistic belongings and radical interpretations. This religious interpretation is what the interviewed pupils explain in their European classrooms when teachers asked them to talk about their religion. This is a very good practice so that pupils feel they are protagonists and do not have to be subjected to others' narratives. They also talk about good experiences when they attend Catholic religious classes in Italy as a space in which they can learn about their classmates' religions and traditions, understand the differences between Islam and the tradition of the country in which they live, and learn about the other religions of the world. During this research, it was impossible to verify how similar the experiences of other Arab and Muslim pupils in Germany and Sweden were compared with those in Italy. Fewer people were interviewed in these countries, and in Germany, they did not attend any religious classes. It would therefore be interesting, in further research, to compare how the way of dealing with the religious element in the three countries affects pupils' identity.

The experiences with human and social sciences are more controversial. In Morocco, they transmit Muslim and national identity, overcoming ethnic differences with loyalty to the king. Economic disparities are extreme, with a weak public education system achieving low educational results and a developed private one that forms the elite. Despite this, the values of public and private education are the same. The interviewees appreciated and shared that they had found no difficulty in meeting the culture and values they are dealing with in their educational experience in Europe. Instead, in Syria, there are excellent learning outcomes but the political regime negatively influences freedom of thought, opinion, and discussion in the classroom and propagates through humanities an aggressive Arab identity, closed to minorities and the rest of the world. The interviewees questioned the values transmitted in humanities and suffered for their clash with the values they are meeting in their educational experience in Europe to which they arrived unprepared. This does not imply a value judgment about which educational system between the two is the best, but about which is objectively more similar to the educational systems of European host countries about the *habitus* built (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970) and the values transmitted.

This work does not sufficiently consider the cultural differences among the three host countries related to those in the countries of origin. Further research aimed at better investigating this aspect would therefore be of interest. The current study did not seek to determine what historical truth

needs to be taught in European schools or which methodologies should be used. Certainly, a methodology based on discussion is more suitable to personal understanding than a method based on memorization, regardless of content, because the former allows one to construct one's own truths. In most Arab countries, humanities are taught with a memorization-based method (Kirdar, 2017) and this causes an added difficulty for interviewed pupils who move to Europe, where they face different narrations, values and historical "truths." Syrians study the Bilad al-Sham as one united land in which Palestine is marked as a state with the boundaries it had before the Israeli occupation, and, typically, Israel is not studied as a legitimate nation but as the Palestine occupant. This difference and the reasons beyond it are not so clear to pupils who arrived in Europe at an early age and saw the Palestinian land called Israel in European schoolbooks for the first time. This could lead to deep confusion in pupils about their identity. Although it was a shared feeling among the interviewees, none of them discussed it with their teachers, showing a lack of dialogue on this sensitive issue. In all countries, national history is the main topic, of which colonialism represents a fundamental section. It significantly affected pupils' identity development, especially those who have moved to European countries. Indeed, the study of colonialism is felt as dramatically more fundamental in the education systems of any Arab country than in any European one. It should therefore be investigated how the European school can take into account the different historical versions of which pupils are carriers and how teachers' preparation on these issues, combined with competence and sensitivity, impacts their education. Based on the present results and conclusions, it would be important to extensively discuss in further research how educational systems in Europe should be redefined to better interact with pupils with a migratory cultural background and to include historical alternatives. Starting from the analysis of pupils and teachers' experience with European curricula, it may be possible to define how curricula should be reformed and decolonized, especially those of history, and the extent to which changing curricula could affect the personal and professional trajectories of migrants and cultural minorities.

Finally, none of the Syrian respondents experienced the alternative systems that developed during the civil war. Research on these would be extremely interesting since significant pedagogical experiments, little treated in the literature, were carried out and would usefully be explored in more depth.

Notes

1. The uprisings and revolutions occurred in the Arab world since December 2010, when protests from Tunisia spread to most of the Arab world, led to regime change in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and in Syria, to a civil war.

