

Preparatory courses addressed to «special» teachers for training Italian migrants in the early twentieth century

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ABSTRACT: After the initial disregard that the phenomenon of migration received from both the public opinion and the Government, in 1901 was established the General Committee for Migration [Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione], which developed a number of interventions aimed at protecting and supporting migrants before their departure, during their journey and upon arrival to each final destination. This contribution will analyze some little-known pages of the migration policy enacted by the Government in Italy in the early twentieth century to support migrants, both via compulsory course addressed to those who were about to expatriate, and via preparatory courses addressed to teachers who were entrusted with the «social support» of migrants.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: Migration policies; Migrants' training; Teaching profession; Teaching culture; Italy; XXth Century.

Introduction

Educating migrants! Here's a noble and hard duty that the Nation wants to entrust to teachers and that, in this particular moment in time, becomes extremely important¹

The importance of training migrants in popular schools in Italy in early twentieth century was closely connected to the revival of the idea of national conscience, which was «dormant» at that time, and that had to be, instead,

¹ A. Saraz, *L'emigrazione e la scuola*, Pesaro, Premiata Officina d'Arti Grafiche del Cav. Gualtiero Federici, 1914, pp. 8-9.

vividly impressed in our young generations. The Law of 31 January 1901 no. 23 provided for new protection entities²: an idea of migration based on police control and charity actions had to be overcome in favor of fresh perspectives on migrants and the development of new policies where the State³, in line with the direction that school was generally taking in the Giolittian age, would take on the responsibility to support, protect and inform those who were about to expatriate.

In 1901 was established the General Committee for Migration [Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione]⁴, a special office for the protection of migrants under which were finally grouped all those services that until then were spread among different Ministries (of the Navy, of Internal and of Foreign Affairs)⁵; however, the difficult relationships between the officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and those of the Committee (as described by Ostuni and Orsini) were resulting in «conflicts of competence» (Cabrini) that would end up with the Committee's suppression in 1927, when the Law 1.6.1927 gave birth to the Directorate General of Italian residents abroad. Nevertheless, the General Committee for Migration left the tangible mark of a serious commitment in managing migration as an «emergency» of the time, both at theoretical and practical level⁶. The Committee was, in fact, relevant for the legislation on this particular

² L. Bodio, *Dell'emigrazione italiana e della legge 31 gennaio 1901 per la tutela degli emigranti*, Rome, Direzione della Nuova Antologia, 1902.

³ The new law of 1901 replaced that of 1881, which proved inadequate as it only established police regulations; this law, instead, envisioned a «Special Office on migration as a mainly technical body which must not be involved into political and parliamentary competitions and, at the same time, could unify all services related to migration which were spread out among various Ministers»: cf. *Il Commissariato Generale della Emigrazione. Origini, funzioni, attività*, Rome, Grafia, 1924, p. 9.

⁴ Very few studies have been so far dedicated to the Committee; most of them come from pure historians, as they have interested the historical-educational historiography: cf. M.R. Ostuni, *Momenti della "contrastata vita" del Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione (1901-1927)*, in B. Bezza (ed.), *Gli italiani fuori d'Italia. Gli emigrati italiani nei movimenti operai dei paesi d'adozione (1880-1940)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1983, pp. 101-118; F. Grassi Orsini, *Per una storia del Commissariato dell'Emigrazione*, «Le carte e la storia. Bollettino semestrale della Società per gli studi di Storia delle istituzioni», vol. III, n. 1, 1997, pp. 112-138.

⁵ On the «special action of the State» in response to the social phenomenon of migration in early twentieth century, in such a way that «juridical-social provisions were required to regulate and manage it effectively», and on the parliamentary debate that accompanied the Law of 1901 which established the Committee as the «supreme moderator of migration in Italy», see *Il Commissariato Generale della Emigrazione. Origini, funzioni, attività*, cit., pp. 5-13.

