

Interculturalism, multiculturalism and *Italianness*: The case of Italy

Bruno Mascitelli
Swinburne University of Technology, Australia
bmascitelli@swin.edu.au

Chiara De Lazzari
Swinburne University of Technology, Australia

Abstract

Until the 1970s, Italy's population trajectory had demonstrated a clear propensity to be an emigrating nation. Over its almost 150-year history, it had witnessed four major phases of outward migration which had defined this country and created large diasporas across the globe. However, major changes began occurring to this demographic trajectory. It saw the unexpected arrival of large numbers of migrants from mostly poorer nations which it only reluctantly acknowledged. But, Italy was both unprepared and unconvinced to respond to this new phenomenon of incoming migration. Even though many of its European neighbours began to engage with this new and wider multicultural paradigm emerging in the 1980s, this multicultural approach never took hold in Italy. At the same time segments of the Italian education system were obliged to tackle recently arrived large numbers of migrants and their children requiring integrated models of education. While the political elites sought to remain immobile with large numbers of incoming immigrants, schools and educational institutions had little choice. Unfortunately, as this paper will demonstrate, this approach was mostly limited to the area of education. Although Interculturalism received a boost from its European Union promotion in 2008, it remained largely an activity exercised within the domain of public education. Fundamentally multiculturalism, like interculturalism were never officially embraced in Italy. While some sectors of society constructively engaged with interculturalism arguably as a different and more developed idea than multiculturalism, Italy and its policymakers continue to avoid engagement with migrant integration models whatever they be.

Keywords: Italy, multiculturalism, interculturalism, integration, Italianness, migration.

Introduction

Since 1871 Italy has been renowned for its population exodus, generally an exodus in search for a better future.¹ However it was seen as a necessary correction in a country where providing for its population solely from national resources was beyond its means. The safety valve of immigration for the resources poor Italy ultimately became a necessity. In 1974 for the first time, Italy witnessed a demography where many of its former emigrants re-entered the country than had exited. Much of this occurrence was as a result of the closure of labour markets in surrounding European

¹ D. Gabaccia, *Italy's many diasporas*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.

states UK, Germany and France in particularly.² But it was a statistic which laid bare the unplanned and undesired new state of affairs of migration to Italy. Besides demonstrating a different perspective and approach from the emigration affecting other European states, it was a watershed which would come back to haunt Italy and its doggedly monocultural perspective.

The aim of this paper is to examine whether interculturalism as an approach which has emerged in segments of Italy's schools and education system has become an embraced phenomenon in relation to incoming migrants. Or whether this new phenomenon, which some have sought to apply, is simply another failed attempt at migrant integration. Some have advanced the notion that multiculturalism in Italy, and Europe as espoused by various European leaders some years ago, has failed as evidenced by former UK Prime Minister Cameron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.³ While in Europe there has been backtracking on the relevance of multiculturalism, Italy it could be argued never embraced this phenomenon from the outset and therefore the matter was never posed. Moreover, as demonstrated the world over, multiculturalism cannot occur without it being welcomed or embraced by the political elites.

In comparison to European neighbours, Italy both arrived late at providing a legislation framework for immigration and was slow at recognition of new ethnic communities occupying the large Italian cities. It also failed to see the need for providing the societal integration assurances and commitments for the large numbers of new arrivals. Much of Italy's institutional approach towards all these behaviours has been a reluctance to accept and legitimise multiculturalism as well as interculturalism. As scholars have observed the divide between the ethnic groups and mainstream society is reflected in:

The interculturalism in use [in Italy] today still continues to conceive of individuals as (cultural) groups standing on opposite banks of a river with rights in between, which do not always allow them to navigate across on the ship of a robust policy of recognition.⁴

Where multiculturalism has emerged, albeit in small doses, it has occurred by stealth and led by informal, labour based, non-government and community organisations. Important inroads into intercultural learning occurred by the very presence of immigrant children in classrooms and a de facto embracement of interculturalism. However, these initiatives were but a drop in the ocean and without political and key institutional backing as noted by some scholars: "... this is because 'interculturalism' belongs to certain kinds of NGOs and not to those making or implementing policies or the media which comments on them".⁵ As opposed to many other States which have generally and more willingly harboured immigration, the public discourse in Italy has rarely made mention of immigration and where it has, its presence has on

² S. Rusconi, *Italy's migration experiences*, www.migrationeducation.org, 2010, accessed on 28 September 2016.

³ K. Malik, *The failure of multiculturalism: Community versus society in Europe*, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/western-europe/failure-multiculturalism>, 2015, accessed 31 August 2016

⁴ M.E. Mincu, M. Alassia and F. Pia, 'Uneven equity and Italian Interculturalism(s)', *Policy Futures in Education*, vol 9, no.1, 2011, pp. 88-95.

⁵ N. Meer, & T. Modood, *Interculturalism, multiculturalism, or both?*, European University Institute, *Policy and papers*, 2013.

the whole acquired negative contexts and connotation as will be demonstrated in this paper.

