

Theory and Best  
Practice Models  
in Educational  
Institutions  
in Spain and Italy



# Theory and Best Practice Models in Educational Institutions in Spain and Italy

Edited by

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# INTRODUCTION

## CHALLENGE INTERCULTURALITY

ANNEMARIE PROFANTER

Europe has been a crossroads of cultural interaction for the last three thousand years. Throughout history and in contemporary times this area has hosted numerous populations. The societal and social reality in Europe is undergoing far-reaching changes due to this migration phenomenon.

The interpretation of patterns of human mobility is important in understanding current population issues and societal changes. This is especially relevant for the impact of immigration on population characteristics. While in general, Europe's population is overall increasing by a very small amount, the single nations face population declines: the birth rates of Italy and Spain, for instance, are the lowest since the foundation of the nation state (Akkoc 2015).

Recent studies show that this decline is related to the economic crisis and high unemployment. In countries like Italy and Spain, this further discourages young people from procreating (Daley and Kulish 2013).

Thus, continued positive population growth is linked utterly to soaring immigration. Immigrants are young and often in the key childbearing ages. They often come from a cultural tradition where high birth rates are the norm. An increased demand for school places is forecast and shortages are acute especially in Southern Europe. This influx of pupils from migrant countries not only calls for more resources in formal and informal educational settings but also for an assessment of teacher training programs and continuous professional development.

European governments need to react to this changing societal landscape with budgetary allocations to the education sector and a reform agenda in relation to the societal sub-systems involved. It is widely recognized that educational policy can assist integration of immigrants and that pedagogical practice has a role in supporting the achievement of children of immigrants in school. Given the cultural and linguistic diversity of the European member states and the fact that educational

affairs are under the responsibility of every single nation, things are not as straightforward. There is a huge body of literature on the assimilation and integration of second-generation immigrants: different theoretical models have been proposed such as Berry's (1997; Alba, Kasinitz, and Waters 2011) model on the process of cultural transformation. He distinguishes between segregation, separation, and marginalization and focuses on acculturation as the key to successful integration. According to some assimilation perspectives, discrimination against migrant groups may attenuate with time across generations regardless of country of origin. However, other research suggests that socio-economic background as an intermittent variable plays an important role. Adopted strategies by the host society that hinder or favor upward mobility seem to be crucial. Thus differences in the educational systems and the ways in which the transition to the labor market is formalized are vital in the successful integration of immigrants (Crul and Vermeulen 2006).

“Challenge Interculturality: Theory and Best Practice Models in Educational Institutions in Spain and Italy” relates stories of intercultural communication and integration of two case studies, Spain and Italy, for educational researchers as well as for an interested general audience. The two nation states can be analyzed from a comparative perspective as they are in a similar stage of development: in the recent past, territorial autonomies have been created and consolidated; and now in the third phase they have to meet the challenge of differentiation, particularly in relation to fundamental rights (Ragone 2013).

In this volume, the connections between societal change and educational issues in relation to these two southern European nations are examined. It may serve as a sounding board for the discussion of developments in other parts of Europe with similar demographics. In this way, the volume takes the reader to public and private entities in Italy and Spain, where intercultural education is part of societal discourse.

The first chapter takes stock of the situation in Italy. Following a brief overview of the immigrant situation, Annemarie Profanter focuses on the northernmost autonomous province, South Tyrol. The chapter includes an analysis of the performance gap in the educational sector and looks at teacher training programs. It concludes with policy recommendations on how to further improve intercultural communication through teacher training.

The second chapter by Paolo Somigli discusses the results of the research project “Music Culture and Social Function of Music in South Tyrol” which addresses in general the role of music in multicultural and multilingual contexts. It analyzes the conditions that make music a bridge



and at the same time a factor of distinction and sometime of separation between different groups.

In the third chapter, María Luisa Sevillano García deals with the multilingual reality in Spain. The linguistic diversity was once considered a threat to the unity of Spain and an impoverishment of the universal heritage of Castellan. The integration of the linguistic reality in school curricula and in the public administration has not been and is still not straightforward. The article analyzes how Spain can contribute or learn from similar situations in the European context.

Esteban Vázquez Cano examines in the fourth chapter how the school of the XXI Century addresses cultural diversity and how it can respond appropriately to it. He focuses on the concept of global citizenship built from multiculturalism. He presents the Spanish model of linguistic diversity of immigrant students in order to identify its strengths but also its shortcomings; in this way it can be compared to other systems to improve multiculturalism and attention to the linguistic diversity of immigrant students.

