

CHANGING HORIZONS in GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION

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Intercultural education in Italian Geography

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Introduction

This paper wishes to highlight the contribution of Italian geographers to the analysis of migration flows.

Their work does not only trace the entity and diffusion of the migration phenomenon, but also tries to comprehend the new social scenario thereby created: groups of different ethnic origin characterised by problems of inter-relations and integration.

The contribution of geography appears to be important since provides instruments of education to the new intercultural scenario.

Italy has been for several decades in the past a country of emigrants.

Emigration flows took mainly place :

- Between the end of the 19th century and beginning of 20th
- After the 2nd World war

As a consequence of this phenomenon, the interest of Italian geographers focused on emigration for a long time.



Geographers studies on emigration were mainly driven by the interest on the following topics:

- Emigrants impact on population's geography both on departure and arrival countries.
- Characteristics of the national communities that were formed in distant countries and the way they faced different natural and political environments, traditions and languages, laws and lifestyles

The first geographical congress on migration was held in 1961. In that occasion it was highlighted the contribution of geographers to migration with emphasis on Italian emigration abroad.



The beginning of the seventies is characterized by an important change to the direction of the migration flow:

Italy becomes an immigration country

In 1975, (during a National Congress), geographers outlined the characteristics of the new immigration flow: people in search of work and life opportunities either on temporary or permanent basis.



During the 1980s, the development of *geography of gender* brought to an increased sensitivity towards the female contribution to immigration.



Starting from the 1990s, the Italian scientific research of cultural issues and migration became increasingly richer, coincidentally with the increased weight that foreign immigration was assuming in Italy. Symposia, meetings and study seminars became occasions for comparison and discussion on the initial results of research.

Important meetings of geographic studies, entirely dedicated to the theme of recent immigration, were held starting from the second half of 90s.

1996:

“Immigration and multiculturalism in Italy today. Territory, problems and didactics”

shows as the analysis of the issues related to a growing presence of immigrants brings the hosting society to face political, economical, educational and integrational problems between individuals of different culture.

1998

“Multiculture: conflict and living side by side in the multiethnic society”

highlights the problems related to multiculturalism and identity, immigration and emargination, racism and xenophobia

On the threshold of the new millenium
almost all geographic researches on
immigration are linked to the themes of
muticulturalism and integration



Intercultura

Geografia

Formazione

2003

“Interculture, Geography, Training”

reaffirms the centrality of geography in the process of intercultural integration and the connecting role that the discipline can play with respect to other scholars equally interested in the problem of immigration.

New themes are faced, such as:

- training,
- geographic education for sustainable space sharing,
- stereotypes and prejudices towards non-Europeans,
- The difficult integration of Rom people,
- Immigration and drug addiction,
- interculture and geography in teacher training schools.



Geography offers a great chance to promote intercultural education provided that diversity is considered as a value and stereotypes and nationalistic or eurocentric views are avoided.

This approach requires a modernisation of instruments and teaching methods which relates to school and university educational levels.

The intercultural aspects of geography are connected to the epistemology of the discipline, i.e.:

- The capacity of interpreting different environmental conditions, social, economical and political aspects of the planet
- The ability to analyze and understand the dynamic relation between man and environment

Geography plays an important role in creating an intercultural sensibility, whereby people are well predisposed to meet, learn, recognise their own and others' cultural diversity and consider them as resource

Italian geographers should find important opportunities in the organisation of new courses at master level in order to promote an intercultural education not only for teachers, but also for personnel working in institutional structures or, economical and cultural associations