Multiculturalism under siege

One of the clear developments has been the different positioning of multiculturalism in different parts of the world. In some societies, such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia, multiculturalism has become the catchword for the progress, stability and ethnic integration of these nations. While this may become challenged by recent elections in the United States and the rise of a Trump administration, the acceptance of multiculturalism in much of the Anglosphere is a taken. This is not the case in many parts of the world and certainly not in Europe. While some European nations such as Germany have tried to embrace multiculturalism, in more recent times it has been strongly challenged in countries such as France, Italy and many Eastern European nations and of course in the UK with the recent Brexit referendum. Terrorist incidents such as in Paris and Belgium are a statement which also point to failures in this approach. Political leaders such as former British Prime Minister Cameron and German Chancellor Merkel have made public pronouncements on the failure of multiculturalism. Declaring “multiculturalism has failed, completely failed”.⁶

Alongside these declarations of the death of multiculturalism in Europe, Italy was substantially silent on the matter as it had little in the way of multiculturalism and these European sentiments confirmed the scepticism Italy had had on the matter.⁷ The immigration crisis in Europe of 2016 was but the final nail in the coffin in the short term to seek some other model of migration integration. However, the electoral results expected in 2017 of France and Germany appear to provide even greater uncertainty on this quest. While multiculturalism in Europe is under siege some scholars have questioned the meaning, use and applicability of multiculturalism in Europe stating:

The term multiculturalism in Europe came to mean, and now means throughout the English speaking world and beyond, the political accommodation by the State and/or a dominant group of all minority cultures defined first and foremost by reference to race, ethnicity or religion, and, additionally but more controversially, by reference to other group-defining characteristics such as nationality and aboriginality.⁸

European nations struggled from the outset to locate an ideal model to support the integration of migrants in their respective states. Over the years, many attempts were made to respond to multicultural societies' need. However, policies implemented have not only been non-inclusive they also been inconclusive and also rejected. The European experience, for instance, has highlighted the numerous limitations of multiculturalism which the Brexit vote in the UK and the latest migration crisis in Europe has only served to underscore.

⁶ Malik, op. cit.

⁷ L. Ferrante, Has multiculturalism failed in Europe? Migration policies, State of emergency and their impact on migrants' identities in Italy, in M. La Barbera (ed), *Identity and migration in Europe: Multidisciplinary perspectives, International Perspectives on Migration*, 13, DOI 10, 2015, pp. 39-57.

⁸ N. Meer & T. Modood, How does interculturalism contrast with multiculturalism? *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2011, pp. 1-22.

While the so-called (and arguable) failure of multiculturalism is in discussion, some have ventured to advance the notion of a new approach called interculturalism.⁹ Why the notion of interculturalism rather than multiculturalism?

One such definition places multiculturalism as a view which supports the value of cultural differences in order to create social equality among different cultures and minority groups.¹⁰ As Hammer¹¹ indicates, multiculturalism is a policy based on the notion of personal autonomy. Interculturalism, in contrast, recognizes that in a society of mixed ethnicities, cultures act in multiple directions. Host or majority cultures are influenced by immigrant or minority cultures and vice versa. Multiculturalism tends to preserve a cultural heritage, while interculturalism acknowledges and enables cultures to have currency, to be exchanged, to circulate, to be modified and evolve. Understanding how cultures move around in a society, introduce social changes, and facilitate cultural integration requires an interdisciplinary approach: one that includes the obviously primary concerns of human rights, citizenship, work, education, health and housing, one that also develops inclusive policies and supports the development of creative expression.¹²

Interculturalism: What it is and what it's not

The interpretation of interculturalism has been a debate mostly localised in Europe and in some cases within pockets within Europe. The Council of Europe in 2008 surprised many, in Europe and beyond, by championing interculturalism as an alternative approach to migration settlement even sidestepping multiculturalism for the growing need for integration of the many ethnic communities migrating to European nations. A White paper on Intercultural Dialogue of the Council of Europe declared:

intercultural dialogue is understood as a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. ... Intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies. ... It aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse world views and practices, to increase co-operation and participation (or the freedom to make choices), to allow personal growth and transformation, and to promote tolerance and respect for the other.¹³

Despite attempts to the contrary, and different levels of embracement across Europe especially along the Mediterranean flank, interculturalism is still predominantly a theoretical concept with scarce official understanding and support.

⁹ L. Fischer & M. Fischer, *Scuola e società' multi-etnica: modelli teorici di integrazione e student immigrati a Torino e Genova*, Turin: Fondazione Agnelli, 2002.

¹⁰ I. Bloemraad, M. & Wright, (2014). "Utter failure" or unity out of diversity? Debating and evaluating policies of multiculturalism. *International Migration Review*, 48, 2014, pp. 292–334.

¹¹ L. Hammer, Interculturalism and Migrant Workers in Israel, in F. Sze & D. Powell (eds), *Interculturalism exploring the issues*, Oxford UK: Interdisciplinary Press, 2004.

¹² F. Sze, & D. Powell, 2004, *Interculturalism exploring the issues*, Oxford UK: Interdisciplinary Press.

¹³ CoE, 2008, Council of Europe, *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living Together As Equals in Dignity"*, 7 May 2008, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/-intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf, accessed on 30 March 2016, p. 17.