The fifth chapter by María Del Pilar Quicios García aims to analyze the social difficulties of immigrant children and the resulting social requirements for the multicultural school. A question discussed in depth is how personalized attention to the needs of immigrant children can support the process of integration. Moreover, the article deals with the development towards a supranational education as an improvement for the multicultural education in Spain and in Europe in general.

In the sixth chapter, María Carmen Ricoy discusses the inclusion of immigrant children in schools considering the peculiarities of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (linguistic, socio-cultural, geographic, etc.) and how these can be integrated into a closed community. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the usefulness and constraints of internet tools in the process of educational inclusion of students from foreign countries, especially non-Spanish speaking pupils. In addition, the article aims to deepen the analysis of the best use of practices regarding web resources.

The seventh chapter by María Ángeles Pascual follows the philosophy of 'Index for Inclusion' by Booth and Ainscow, analyzing educational efforts from the necessity of developing an inclusive culture through school communities where coexistence is realized in a friendly, collaborative and stimulating atmosphere. These principles guide policy decisions of innovation to improve learning and participation of all students. The article describes inclusive educational policies in relation to immigrant students in Spain and the practical measures taken to meet their

needs. In this sense, research results carried out in Spain are analyzed in relation to language immersion classrooms and reforms are proposed.

In summary, the authors featured in the following pages illuminate a host of intercultural viewpoints, different challenges related to and defined by the context in which they occur. I am grateful to the contributing authors who were willing to embark on this collaborative, international journey which is the second of its kind: the fruits of thought-provoking discussions of our first meeting in Italy in 2012 where scholars from the Free University of Bolzano as well as from the “Universidad Complutense de Madrid” and the “Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia Madrid” met, have been published by Ediciones Académicas in English, German, Italian and Spanish with the title: “How to Include the Media, Blogs, MOOCs, PLEs, On-line Programs and Multimedia in Learning”. While the focus was on primary, secondary, and higher education in Spain and Italy, this anthology is dedicated to intercultural issues in a narrower sense. I hope that this international collaboration continues to bear fruit and helps to stimulate reflection upon, and discussion of, intercultural issues internationally.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE INTERCULTURAL ITALIAN EXPERIENCE: REFLECTIONS ON TEACHER TRAINING MODELS

ANNEMARIE PROFANTER

### **Abstract**

Statistics show that in general and in western European countries in particular, children with diverse mother languages as well as diverse sociocultural backgrounds are on the rise. This intercultural phenomenon that can be observed in nearly any school in Europe requires skills and specific competences in teachers for managing diversity as it relates to cultures, languages, social affiliation, and gender. The foundation for the development of these competences and their further consolidation is laid in teacher training. This chapter analyzes the nexus of intercultural challenges in society and teacher training. Based on the 5-year training program at the Faculty of Education of the Free University of Bolzano, reforms are discussed in relation to international models.

The chapter concludes with policy recommendations on how to further improve intercultural teaching quality through teacher education, helps teachers confront challenges in their classrooms, at school, and at system level to ensure intercultural communication and integration.

### **Introduction**

Italy's transition from an emigration country to an immigration country in the nineties is reflected, on the one hand, by a growing population of immigrants, and on the other hand, by the diversity of countries of origin of those immigrants. Thus the numbers of immigrants increased from approximately 650,000 in 1992 (Istat 2011, 3) to more than 5.7 million in 2015 out of a total of 60.8 million inhabitants (ibidem 2015a, 1).

Immigration is a non-linear, complex process, which occurs in all parts of the Italian peninsula but above all in the south, where migrants from many nations cross the Mediterranean Sea to travel north.

The past and current left-wing Italian government, under premier Matteo Renzi famous for the operation 'Mare Nostrum' starting from October 2013-2014, took steps of decriminalizing illegal immigration – boat people were rescued and not arrested but taken to welcome centers so-called 'Centri di accoglienza'. These boat immigrants can only claim political asylum in Italy, the country of their arrival in the EU (Dublin Accord). In practice, however, only few claim political asylum in Italy. Many remain in the country illegally and travel north over land to reach the big cities or enter neighboring EU countries.