⁶ The Committee was composed by: a Central Office that set out the guidelines on migration and watched over their application, in accordance with rules and regulations in force; the Superior Council on migration, an advisory body composed of 30 members; a number of executive offices at Home and abroad. The functions carried out by the Committee were referred to Service I of General Affairs, Service II of Internal Affairs and Transportation of migrants, to Service III concerning migrants' employment abroad. The institutional activities of the Central Office included the monthly publication and diffusion of the Migration Bulletin (*Bollettino della emigrazione*), which contained studies and researches, overviews on the regulations in force

subject⁷, which was perceived at the time as «the most significant feature of our life as a nation», in the effects and consequences that its «constant and often overwhelming progress» was causing in the Country. The former law provisions (from the circulars to the legislative proposals that appeared from 1883 to 1888) started from the same basic principle, which was «to support migrants before their departures and defend them from speculations», by selecting recruiters wisely, by supervising the recruitment processes, and providing for safe ships; however, these provisions were limited to the «police» control and were not adequate to respond to other needs that the situation required and that were mainly of political, economical and juridical nature.

The Law of 1901 was the first comprehensive law on migration, thanks to its specifically social and economic character, and in its putting the migration issue on the same level as other international issues. It provided for a form of intervention and protection by the State before the migrants' departure, during their journey and upon arrival to each final destination. In 1902 the first Commissioner General Luigi Bodio said

the new Italian law intends to protect migrants in every stage of their journey, from the very moment they leave home, while they stand at the ports of departure, on board of the transoceanic ships and, finally, in the Country of destination⁸.

By recognizing the freedom of movement, the provision wanted to ensure in the first place the safeguard of the individual, that was reflected on the interests of the homeland as a whole⁹.

abroad, various info on foreign markets and other official acts; also, the Office was in charge of the free distribution of guides, manuals and newsheets with useful info for migrants on foreign countries. The functions of «national utility» carried out by the Committee for the protection and assistance to migrants were multifold, and they covered the migrants' protection at home and abroad. On the organization and functions of the Committee see the introductory note by Fabio Grassi Orsini, in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Directorate on migration and social affairs, historical-diplomatic Archives, *Il fondo archivistico Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione (1901-1927)*. Inventory by Piero Santoni, Rome, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1991, pp. 9-75 (specie da p. 23). See also E. Primiceri, *Il Consiglio Superiore dell'Emigrazione dalla prima guerra mondiale all'avvento del fascismo. Problemi e prospettive di ricerca*, «Historical Bulletin of Basilicata», vol. 24, 2008, pp. 257-272.

⁷ Cf. General Committee on Migration, *L'emigrazione italiana dal 1910 al 1923. Relazione presentata a S.E. il Ministro degli Affari Esteri dal Commissariato Generale sull'emigrazione*, vol. 1, Rome, Edizioni del Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, 1926.

⁸ Bodio, *Dell'emigrazione italiana e della legge 31 gennaio 1901 per la tutela degli emigranti*, cit., p. 11. Senator Luigi Bodio was the first Commissioner General in charge from 1901 to 1904; he was followed by: Admiral Leone Reynaudi from 1905 to 1908; Parliamentarian Luigi Rossi from 1908 to 1911; State Counsellor Pasquale Di Fratta from 1911 to 1912; Senator Giovanni Gallina from 1912 to 1918; Senator Mayor des Planches Baron Edmondo from 1918 to 1919; Prof. Giuseppe De Michelis from 1919 to 1927. For info on the bureaucracy of the Committee see F. Grispo (ed.), *La struttura e il funzionamento degli organi preposti all'emigrazione: 1901-1919*, Rome, Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1986.

⁹ A. Micci, *L'emigrazione. Testo destinato ai maestri, agli allievi maestri, ai sacerdoti e a tutti*

A crucial role at this respect was played by the new ruling body of the General Committee of Migration¹⁰ which, in the framework of the migration policies of the host countries, as well, performed its action on three different levels of «migrants' recognition»¹¹: the basic education and cultural, professional and general training for migrants in their home country; the professional training and the initiatives aimed at favoring the migrants' employment abroad; the specialization courses addressed to the migrants' instructors.