Interculturalism was a concept of relevance which had initially only a European context entered the Italian discourse mostly in the field of education and schools. According to one view, the concept, despite good intentions remained confused and problematic even though intercultural education became a fundamental principle in Italian schools from the 1980s.¹⁴ By its supporters it was considered the only way to achieve integration among students of different origins, a view shared by its teachers.¹⁵ It was, as an approach, strictly linked to the European context to indicate a third form of inclusion beside those of assimilation and multiculturalism.¹⁶ The debate on the three forms of inclusion, the differences between multiculturalism and interculturalism¹⁷ their success or failure requires separate analysis. Here the issue at stake is interculturalism, and its enforcement in educational contexts.¹⁸

Like many papers emanating from the European Union, the White Paper from Europe in 2008 on interculturalism had little societal impact. Rather the debate continued to remain on the successes or failures of multiculturalism. Many multicultural societies, such as Canada and Australia, equally registered some levels scrutiny of the phenomenon although their models remained substantially intact. In the case of Australia as Horne observed: “Australia did not know it, but they were leading the world (as they continued to do in immigration policy until John Howard backed away from this Australian achievement as un-Australian...”¹⁹ In the case of Canada, another much cited example of multiculturalism, while coming under some scrutiny, has the benefit of its multiculturalist practice enshrined in its constitution and as one scholar has summarised “... was largely a result of the French-Canadian factor in Canada. However, the longer-established non-British and non-French groups in that country also played a part ... the Canadian population had always been considerably less homogenous”²⁰

As Ford correctly noted:

... a policy of multiculturalism does not have the implicit requirement to create intercultural relationships. A multicultural policy ensures that there are lots of cultures (multi) but does not require the opportunity for people to, at every opportunity, meaningfully come together to create ongoing relationships (inter) which strengthen and weave themselves into our community.²¹

Bouchard in contrast on the question of interculturalism (in a Quebec context) has provided even greater lucidity on its meaning as a model of management of ethno-cultural diversity. His approach is firstly to state what this phenomenon is not and

¹⁴ Mincu, Allasia & Pia op. Cit.

¹⁵ MIUR, 2007, Ministero dell' Istruzione e della Ricerca (MIUR), La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l' integrazione degli alunni stranieri, 2007 accessed on 24/10/2016 http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/cecf0709-e9dc-4387-a922-eb5e63c5bab5/documento_di_indirizzo.pdf, accessed on 30 October 2016.

¹⁶ A. Milione, 'Young immigrants at school: inclusion and location of rights in Italy', *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 2, 2011 pp.173-198.

¹⁷ Meer and Modood op. cit.

¹⁸ E. Caneva, 'Interculturalism in the classroom', *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 3, 2012.

¹⁹ D. Horne, *Looking for leadership: Australia in the Howard Years*, Melbourne: Viking Publications, 2001.

²⁰ J. Mann, "'Multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" and "a cohesive, united, Multicultural nation": Multicultural policies in Canada and Australia, 1970s–the present.", *Conference paper, University of Sydney*, 2011, p.13.

²¹ L. Ford, *Multiculturalism and interculturalism – the difference is in practice*, 24 November 2015, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/multiculturalism-interculturalism-difference-lynda-ford-gaiced?forceNoSplash=true>, accessed 27 March 2016.

then to elaborately pose its nuances and uniqueness.²² Alongside this attempt there have been other scholars who have sought to rid the term of political context and address it in a complete state of political neutrality and do so convincingly such as the following definition:

...Interculturalism is a better term than multiculturalism. It emphasises interaction and participation of citizens in a common society, rather than cultural differences and different cultures existing next to each other without necessarily much contact or participative interaction. Interculturalism is therefore equivalent to mutual integration... While multiculturalism boils down to celebrating difference, interculturalism is about understanding each other's cultures, sharing them and finding common ground on which people can become more integrated.²³

However, despite these attempts to render interculturalism a development and improvement on multiculturalism including the evolution of migration settlement, it nonetheless still remains a theoretical debate which nation states have yet to embrace or apply.

The story of Italian migration

Italy has a long tradition of outward migration while incoming migration only began in the 1970s with new sizeable inflows of migrants settling in Italy's major cities. As put by one observer:

For almost a century, Italy was one of the leading European emigration countries and only in the second half of the 1970s did the country begin to receive immigration flows of a certain amount from the Third World and, later, from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).²⁴

Between 1876 and 1942 nearly 19 million Italians went abroad, almost half of them crossed the Oceans.²⁵ The vast majority of these expatriations were recorded at the beginning of the twentieth century until the First World War. From 1876 to 1900, large numbers of Italians, made up of spontaneous and individual emigration, travelled to Argentina, Brazil and United States, together with Austria, Hungary and Germany. A following phase, from 1901 to the beginning of the First World War, recorded the top number of expatriations with an average of 600,000 each year and where the United States was the most important of the destinations. After the fall of the migratory flux, during the First World War, numbers fluctuated from 1918 and 1930 although this was followed by new declines of emigration as a result of the fascist anti-emigration policy implemented throughout the 1930s. In the post 1945 period the number of emigrants rose again until the beginning of the 1970's and

²² G. Boucharde, What is interculturalism?, McGill Law Journal — Revue de droit de McGill vol. 56 no. 2, 2011 http://www.symposium-interculturalisme.com/pdf/McGill_Inter_en.pdf, viewed 10 October 2016.

²³ NewStart Magazine, *Its all in the mix*, 2006, 7 June.