The northernmost province, the autonomous province of South Tyrol, serves as gateway to Austria; yet, nowadays all borders are 'checked' rigorously, e.g. at the Côte d'Azur and at the Brenner Pass in the Alps; thus, many immigrants are sent back to Italy. So, for many immigrants, South Tyrol is their 'temporary final destination'. Thus, official statistics from 2011 report immigrants originating from not less than 138 diverse home-countries in South Tyrol (Astat 2015a, 9). As the majority, 62.1% (Astat 2015c), of the population in South Tyrol is of *Austro-Bavarian* heritage and speak *German*, they constitute a minority themselves in Italy and are now facing the challenge to integrate these diverse minority groups into the system while struggling with their own minority status. At this juncture, it should be underlined that the integration into the educational system is a particular challenge. As the author herself holds a position as Associate Professor at the Free University of Bolzano, an institute of higher education in the northern province of South Tyrol, the focus of this chapter will be twofold: the issue is analyzed from a national perspective with side glances at the most northern province. South Tyrol is granted a considerable level of self-government, consisting of a large range of exclusive legislative and executive powers. Secondly, when it comes to educational institutions and teacher training programs national requirements have to be met.

An overview of the Italian educational system and official statistics on the immigrant population shed light on the issue from a national perspective and in relation to the province of South Tyrol. The achievement gap is discussed in relation to migration trends and the changing educational landscape. Teachers play a crucial role in minimizing the achievement gap and promoting the integration of foreign students. This competence can only be taught effectively in teacher training programs. An overview of

recent developments in teacher training and in particular on how the intercultural agenda can be incorporated effectively is examined.

## **Immigrants in the Italian Educational System**

The Italian educational system is inclusive: immigrant students are always placed in regular classes. However, first generation immigrants are frequently required to repeat the previous grade much more commonly than native students. The country lacks an institutionalized body of policies aimed at the integration of migrant background children (Contini 2013, 15).

Italy has pioneered the field taking on a leading role: Article 34 of the Italian Constitution states that school is open to everyone and the first eight years of schooling are free and compulsory. The Italian school system is dominated by public schools and is characterized by universal access. Education is compulsory up to the age of 16 and there is freedom of school choice thereby promoting the interaction and intermingling of children and youth of diverse social backgrounds. Schooling takes place in the mornings and is coupled with homework encouraging familial support that consequently may constitute obstacles for immigrant children whose families may have diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The educational system in Italy is organized as follows: Kindergarten (3-6 years with optional attendance except for some provinces where attendance of 1 year is compulsory e.g. Province of Bolzano-Bozen); primary school (6-11 years); middle school (11-14 years); and the initial year of upper secondary school (from 14 to 17 or 19, depending on the track – academic orientation, vocational training, technical orientation). This choice of track, that usually occurs in the final year of middle school (at age 13), has a major influence on future career options. Schools that provide an academic orientation lead significantly more to university education whereas schools that offer vocational training do not grant access to college education.

Minority students are a growing population nationwide but especially in the province of South Tyrol.

In 2012 some 7.5% of students in Italy had an immigrant background. While this proportion is smaller than the OECD average, it had grown by 5 percentage points between 2003 and 2012, while the proportion of students without an immigrant background shrank by 5 percentage points during the period (OECD 2012a, 6).

The percentages of immigrant students by school levels for the school year 2013/2014 in Italy indicate that immigrant students are less likely to have access to higher education: while there are 10.1% in kindergarten, 10.0% in primary schools, and 9.6% in secondary schools, the percentage drops to 6.8% for high schools. Therefore, improving access to post-secondary education for immigrant students is crucial (Istat 2015b).

Likewise in the province of South Tyrol the percentages of immigrant students have risen exponentially. During the 1991/92 school year only 0.2% per 100 registered students had an immigrant background, however, the percentage increased to 10.1% for the school year 2013/2014 (Astat 2015b). The table below shows the detailed distribution in relation to country of origin

**Table 1-1:** Percentage distribution of foreign students in South Tyrol, school year 2013/14 (Astat 2015b, 19).

<b>Citizenship</b>	<b>Total percentage</b>
EU-27	16.0
Other European Countries	40.7
Asia	21.9
Africa	16.1
America	5.3
Australia and Oceania	-
stateless	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## **Understanding the Achievement Gap**

The achievement gap continues to persist between minority and non-minority students in Italy as well as growing gaps within minority groups themselves. According to the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) Italian native students seem to outperform immigrant students in mathematics. These results indicate disparities in socioeconomic status between the two groups (OECD 2012b).

