



Education and cultural policy in Italian migrations

International conference

Turin, July 14-16, 2021

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Italian emigration has been one of the largest migrations in history. Over the past two centuries, millions of people have left their country in order to build a different future abroad. Even before the unification of Italy (1861), Italians could rely on a network composed of a multitude of institutions and associations grounded overseas: From the Americas to Northern Africa, from Europe to the Levant. Even though the trade routes marked the first migratory flows and favoured the circulation of Italian-Romance languages across Europe and the Mediterranean basin, it was only from the 19th century that an Italian political and cultural diaspora emerged. Following national unification, this transnational network moved towards a progressive broadening of educational and political initiatives aimed at "safeguarding the Italian language and culture".

Since its establishment, the Kingdom of Italy recognised the issue of language maintenance as a political tool amongst the national communities abroad. In order to increase the national influence and to support commercial interests abroad, the Italian administration implemented educational and cultural institutions overseas. Following this policy, over the late 19th century the Kingdom attempted to centralize the established educational systems abroad –that consisted basically of private institutions– by opening at the same time new public schools. The development of the Italian educational and cultural system abroad has been appended by several factors: The foundation of the "Dante Alighieri" Society in 1889, the creation of chambers of commerce, the spread of Roman Catholic associationism, and the mutualism of national clubs overseas.

At the turn of the 20th century, during the *Grande Emigrazione*, colonialism and expansionism figured prominently at the top of the political agenda for the Kingdom of Italy. National education abroad, by preserving the relationship between emigrants and their homeland, not only became a pillar of cultural diplomacy and an expansionist device, but embodied a socio-political tool for training of local and foreign Italian-speaking future elites. Secular, religious, private or mutual, public, sponsored or autonomous, Italian schooling initiatives abroad developed quantitatively over the years, following migratory flows and in coherence with Italian foreign policy and Roman Catholic missionaries and associations.

Domestic issues and international conflicts characterized the first fifty years of Italian education organisation abroad, an age marked by investments and ambition, but also by strong discontinuities and disruptive forces. In the 1920s, the emergence of the new fascist State opened a new foreign policy, marked by the political and ideological exploitation of the national education and cultural institutions abroad. The education of Italians abroad represented, for Fascism, an essential means to try to control and build consensus in the expatriates' communities. The overlap of education with "fascistisation" took concrete form in school programming for Italian children and adults as well as in the selection of personnel, and found its main dimension in the defense and outreach of "*Italianità*", understood according to the dictates of the fascist doctrine. However, Italian associations and schools turned into one of the main fascist soft power channels of outside the peninsula.

Certainly, the harsh interferences of the Italian regime that occurred during the interwar period caused a general reluctance and distrust towards Italian initiatives abroad, that was a base for the weakening of the Italian educational and cultural network overseas. The decolonization and the emergence of a bipolar world, as well as the new Italian democratic and republican course, ended up shaping the new Italian foreign policy, whose cultural dimension had to relate necessarily to this new reality. Currently, intrinsic and extrinsic factors guide the Italian cultural, linguistic and educational life abroad in a transnational and multi-dimensional engagement. Nowadays, political affairs on Italian education and culture abroad call for a deep reflection on the challenges concerning the new mobilities.

The international conference "**Education and cultural policy in Italian migrations**" invites experts and scholars to analyse the development of the various aspects of Italian educational and cultural experiences abroad. The variety of experiences and practices, throughout the Italian emigration history, raises significant reflections on a subject whose treatment we feel requires new and original research.

Submissions may address, but are not limited to, the following panels:

- 1. Students and teachers in the Italian overseas empire. Colonial and postcolonial trajectories**
- 2. National education and transnational communities in the Mediterranean region (19th c. - 20th c.)**
- 3. Production, circulation, and use of textbooks in the Americas within the context of Italian immigration**
- 4. Italian education, propaganda and cultural diplomacy abroad during the fascist period**

5. Cultural institutions, training organisations and Italian associations in Europe from the end of the fascist regime to the “fall of the Berlin Wall”

Within the conference, several round tables will be organized on the following topics: Educational integration of migrants in Italy; new Italian mobilities abroad; narration and memory of migrations in Europe.

Please send your abstract (max. 800 words) with your short biography to francesco.pongiluppi@unito.it and paulaalejandra.serrao@unito.it by **May 1st, 2021**.

Papers and presentations (no more than 20 minutes each) can be submitted in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese or English.

Successful applicants will be notified by **May 14th, 2021**. Additionally, a selection of papers will be processed, following revision and updating, for publication.

There is no registration fee. Any contribution for travel and accommodation costs will be communicated after notification of acceptance.

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