²⁴ C. Bonifazi, F. Heins, S. Strozza, & M. Vitiello, 'Italy: The Italian transition from an emigration to immigration country, Institute of Research on Population and Social Policies' (IRPPS-CNR), *IDEA Working papers*, 2009, http://www.idea6fp.uw.edu.pl/pliki/WP5_Italy.pdf, accessed on 10 October 2016.

²⁵ Gabaccia op. cit.

many of these emigrants made their way to Germany, Belgium, France and Switzerland.²⁶

Italy as a recipient of migrants has been as Allievi²⁷ indicates “a late comer” in comparison to its closer European neighbours. Incoming migration into Italy initially registered small numbers and was at first viewed by the political elites at the time as a momentary response to geo-regional developments and therefore of little further consideration. The arrival of thousands of immigrants, many with no papers or identification and therefore many who were unknown to have even arrived, saw an Italy totally unprepared for this development.²⁸ Some commentators sounded alarm bells and the Italian State was slow to address this growing inward movement. The word “immigration” fails to appear as a portfolio of government responsibility and to this day the management of migration remains in the hands of the Ministry of Interior and the police authorities. As one observer noted “Like many of its southern European neighbours, Italy has struggled to find the right tone and approach toward immigration”.²⁹ Prior to the 1980s, Italy did not have any laws to address the legal presence of foreigners and thereby had to fall back on a fascist era public security law of 1931, known as “Rocco Code” which was an all-encompassing piece of internal migration social legislation. This code required that foreigners needed to declare their presence to the authorities. During the *Forum Internazionale ed Europeo di Ricerche sull’Immigrazione* (FIERI), Al-Azar³⁰ reported that the 1981 census exposed an unexpectedly high number (320,778) of foreign residents. The really high levels of incoming migration was eventually noticed in the mid-1980s (1984 to 1989) when approximately 700,000 to 800,000 people entered Italy and more than half that number did so without a valid residence permit.³¹

Italianness and mono-culturalism

While many societies nurture their own culture, language and identity and prefer their mono-cultural outlook, some feel threatened by the presence of other cultures and find it hard to moderate and accept other cultures and identities in their own homeland. This has been the case of Italy. Armillei³² has referred to this as non-acceptance as a refusal to accept “otherness” or “others”. In many ways this approach has determined Italy’s view of its identity, its citizenship and its own people. It has been a strong endorser of global Italian diasporas, enshrining the philosophy of “once an Italian always an Italian”.³³ This is enshrined in its constitution, its legal process, its citizenship and ultimately its view of immigration.

²⁶ L. Zanfrini, *Immigration in Italy*, June 30, 2013, http://migrationeducation.de/fileadmin/uploads/CountryprofileItaly_aggiornamento.pdf, accessed on 29 April 2016.

²⁷ S. Allievi, ‘Immigration and cultural pluralism in Italy: multiculturalism as a missing model’, *Italian Culture*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2010 pp. 85-103.

²⁸ Ferrante op. cit

²⁹ R. Al-Azar, Italian immigration policies: The metaphor of water, *The SAIS Journal*, 1 April 2006, <http://www.saisjournal.org/posts/italian-immigration-policies>, 2006, accessed on 16 April 2016.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Gabaccia op. cit.

³² R. Armillei, 2015, ‘A multicultural Italy?’, in F. Mansouri (ed.), *Cultural, Religious and Political Contestations: The Multicultural Challenge*, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 135-151.

³³ S. Battiston, & B. Mascitelli, 2008, “Full voting rights for Italian citizens overseas: Citizenship gone global, *Italianness* or Italian party politics”, in S. Bronitt & K. Rubinstein., *Citizenship in a Post-National world*, Law and Policy Paper 29, Canberra: ANU, 2008.

The re-emergence of “Italianness” in Italian modern history has its roots in the 1980s with Italy divided ideologically and returning to be a force in a geo-political context.³⁴ It became a moment to celebrate Italian achievements and re-assessing its identity. Italy at the same time also discovered its expatriate community which it declared to be as much as 60 million across the globe.³⁵ At the same time and with reluctance, it was becoming a popular destination for migration in numbers that started to create some alarm.

Italy belongs to the group of countries defined by Calhoun as countries that have fostered national identity based on a common past.³⁶ The sense of belonging to the Italian community guided by the development of an Italian identity based on people with a common history, background and set of values. As Smith³⁷ indicates, such countries consider national identity the way to acknowledge the past of a group of people and the “shared destiny” of this group. This need was even more urgent for a nation that, since its creation, has struggled to create a strong national identity in the peninsula.

Due to the fragmented history of Italy, the identity-building process in Italy is the result of intellectual and nationalistic proclamations over the decades, seeking a concept of an Italian nation through the implementation of a common ideal in an historically divided country. The famous sentence pronounced by Massimo d’Azeglio: “Now that we made Italy, we have to make Italians” describes the need to create national identity and cohesion in regionally divided states and therefore a stronger “Italian-ness” amongst Italians.³⁸ For this reason, protectionism of national identity and citizenship became part of the Italian legislative approach. It is the basis for the definition and use of the term of *Italianness*.