However, even after taking socio-economic status into account, the performance gap that is associated with an immigrant background is still 32 points – far larger than the OECD average gap of 21 points (OECD 2012b, 6).



In general, immigrant students' performance increased by 23 score points in 2012 as compared to results obtained in 2003. Thus,

new immigrants in Italy tend to be much more socio-economically disadvantaged than established immigrants. Language barriers are also an obstacle to learning. Among students with an immigrant background, those who speak Italian at home score 19 points higher than those who do not (OECD 2012b, 6).

Research has shown that there is a statistically significant negative effect of ethnicity on educational attainment. This significance is lower in families in which both parents are from the European Union and much higher if they have an immigrant background coming from a non-European member state (Vlach 2015).

In general, official statistics show that immigrant youths are more likely to subscribe to vocational schools in comparison to Italian youths. The choice of education influences future educational attainment and can limit choice, in the sense that vocational training inhibits access to university education. Thus, the high prevalence of immigrant youths in those schools is a sign of segregation in the Italian school system and constitutes a potential obstacle to integration (Barban and White 2011).

Data released by the Ministry of Education in Italy suggests that non-nationals are more vulnerable in the sense that they show lower achievement rates and higher drop-out rates as compared to their native counterparts (Ministry of Education 2009). Evidence of large performance gaps between native and immigrant students is provided by OECD (2012a), Schnepf (2007), and Dustmann, et al. (2011). Yet, there is a considerable cross-country heterogeneity in the magnitude of these gaps. Although there is substantial political controversy as the demography of elementary and secondary schools is changing rapidly, specifically in high populated areas in Italy, there is no doubt about the fact that those very children will be a crucial component of their host countries' economy in the near future.

Other research results by Azzolini and Barone (2013) also indicate significant achievement gaps between natives and children from immigrants in Italy and Spain. However, achievement is significantly correlated to their generational status: thus, second-generation students outperform first-generation students but perform worse than natives.

The results further suggest:

that not only is children's nativity status important but so too is that of their parents. When parents lack familiarity with the host country's education system, their children's educational prospects are negatively affected,

especially in countries where family influence on scholastic outcomes is very pronounced (Dalla Zuanna, Farina, and Strozza 2009 cited in Azzolini, Schnell and Palmer 2012, 65).

However, the results have to be interpreted with caution as the variable ‘country of origin’ has not been taken into account. There is a high percentage of second-generation immigrant students from North-Africa who have lower educational outcomes than Eastern Europeans, who are the majority group of first-generation immigrants (Azzolini and Barone 2013; Azzolini, Schnell and Palmer 2012, 65).

Other research has shown that ethnic segregation as a result of residential sorting may have deleterious effects on schools, and thus on students attending disadvantaged schools.

Such adverse neighborhood effects can result in larger differences in reading scores than those between students with high-educated mothers and those with low-educated mothers (Enthof 2015, 7).

Thus, the level of education of mothers can be more influential than being a student at a disadvantaged school. These effects have been found above all in countries like France, Germany, and Italy and not in Scandinavian countries (Enthof 2015). According to the results of PISA from 2012 Italian “schools with a more disadvantaged student population tend to have poorer educational resources than schools with a more advantaged student population” (OECD 2012a, 6).

In conclusion, “to meet the labor market challenges of aging populations and ensure enough skilled labor to maintain economic growth, host countries need to fully integrate migrant students into schools” (Enthof 2015,1). Although this is straightforward there is still an achievement gap between migrant and native-born students. Therefore, it is indispensable to prioritize policies that counterbalance the effect of variables such as segregation, country of origin, and socio-economic standing (Enthof 2015).

## **The Starting Point: Teacher Training**

Linguistic and cultural diversity in the classrooms is a major challenge for teachers of the 21st century. First and second generation students bring a set of values, cultures, and languages that may differ from the dominant ones and might be strange to teachers themselves. The question arises: how can teachers be prepared to face these new sociological situations?

Teacher training programs in Europe differ from country to country and have been re-conceptualized in the last decade in order to meet these needs. As I myself am involved in pre-school teacher training and teacher training at the Free University of Bolzano in northern Italy, I am aware of the challenges that educational institutions face in order to train teachers appropriately in intercultural education.