2. While the work of Catarci (2015) dealt with many European countries looking at intercultural education in general, the work of Immerfall and Pugliese addressed specifically the inclusion of pupil from Arab countries in Italy and Germany.

3. This work focuses on French secular model, highlighting how the supposed neutrality of secularism actually causes discrimination against religious cultures such as the Islamic one.

4. This Italian pedagogue, in his work aimed specifically at intercultural Italian teacher education, advocates that teachers delve deeper into the home cultures and educational systems of students with migrant cultural backgrounds.

5. This critique of European intercultural education can be seen as foundational to the fields of inquiry of postcolonial and de-colonial education, which this work is inspired by.

6. These two works coming from different fields confirm each other. The first is a work specifically belonging to the field of Arab-Islamic studies with a focus on interpretations of the Muslim religion; the second, on the other hand, is a study specifically on the teaching of history in Morocco.

7. Landis examined school textbooks written between 1967 and 2001 and found them similar in their anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, tracing this approach to the regime's political propaganda against Israel (Landis, 2003). The American author forgets to point out how colonialism has harmed the colonised population greatly. Despite this, his analysis is the most comprehensive that has been found on the subject.

8. It is called by some the "Dubaization model" (Trombetta, 2013) since the United Arab Emirates have become the best implementers of it.

9. Arabization in Morocco faced delays because of a lack of Moroccan teachers' proficiency in Arabic, as most Moroccan graduates had been educated in French. To address this issue, the Minister of Education hired Egyptian teachers with Islamic backgrounds and recruited individuals from Quranic schools. These measures played a role in the re-Islamization of education in the 1970s and 1980s (Ennaji, 2005; Rose, 2017).

10. Lands that are to the left, according to Arab geographers' perspective.

11. Providing a review of the extremely broad secondary literature on this author is beyond the purpose of and the space allowed for this article.

12. At the beginning of the research, the possibility of using the biographical interview, extrapolating from it an educational biography, is evaluated. It allows analyzing of in-depth individual life stories by bringing out the most important historical, sociological, and pedagogical elements from the experience of individuals (Erben 1998; Atkinson, 2002; Bichi, 2002; Breckner & Massari, 2019). As it is possible to understand from the mentioned works, a biographical interview is the best option to analyze in depth one life history, or otherwise, a limited number, considered paradigmatic to explain a phenomenon. After some first pivotal interviews with Moroccan people in Italy, carried out with this approach, the necessity for this research not to choose a single person or a limited number as an example for their remarkable history emerged. On the contrary, it needs a significant number of people, between 40 and 50, living ordinary and not exemplary lives within the three different host countries and at different points of their educational paths. Consequently, the structure of semi-structured interviews is determined by a set of questions through which it is possible to compare the data from numerous interviews with people living in different situations in different host countries. Nevertheless, the biographical and narrative approach finds a place inside the interview methodology, based on the interviewee's narration.

13. The other questions are: 3. Why did you not attend kindergarten? / What type of kindergarten did you attend? 4. Were you male and female together? Were teachers of both sexes? Were there differences in how you related with male or female teachers? 6. What was the instruction language? What other language were you and your classmates speaking in your life? What other languages were you studying? 9. What was the role of science and technology? 10. What relations were there between the school and your family? 12. Did your teachers deal with the theme of tolerance somehow? How was it experienced? Can you make a comparison with the school you attend in Europe?

14. A parent or legal representative had to sign for a participant who was a minor.

15. The cultural mediators often did not report the answers of the interviewees word for word but made a summary of them, and very often had to explain the questions to the interviewee and had short discussions with him/her. The mediator's presence was functional but also made the interview less spontaneous and prevented the creation of a free flow of communication between interviewees and the interviewer. Even if the linguistic level of the interviewee was higher in Arabic than in English, the nuances of meaning are lost more in the translation (and synthesis) of a third person than in the effort of expressing themselves in English since the interviewees nonetheless had a good level of English.

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