Italian society over the last decades has continued to prop up a political agenda which oscillates between purposefully glorifying Italians abroad and providing them with privileged access to refusing to acknowledge the new generation of distinct migrants entering and living in Italy’s large cities. This stubborn attachment to “Italianness” as some call it.³⁹ Whereby generations of former Italians, including millions who cannot speak the language and have never set foot on Italian soil exercise rights and privileges migrants can only dream of. With a foothold in legislative principle of *jus sanguinis* Italy becomes defined as being non-receptive to foreigners ultimately influencing much of its approach towards migration and its legislation. This ethno-centric citizenship approach has created obstacles in supporting the creation of a more heterogeneous Italian society and thereby neglecting the citizenship status of many migrants that have been permanent residents in the Italian territories for decades. The onset of migration to Italy occurred in effect without a legal framework and haphazard rules and regulations often undertaken at local levels. From 1976 until 1986 was a chaotic period of no legislation reflecting a chaotic and indifferent mode of migration regulation as governments remained unsure how and in which way to

³⁴ B. Mascitelli, & S. Battiston, *The Italian expatriate vote in Australia: democratic right, democratic wrong or political opportunism*, Connor Court Publishing, Ballan, Vic., 2008

³⁵ G. Tintori, ‘The transnational political practices of Latin American Italians’, *International Migration*, Vol. 49, No. 3, 2011, pp: 168-188.

³⁶ C. Calhoun, *Social theory and politics of identity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

³⁷ A.D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: a critical survey of recent theories of nation and nationalism*, London: Routledge, 1998.

³⁸ S. Patriarca, *Italianità: La costruzione del carattere nazionale*, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2010.

³⁹ P. Vereni 2009, *Secondo a chi?*, <http://pierovereni.Blogspot.com/2009/11/secondi-chi.html>, accessed on 14 December 2016.

address the rising phenomenon of immigration. Over the following decades this approach would be modified but with little conviction and purpose.

First steps towards migration regulatory management

When immigrants first arrived in Italy in large numbers, they arrived in a country not expecting nor prepared for their arrival. There was little in the way of a legal framework and migrants found themselves trapped between an inability to acquire legal status and a State which was unable at the same time to have them expelled.⁴⁰ Eventually legislation on migration began emerging from the early 1990s onwards, motivated more by urgency than embracement of migration and certainly without a clear coherent migration policy. In this context, the incorporation of the immigrants in the Italian society has taken place mainly through a labor market and labor force needs for manual and unqualified jobs abandoned by the nationals. These were mostly in the informal sectors (small enterprises, construction, tourism, agriculture, services to private persons) in a country where the informal economy counts for around 15 per cent of the national product, according to some estimations.⁴¹ Ambrosini⁴² observed that this need for immigrants to undertake what ordinary Italians prefer not to do includes employment in heavy, dangerous and low paid jobs. Given the failure of the Italian government to address this development with policies and labour market regulation referred to this occurrence as “subordinated integration”.⁴³

It was in 1990, however, when the centrist Craxi government passed the Martelli Law, which was Italy's first comprehensive piece of immigration legislation. The new law aimed to regulate migration and demonstrate Italy's growing immigration concerns. The law introduced visa requirements, addressed deportations and introduced sanctions for migrant smugglers and traffickers.⁴⁴ This law also sought to comply with the emerging European Union Schengen arrangements which Italy was a party to as well as provide a planned approach towards regular migrants. While implementation and enforcement activities were criticized, the step boldly declared the government's intention to allay public concern about possible increased immigration. Growing European concern about the Italian government's ability to manage its long seacoast was viewed by many European capitals as the unsecured door through which immigrants were accessing other European countries.⁴⁵

Emigration to Italy steadily increased and by 1990 it reached one million and destined to grow in the following years. Moreover, the proportion of emigrants coming into Italy changed from European Union States to non-European States. The proportion of emigrants from outside Europe increased to 86 per cent by 1990.⁴⁶ However global conflict, the Yugoslav breakup, the end of the Cold War and African

⁴⁰ M. Ambrosini, The Role of Immigrants in the Italian Labour Market, *International Migration*, Vol. 39, Issue 3, 2001, pp. 61-83.

⁴¹ Il Sole 24 Ore, Istat: economia sommersa e illegale «vale» 206 mld, il 12,9% del Pil, 13 September 2016, http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2016-09-13/istat-economia--sommersa-e-illegale-vale-206-mld-129percento-pil-154126.shtml?uuid=ADD-JliJB&refresh_ce=1, viewed 20 November 2016.

⁴² Ambrosini op. cit.

⁴³ Ambrosini op. cit.

⁴⁴ Rusconi op. cit.

⁴⁵ K. Hamilton, & M. Jachimowicz, *Italy's Southern Exposure*, migrationpolicy.org, 2002, Available at: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/italys-southern-exposure>, accessed on 30 October 2016.

⁴⁶ Rusconi op. cit.

and Middle Eastern instability continued to witness many seeking refuge, a better life and safety, venturing the nations of Europe. This included Italy.