In Italy, pre-school and primary school teachers undergo a five-year degree in primary school education (*Scienze della formazione primaria*). A graduate degree is required to teach at secondary level and after completion an annual specialization and traineeship in schools (TFA – Tirocinio Formativo Attivo) has to be undertaken. The training for pre-school and primary teachers includes 9 hours of intercultural training (Unibz 2015) and for the TFA, 1,500 hours of general didactics (60 credits) and 12 hours (2 credits) of intercultural education (MIUR 2015).

In summary, the theoretical training of teachers in intercultural education is very limited and no practical training is offered. This is far from building a solid academic foundation. It ultimately all comes back to the definition of priorities: there is a limited (political) awareness of the challenges that teachers face when dealing with pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds. However, in the following section a comparison with international programs shall give a deeper insight.

## **Intercultural Competence of Teacher Trainees**

In response to this changing societal structure there is a growing recognition of universities involved in teacher training to prepare teachers of all school levels to address the challenges associated with teaching children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

As it is known from the literature, there is an urgent need to improve the skills of (prospective) teachers in dealing with heterogeneity (Lanfranchi 2010). The socially and culturally heterogeneous school demands for specific professional skills, particularly in the areas of teaching, educating, counseling, and innovation.

In order to transform the schools it is important to transform the prospective teachers' beliefs by providing access to knowledge about intercultural communication concepts and cultural differences (Llurda & Lasagabaster, 2010). In line with Ortloff (2011) I argue that the 'hidden curriculum,' like the individual opinions and morals, are often more powerful than the formal curriculum.

One of the view studies on teachers' beliefs in relation to the intercultural classroom has been carried out in two bilingual towns in

Catalonia, Spain. This quantitative study by Llurda und Lasagabaster (2010) involved 253 participants both in-service and pre-service secondary education teachers. The findings show that there was a general awareness of the importance of intercultural education although a difference between the two study groups could be observed “on a practical-idealistic dimension, and language teachers displayed more positive views towards interculturalism than teachers of other subjects” (Llurda and Lasagabaster, 2010, 327). This result indicates that during teacher training the focus needs to be more on intercultural attitudes. These attitudes don’t change over the course of a professional career but are rather persistent. Llurda and Lasagabaster (2010, 349) note that “[...] teacher education is currently struggling to improve the training of future teachers for an increasingly diverse student population.” Thus, their final resume can be summarized as follows:

Prospective teachers’ beliefs must be transformed so that in the future they can transform the schools they will be working at. That is the reason why, in an age when schools from all over the world are becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural, the access to knowledge about intercultural communication concepts and about cultural differences is essential to preservice teachers before they set out to teach and during the initial stages of their teaching career (Llurda and Lasagabaster 2010, 350).

The educational system of Finland which often serves as a role model also struggles with the adaptation of teacher training to the intercultural challenge. The Finnish researcher Jokikokko points to the masters at the University of Oulu and states:

Although the need to prepare teachers for multicultural schools and intercultural relationships cannot be denied, the change in Finnish teacher education programmes has taken place slowly. One specialized programme concentrating on multicultural issues is not enough (Jokikokko 2009, 161).

The research study by Polat and Ogay Barka (2012) analyzes attitudes towards intercultural issues of 185 teacher candidates from Switzerland and Turkey. The aim was “also to investigate whether there is a correlation between multiculturalism and intercultural education” (Polat and Ogay Barka 2012, 1180). The data were collected using ‘The Scale of Attitude Towards Multiculturalism’ by Munroe und Pearson (2006), ‘The Scale of Attitude Towards Intercultural Education’ by Ponterotto, Baluch, Greig, and Rivera (1998), and the personal information form. The results indicate significant differences toward multiculturalism and intercultural education.

Swiss teacher trainees showed more positive attitude towards both multiculturalism and intercultural education. The authors explain the results pointing to the differences in the curricula: teacher candidates in Switzerland have to attend more courses in intercultural education compared to their Turkish colleagues. Moreover, it was revealed that all candidates had too little practical experiences with cultural heterogeneity in the classroom. Polat and Ogay Barka (2012, 1186) state:

Behavioral acts cannot be learned from books or faculty members. Therefore, teachers need to be closer to a real classroom atmosphere rather than books so as to understand intercultural education better.

Lázár (2011, 124) argues in line with Polat and Ogay Barka:

[...] the lack of firsthand experience on other cultures or with people from other cultures can make trainees feel incompetent in incorporating the cultural component into language teaching.