A slow emerging legal framework without multicultural recognition

Settlement integration received little attention in Italian migration legislation until the Turco-Napolitano law passed in 1998 under the then Prodi centre-left government. However much of its implementation and responsibility as indicated by legal requirements, would fall on the shoulders of the NGOs and community organisations.⁴⁷ In 1998 The National Commission for the Policies of Integration of Immigrants was indicated as seeking an “Italian model” of integration and noted a rejection of the assimilationist model of wanting migrants to Italianise. At the time regional conflicts such as the fall of Yugoslavia and the consequences of political turmoil in other Eastern European nations, saw that large numbers of immigrants crossing into Italy, with Romanians beginning to assume the largest ethnic migrant community.⁴⁸

The Turco-Napolitano law, despite containing repressive measures for immigrants especially those without identification and documentation including swifter measures for deportation, it also enacted the first piece of legislation addressing settlement for migrants including the institution of permanent residence documentation. This momentum however was of short duration with a change of government seeing the victory of a new centre-right coalition in 2001 led by PM Berlusconi. This would re-introduce increased xenophobic tendencies in the government expressed especially by the Lega Nord alongside populist and xenophobic currents permeating throughout Italy itself. In 2002 the Berlusconi government introduced the Bossi-Fini law (189/2002) to further the emergency management of immigration. To its credit, however, the legislation also simplified refugee’s applications, another growing category of migration as a result of the collapse of Yugoslavia and new immigrants arriving by boat especially from conflict torn areas. This new (immigration) law besides seeking to reduce the presence of immigrants in Italy, also had the effect of criminalising immigrants and as a consequence did little to promote intercultural values amongst the Italian population.

Despite the regressive actions of the government some 634,728 people were regularised during the duration of the 2001-2006 centre-right government. This also began to provide more realistic numbers of the immigrants in Italy both those with and without documents or documents of identity. Curiously, this government despite its unfriendly messages towards migration, left the entire apparatus of social and family rights of immigrants intact.⁴⁹

In 2006 the Berlusconi government came to an end and was followed by a short lived centre-left government between 2006-2008 led by Romano Prodi. It too failed to make changes and improvements in the legislation for migration and more importantly to the climate of non-receptivity or pathway to settlement and acceptance. With the elections of 2008 Berlusconi returned with a strong majority

⁴⁷ F. Gobbo, R. Ricucci, F. Galloni, *Inclusion and education in European countries: final report*, 2009, DOCA Bureaux, Lepelstraat.

⁴⁸ Al-Azar op. cit.

⁴⁹ Rusconi op. cit.

and with a strong “security” agenda with specific focus on immigration ultimately provoking suspicion towards migrants as being prone to acts of criminality. This included the so-called “Security Package” which involved “a set of regulations whose aim was to guarantee security for Italian citizens, to fight against illegal migration, the crimes and anti-social behaviour of immigrants”.⁵⁰ Nor were these measures opposed by opposition parties. Much of this approach and legislation preparation came from the Lega Nord, the xenophobic party within the Berlusconi coalition. Berlusconi permitted this “criminalisation” of immigrants as a concession to the far right member of its coalition. The Lega Nord even encouraged the establishment of vigilante squads to roam the northern cities and the transport hubs for “immigrant criminals” and to pursue them populist myth of rendering the cities safe from these external threats. The net effect was to deprive of immigrants of more rights and put them on the defensive.

While the dynamics of Italian immigration have been volatile over the last decades, to its credit over the last few years, Italy has shouldered more than its share and burden of the refugee crisis from war torn locations such as Libya, Syria and Afghanistan. While these have been on the whole emergency scenarios for Italy, as part of the European Union generic approach, this experience has provided a surprisingly different and empathetic approach from what was a more static picture of migration in the past. According to the ISMU report for 2016, the purported foreign population in Italy had reached 5.8 million people out of an Italian total of 62 million.⁵¹ That means that migrants have become approximately 10 per cent of the Italian population. This poses more than just a desire to confront settlement needs for the growing migrant population in Italy but a policy which has sustainability, acceptance and positiveness.

The case of Italy: multiculturalism, monoculturalism and interculturalism

In 2008, the Council of Europe released *The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*. This paper was seen as an approach by European Union to guide European countries in the pursuit of intercultural principles in their respective national policies. This paper by the Council of Europe, saw interculturalism as the more relevant approach to support the integration and recognise the value of minorities in countries’ territories.

Despite these guidelines released by the Council of Europe on intercultural values through the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, interculturalism and intercultural education were not entirely new concepts in the Italian context. These guiding principles were already incorporated in the Italian education system as far back as the 1980s and 1990s.⁵² For this reason, at the time of the implementation of the White Paper, Italy was already pursuing intercultural dialogue and promoting intercultural values through schools’ curricula. Despite the existing awareness on the importance of intercultural dialogue in the education sector before 2008, only in

⁵⁰ E. Caneva, The integration of migrants in Italy: an overview of policy instruments and actors, 2014, Interact Research Report, Country Report RR2014/05, http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream-/handle/1814/32019/INTERACT-RR-2014_05.pdf?sequence=1, accessed on 12 December 2016.

⁵¹ ISMU Report, 2016, Twenty-First ISMU Report on Migrations, 11 January 2016, <http://newsletter2.ismu.org/?p=4429&lang=en>, accessed on 15 March 2016.

⁵² Caneva, Interculturalism in the classroom op. cit.

more recent times has the Italian approach towards interculturalism come under closer scrutiny and greater acknowledgement of the limited spread of this phenomenon in Italian society.

While some claim that Italian governments have given priority to implement policies to promote intercultural values in the education sector.⁵³ Italy has struggled to develop these policies and approaches that include the Italian population in the discussion and in the acquisition of intercultural competences. In some aspects, ironically, Italy appeared to be quite ahead in the inclusion of intercultural principles in the education policies.⁵⁴ After the first recommendations issued by the Council of Europe in 1985, Italy decided to include intercultural education in scholastic curricula. Following this recommendation, interculturalism became a “mantra” in the Italian educational pedagogy⁵⁵ thanks to the push coming from the Council of Europe in the promotion of activities for the protection of human rights and the recognition of equal opportunities in the field of education.⁵⁶ The guidelines delivered in the *White Paper for Intercultural Dialogue* issued in 2008 by the Council of Europe were also incorporated in the Italian legislation to support the already existing interest in interculturalism in schools. Caneva noted that Intercultural education was considered the best way to prevent intolerance and racism and to promote democratic values.⁵⁷

The Italian government, at that time, believed schools were the best context to start projects on intercultural education, fostering the appreciation of different languages and supporting the implementation of exchange programs.⁵⁸ In 2007 another document released by the Ministry of Education highlighted once again the importance of interculturalism at school in order to support the paradigm of diversity in school identities.⁵⁹ But one is forced to admit that much of playing on the importance of schools for interculturalism was at the same time to admit that it would take place nowhere else.

As part of the intercultural approach in Italy to the extent it existed, would however be relegated to the education sector with confused and not always consistent outcomes among schools.⁶⁰ As Fischer and Fischer⁶¹ remember, the risk of this system is that schools could become a “protective enclave” where people from different cultures can exchange their views of the world in class but this experience is not be replicated in the outside world. The authors criticised a lack of institutional engagement in the promotion of this intercultural paradigm on a broader spectrum, questioning the approach, the informality of the arrangements whereby they depend too much on non-official agencies. To make matters worse these Italian institutions even deprived this informal arrangement of ongoing funding. But as would be

⁵³ Caneva, *Interculturalism in the classroom* op. cit.

⁵⁴ Fischer and Fischer op. cit.

⁵⁵ Mincu, Alassia and Pia op. cit.

⁵⁶ T. Hammarberg, *Report*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2009.

⁵⁷ Caneva, *Interculturalism in the classroom* op. cit.

⁵⁸ Ministry of Education, Universities and Research [MIUR] 1995: 109

⁵⁹ Ministero dell' Istruzione e della Ricerca (MIUR) 2007, *La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l' integrazione degli alunni stranieri*, http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/cecf0709-e9dc-4387-a922-eb5e63c5bab5/documento_di_indirizzo.pdf, viewed 30 October 2016, pp.8-9

⁶⁰ M. Omodeo, *La scuola multiculturale*, Roma, Carocci, 2002.

⁶¹ Fischer and Fischer op. cit.

demonstrated time and again only those directly involved in the education system had awareness of this approach, but also its limitations.

Without denying the importance of the education system in promoting the intercultural dialogue among students, Italy has struggled to invest in any other form of promotion of intercultural values as indicated by the Council of Europe. While education appears to be the starting point for the transmission of intercultural values, the Council of Europe supported the promotion of intercultural dialogue in the general communities through policies that could have an impact to all citizens. As Regnault suggests: “intercultural education [...] is not a problem in schools only, but concerns the whole society, particularly with regard to policies implemented in social, family, and migration fields”.⁶² Despite the concerns raised from a theoretical perspective, Italian institutions have not been able to implement policies to intervene in sectors other than the education until now.

With the gap left by institutions and political elites, some independent of NGO actors tried to fill this gap. Regional, local and independent groups engaged with the population for the promotion of intercultural dialogue throughout the country to generate awareness in intercultural values. According to Gobbo et al. non-for-profit and independent organisations, in partnership with local authorities and schools, were responsible for the promotion of 90 per cent of intercultural activities throughout Italy during those years. But, these actions were generally “carried out on the basis of annual funding, without any continuity or final evaluation of their efficacy”.⁶³

Multiculturalism did not fail in Italy... it simply never existed

In the last few decades the Italian population has become increasingly diverse and studies such as Bonifazi et al.⁶⁴ demonstrate significant levels of foreigners attending school and levels of social inclusion for the young. Calavita notes that:

While the integration of foreigners in Italy probably lags behind their integration in countries of longstanding immigration, the rate of settlement into Italian society seems to be increasing. The incidences of binational marriage, long-term residency, naturalization, and the presence of families have all increased substantially over the last decade.⁶⁵

In large part the quest for multiculturalism in Italy, despite real efforts from civil society, has had a hollow and unconvincing ring to it and interculturalism even more so. While many have witnessed the discussion and engagement of the use of interculturalism in the education sector of this phenomenon, it failed to extend to the outside world, to the workplace, to the state machinery or to Italian culture. The Italian school system since the 1980s has sought, often with little recognition or control, an approach of integration and recognition of its growing presence of children of foreign extraction. Numerous papers and documents have emerged from

⁶² E. Regnault, "Cultural Identity and Good Practices in Intercultural Education in Europe", *Nation-Building, Identity and Citizenship Education*, Springer Netherlands, 2009, pp. 143.

⁶³ Gobbo et al. op. cit. p. 6

⁶⁴ Bonifazi et al. op. cit.