As a consequence of such study results, it was aimed at recruiting teacher trainees with a migration background (Gogolin 2011; Ekinci-Kocks 2012). The hypothesis was that these candidates would have easier access to migrant communities (Ekinci-Kocks 2012, 95) and be a role model for children from immigrant families. Moreover, they would facilitate communicative processes due to their linguistic skills (Ekinci-Kocks 2012). Only a few studies have been carried out that have tested this hypothesis. With a sample of 288 teacher trainees for mathematics Hachfeld, Schroeder, Anders, Hahn, and Kunter (2012) found that those teachers with a migration background showed more self-efficacy and higher enthusiasm for teaching heterogeneous classes. However, the statistical analysis revealed the key variable was personal multicultural beliefs and could not be explained only by an individual's migratory background. These results indicate that strong multicultural beliefs, that can be learned by all students, not only by those with a personal migratory background, have a strong effect on self-efficacy and enthusiasm in relation to teaching immigrant children. However, further research in this area is needed in order to evaluate if the strategy of recruiting teachers with a migratory background would bring positive results or if, on the other hand, working on intercultural beliefs would be of key importance.

Following a meta-analysis of research on intercultural training of teacher trainees Cushner (2011 610) argues:

[...] One way to prepare teacher candidates to understand and address the challenges associated with teaching students in a global age is through carefully structured, intercultural field experiences where candidates are immersed in another culture (Cushner 2011, 610).

Contributions from intercultural research in such areas as the formation and reduction of prejudice, acculturation and intergroup interaction, what we know about intercultural sensitivity, the development of intercultural competence, and the process of culture learning are reviewed, suggesting the facilitation of intercultural sensitivity and competence may be an essential precursor to one's understanding that other perspectives, experiences, and histories can and do exist (Crushner, cited in Research Gate 2015, no page).

Other authors like Sharma, Pillion, and Malewski (2011) argue that intercultural expertise can be obtained only through critical reflective processes of personal intercultural experiences - also abroad. The results are based on research with teacher trainees who absolved a three week practical training in Honduras.

Also Jokikokko (2009, 143) argues that a transformation of individual viewpoints is only possible through critical reflection: "In order to change their meaning structures, learners must engage in critical reflection on their experiences." DeJaeghere and Cao (2009) go even further. According to their research results, further vocational training needs to focus on intercultural issues, but

[...] professional development need not be an intercultural immersion experience outside one's own culture and community; schools can create developmentally appropriate training that provides new knowledge, skills, and experience (DeJaeghere & Cao 2009, 445-446).

## **Conclusion**

According to the results from PISA (OECD 2012) Italy performs below the average for OECD countries in mathematics, reading, and science (OECD 2012).

Italians are typically told that the only reason of this dismal performance of their school system is a severe lack of funding, an explanation that appears to be consistent with the cuts to educational expenditures that government of all colors have recently implemented (Ichino and Tabellini 2014, 113).

However, the data suggest that this is not the primary reason for the bad results of Italian students in international standardized comparisons. “Up to a few years ago, expenditure per student in education was greater in Italy than in most other OECD countries” (Ichino and Tabellini 2014, 113-114).

As shown above, education shortcomings have been linked to the achievement gap and the growing number of immigrant students. In order to mitigate these effects, teachers play a central role. Thus, the intercultural contents in teacher training need to be reevaluated and improved for pre-service training on the one hand and continuing education on the other hand. Jokikokko (2009, 147) argues “[...] intercultural learning, professional growth, and the personal life are strongly intertwined and inseparable in the intercultural learning processes of teachers.”

Measures applied in teacher training programs in an international context such as recruitment of teachers with a personal migration background and compulsory international experiences as part of the curriculum, have yet to be discussed in the Italian context. By investing in intercultural teacher education, the challenges posed by the nexus of immigration and multiculturalism can be successfully met. We ought to look at the intercultural challenge through the lens of contingency and potentiality. We can choose to transform the intercultural challenges into a learning experience for teachers, students, and ultimately all components of society.

For the future, it is indispensable to propose organizational models, to potentiate ongoing training of in-service teachers, in order to nurture intercultural understanding in a pluralistic society (Goller, Santamaria & Weissteiner, 2010).