⁶⁵ K. Calavita, *Italy: Immigration, Economic Flexibility, and Integration*, University of California, Irvine, 2006, https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/european_studies/_files/PDF/immigration-policy-conference/calavita.pdf, accessed on 28 September 2016.

both the Ministry of Education as well as from the schools themselves addressing this matter, and in most cases the concept of interculturalism has remained confined within the school and education purview.⁶⁶ Moreover, it has functioned with little technical and professional qualifications to undertake this experimental form of integration and as an approach it has remained isolated to the education system without my adherence to society at large. Many education experts have been unprepared for the consequences of interculturalism including the equal access to schools and the “white flight” as well as the lack of adequate positive forms of discrimination strategies in schools.⁶⁷ As one scholar has noted the “Italian way to interculturalism” was basically left to the discretion of each school and the keenest teachers. It remained more a declaration of intent than a suite of policies.⁶⁸

Many political elites not only failed to provide a “welcome” but actively poisoned parts of society with episodic demagogic and populist sentiments and thereby did little to promote either multiculturalism or interculturalism. The societal effects of “interculturalism” and “multiculturalism”, even in this moment of migration crisis and unregulated people movement in Europe, sees Italy move very cautiously and not with great intent in relation to social legislation on cultural diversity. Discussion of successful multiculturalist policies or strategies in Italy is universally seen as misplaced and non-existent. Some have highlighted the necessity to re-examine the very nature of multiculturalism despite its limits in Italy. As Calavita notes in her findings:

Antipathy towards immigrants in Italy often takes the form of an aversion towards multiculturalism, and/or towards the particular cultures that immigrants bring with them. In a nation that defines itself as relatively culturally homogeneous, the influx of immigrants from around the world has caused alarm. The mosque has become the symbol of multiculturalism for a wide range of spokespeople who object to this contamination of the “purity” of Italy’s Christian civilization.⁶⁹

In effect Italy can be hardly be defined as a multicultural society, particularly since multiculturalism is a concept that has always been absent from Italian public policy and discourse.⁷⁰ Though there were attempts by NGOs, the Church, the trade unions and others to address multiculturalism, the political elites were unable to grasp or accept these issues reflecting a failure by Italy to make that transition. The integration of most migrants has been processed through the labour process as aptly captured by Zolberg when stating about migrants coming to Italy: “Wanted but not welcome”.⁷¹

With multiculturalism declared “dead” in neighbouring European countries, in Italy it never really existed. Its declaration of “death” across its borders only provided Italian political elites with even more ammunition in its opposition to multiculturalism. The experience in Italy over these key decades showed a political leadership unwilling to

⁶⁶ Caneva, *Interculturalism in the classroom* op. cit.

⁶⁷ M. Mincu, “Tensions in recognition politics in Europe: A reading of Italian interculturalism(s) as ideology”, *Journal of Social Research and Policy*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, 2011.

⁶⁸ M. Santerini, *Intercultura*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2006.

⁶⁹ Calavita op. cit. p. 53.

⁷⁰ Armillei op. cit.

⁷¹ A. Zolberg, “Wanted but not Welcome: Alien Labor in Western Development.” In William A. Alonso (ed.) *Population in an Interacting World*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

follow multicultural practices and allowed itself to be prisoner of the populist monocultural domination. Alongside legislation on new ethnic communities flows the question of how welcome they are in Italy and whether there was any semblance of a multicultural scenario. The official Italian discourse never acknowledged nor has it sought to be identified with multiculturalism and many scholars have dismissed the very notion of Italy having anything remotely resembling multiculturalism.⁷²

Conclusion

Italy's search for models of social integration have on the whole been half hearted and shown a reluctance to genuinely embrace the new incoming emigrant communities. Multiculturalism in Italy was never given space to develop by the political elite and much less so interculturalism. This failure is certainly not caused by the failure of civil society or even many in the education field who worked hard at being the front line of integration of ethnic communities, be they migrants or refugees. As thousands of migrants keep venturing around the Italian coastline escaping from war torn conflicts seeking entry, many will ultimately reach an Italian destination even though it may not be their final destination. While Italy as a nation has played a heavy role in providing a first point of contact with millions of migrants, it has at the same time seen them as transitory and not a societal responsibility in terms of settlement and integration. Much of the difficulties have been the result of political leadership seeking to hold on to the "Italianness" identity illusion. Cold geo-political reality keeps chipping away at this illusion and the current Syrian refugee crisis has plunged many states in Europe, not just Italy, into a cold shower dose of reality and even crisis. As Italy catches up with the management of new migrant communities increasing within its national borders, the challenge to alter its philosophical approach towards migrants and their effective settlement in Italy remains a priority. The societal effects of "interculturalism" and "multiculturalism" have made little impact on Italian society and to many appear as hollow notions. The new and ongoing global people movement may however provide little choice to reluctant nations such as Italy which have failed to embrace any of the forms of ethnic integration. While episodic demagogic and populist sentiments persist in this country and give little encouragement to pursue a "welcome agenda" for immigrants, this may no longer be a question of "if" but "when". Like other aspects of Italy's migration approach it may well be yet again "catch up" mode.

⁷² J. Chaloff, 'Immigrant women in Italy', *Paper for the OECD and European Commission Seminar: Migrant Women and the Labour Market: Diversity and Challenges*, Brussels, 2005, pp. 26-27.