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## CHAPTER TWO

# MUSIC AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN CULTURES? A DISCUSSION OF THE CASE ‘SOUTH TYROL’

PAOLO SOMIGLI

### **Introduction**

The idea of music as a ‘bridge’ between different individuals, peoples or cultures is so widespread – also in common speech – to appear obvious. Nevertheless, it turns out to be more problematic than might appear at first sight if observed more in-depth. On the one hand, many practical experiences and a wide literature demonstrate that sharing music activities contributes to creating positive relationships between individuals from different backgrounds (see Besutti and Tassone 2015 and the literature there indicated). On the other hand, as we will see, it is not possible to affirm that this automatically happens or that it does not present controversial and contradictory aspects. Here, I will address and problematize this topic working from the results of a recent research project conducted in South Tyrol. The aim of this paper is not to demonstrate whether music is or is not a bridge between individuals, peoples and cultures; more simply, my essay aims at promoting a reflection on how music may be such a bridge and which kind of questions this idea implies.

### **The Research Project ‘Music Culture and Social Function of Music in South Tyrol’**

#### ***Genesis of the Research Project***

Music is a strong presence in the social and cultural life of South Tyrol, a northern Italian autonomous province where three language groups cohabit: speakers of German, of Italian, and of Ladin. Almost every

village has its own brass band and one or more choirs; in every valley it is possible to find one or more music schools, coordinated in a provincial network; the number of young bands is quite high. Furthermore, the multicultural and multilingual character of the South Tyrolean population determines the presence and the coexistence of ‘Italian’ and ‘German’ musical groups in bigger towns (Bolzano-Bozen, Brunico-Bruneck and so on). This is particularly evident in the case of parish choirs: in general terms, members of the ‘Italian’ choirs are mostly Italian-speaking people, whereas the participants in ‘German’ choirs are mostly German speakers. Moreover, in Ladin-speaking contexts we can observe the presence of Ladin-speaking musical groups and choirs.

From 2011 to 2014, the research project *Music culture and social function of music in South Tyrol* of the Faculty of Education of the Free University of Bolzano aimed at investigating the role of music and of music culture in this interesting context by means of a double approach: musicological and sociological<sup>1</sup>. The research was carried out by means of a data collection through questionnaires, interviews and other sources. Initially, it involved three centers, chosen as representative of the territory and of its main features because of their size, population, and geographical position (Bolzano-Bozen, the main city of the province, mostly Italian-speaking; Brunico-Bruneck, a middle size mostly German-speaking town in Val Pusteria; Corvara in Badia-Corvara, a small Ladin-speaking village on the mountains). Nevertheless, during the research, it became useful to observe other contexts (Riccioni 2015). Theoretical premises, methodological criteria and main results have been published in Riccioni and Somigli (2015, 7-60). Consistent with the general topic of this book, here I will summarize several specific aspects concerning the role of music in multicultural contexts.

### ***Some Remarks about the History of South Tyrol***

As the features of South Tyrol are strictly connected with its history, here I will briefly summarize some historical aspects, which still influence the everyday life of the area<sup>2</sup>.

Until the end of World War I, a region called ‘South Tyrol’ was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It included not only the actual South Tyrol but also the Italian speaking area now called ‘Trentino’. As one of the winner countries, in 1919 Italy obtained both Trentino, where the majority of the population spoke Italian, even though in a dialectal form, and the present Alto Adige - South Tyrol, where the large majority of people did not speak Italian and saw itself as Tyrolean, Austrian or more in general

culturally German, but not Italian. Shortly after the annexation, in the main town Bolzano-Bozen there were disorders and fights but at the same time several proposals about the treatment of linguistic/ethnic minorities were advanced, aiming at controlling and reducing tensions.

Due to the previous Austrian school administration, in all the former 'South Tyrol' Italian and German schools coexisted and people could, but did not have to, choose the school for their children according to their mother language. In 1922, Italian legislation obliged Italian speakers to send their children to Italian-speaking schools. An article from the Italian newspaper 'Il Mondo, Politico quotidiano' (19 Feb. 1922) is a relevant testimony of how the situation was complicated and how people perceived it both at the local and at the national level. Entitled *Il problema della scuola nella zona mistilingue* (The problem of school in multilingual area), it was written from an 'Italian' perspective, i.e. the language of the school attended by Italian-speaking children. I will quote several passages that are particularly interesting for our discussion.

L'appartenenza scolastica in una regione mistilingue è una delle questioni che più appassionano, sia per i motivi personali che entrano in giuoco, sia per le premesse di indole generale sulle quali si impernano due tesi fondamentali: a) obbligo dei genitori di inviare i propri fanciulli alla scuola della rispettiva nazionalità; b) libertà di scelta dei genitori tra le due scuole concorrenti ... Il decreto Corbino impone agli italiani l'obbligo dell'insegnamento elementare in lingua italiana. Lo stato si propone in tal modo di *tutelare e di difendere l'italianità minacciata di famiglie* [*italics in the original*] che, per interessi e consuetudine, o per subite intimidazioni vanno perdendo o hanno annebbiata in sé la coscienza della loro appartenenza nazionale. È dunque un'opera di difesa nazionale che il legislatore si è proposta. Se non ché, obbiettano i tedeschi ... [il decreto], *così come esso è* [sic], si risolve in un'indiretta violazione del diritto dei cittadini di lingua tedesca di venire tutelati nella propria cultura al pari degli italiani. Nel caso speciale che ora si considera, questo ragionamento *fatto dai tedeschi* è un sofisma, almeno per quanto riguarda lo stato attuale della situazione. Non vi è certo pericolo che oggi i tedeschi disertino la propria scuola per frequentare quella italiana. Essi però guardano al futuro [... e] non è errato supporre che tra qualche anno o qualche decennio il contadino tedesco, constatata la maggiore convenienza di apprendere l'italiano, lingua di ufficio o di stato, lasci la propria scuola e frequenti quella italiana ... In sostanza, il decreto dice: «gli italiani debbono andare alla scuola italiana, quanto agli altri me ne infischio». La pedagogia qui non c'entra più. Il fine nazionale è evidente. Ma si poteva ragionevolmente pretendere che il Governo italiano vietasse ai suoi nuovi sudditi di lingua tedesca di diventare italiani? Eh via! Ora si sta iniziando l'applicazione del decreto. Quale contegno adotteranno gli abitanti? Non è necessario pensare

ad oscure mene o a intimidazioni venute da Bolzano per rendersi conto della resistenza che questi italiani tirolizzati apporranno [sic] alla applicazione della legge. Ma il tempo e il buon senso o prima o poi prevarranno.

What school should be attended in a multilingual region? That's one question people get very passionate about, both for personal reasons and for considerations of a more general nature stemming from two key theses: a) parents should send their children to a school of their own nationality; b) parents should be free to choose between the two alternative schools... The Corbino decree imposes on Italians a primary teaching in Italian. The State thus intends to protect and defend the threatened Italianness of families [italics in the original] who, due to interest and habit, or to intimidations they may have suffered, are no longer aware of the nation they belong to, or are confused about it. The legislator has therefore set for himself the task of defending Italian nationality. The Germans, however, object that ... [the decree], as it is [sic], turns out to be an indirect violation of the rights of German speaking citizens to have their own culture protected in the same way as the Italians. In the special case we are considering here, the argument put forward by the Germans is just sophistry, at least as far as the current situation is concerned. There is certainly no danger today that the Germans will desert their school to attend the Italian one. But they do look at the future [... and] it is not unreasonable to think that in a few years or decades German farmers, having realized that there is an advantage in learning Italian, the language used in offices and by the government, will leave their own school and attend the Italian one ... In essence, the decree says: «Italians must go to the Italian school; as for the others, I do not care». It is no longer here a question of education. The national purpose is clear. But could we reasonably think that the Italian Government would prevent its new German speaking subjects from becoming Italian? Come on! The decree is now being implemented. How will the inhabitants behave? We do not have to imagine dark schemes or intimidations from Bolzano to realize that these Italians turned Tyroleans will strongly oppose [sic] the enforcement of this law. But time and common sense sooner or later will prevail. (Il Mondo 1922)

‘Il Mondo’ was not a nationalist newspaper, and it had no sympathy towards the rising Fascist movement; on the contrary, it had a liberal and tolerant orientation. However, this text shows the complexity of instances and problems in a multicultural context. In particular, it makes clear how, for the common sensibility at that time, the very idea of the coexistence of different cultures was difficult to be understood as not conflictive.

German-speakers’ fear for the future was not motiveless. At the end of 1922, the Fascist party and its leader Benito Mussolini rose to power. The new regime subjected the Province to a strong process of “forced