1. Literacy, migration and teachers: State policies in the early twentieth century

The State implemented a number of major initiatives during the first two decades of twentieth century to promote migrants' training. Other than providing «external» protection to migrants by means of safeguard and defense organisms, it also facilitated a form of «self-protection» that could only be achieved by offering cultural and professional training to the expatriates¹².

It is necessary that migrants

are fully aware that their decision to leave their home country is a conscious and well-thought one [...]. Furthermore, they need to be well-informed on what they are about to do; they need to know what are the aids and supports they can receive at Home, during the journey and abroad, in order to overcome any obstacle and fulfill all the required paperwork¹³.

The intervention plan aimed in the first place at opening new schools especially in the towns of Southern Italy with the biggest number of migrants. Four hundred and fifty new schools were opened in 1904, in addition to the 3000 night schools and Sunday schools for adults established by the Orlando Law in the same year; to this purpose, the Committee contributed L. 50.000

coloro che si occupano dell'istruzione degli emigranti, Rome-Milan, Mondadori, 1925, p. 91.

¹⁰ After establishing the body of services to migration within the Committee, the new Law provided to subsidize such services by means of the «Fund for migration» which regulated the income coming from migrants and carriers: «The Fund for migration represented the device through which the social protection of migrants, taken on by the State through the Committee, could benefit of an insurance-based criterion from the financial point of view». Cf. *Il Commissariato Generale della Emigrazione. Origini, funzioni, attività*, cit., p. 12.

¹¹ «The Commissioner General of migration had to provide for the valorization of migrants by means of education and professional training, as a factor of efficiency in the program of migration policies»: cf. *La preparazione culturale e professionale dell'emigrante in Patria*, Rome, 1924, p. 6.

¹² Cf. P. Di Fratta, *La tutela dell'emigrante. Conferenza detta l'11 febbraio 1912 per l'inaugurazione del Corso magistrale romano dell'emigrazione*, Rome, Tipografia dell'Unione Editrice, 1912.

¹³ *Il Commissariato Generale della Emigrazione. Origini, funzioni, attività*, cit., p. 37.

for the payment of teachers appointed by the Ministry of Public Education for training adults in towns significantly affected by migratory flows¹⁴.

The commitment in providing support even by means of information tools led to the publication of *brochures*, *guides* and *handbooks* which became widely spread¹⁵. They illustrated geographical and economic facts of the host countries and, at the same time, provided useful information on issues such as expatriation documents, means of transportation, ticket prices and on the various shipping Companies and their officers; their aim was to warn migrants against any sort of scam or speculation they could face and to inform them on what to do before leaving Home. These guides were pocket-sized, of poor typographical quality, printed in large letters to facilitate the reader, and were a precious contribution to the diffusion of practical info and advice. Several samples of this «guide-books» are available today; they were printed especially by the Committee but also by other secular or religious institutions. They served as instruction manuals and, at the same time, as guides aimed at providing that level of culture that the modern society required to fulfill a «condition of self-defense and self-preservation». This helped to overcome the social constraints linked to a condition of illiteracy (especially harmful since the Burnet Bill Law of 1917 had denied access to illiterate migrants into the United States¹⁶), and, at the same time, had proved useful for the professional life and for the creation of a social and class awareness.

Useful reference at this regard is the catalogue of the 2003 exhibition of the collections kept at the Public Library of Lucca¹⁷. Also valuable is the brochure edited by the very Committee that lists all the relevant publications till the year 1910¹⁸: statistical yearbooks, reports by diplomatic and consular officers, discussions, international agreements, behavioral guidelines for migrants, health-keeping advice, laws and provisions on citizenship, rules for legal protection, principle of international legislation in social and labor matters in the various host Countries.

¹⁴ S. Gallo, *Educare chi se ne va: i corsi statali di alfabetizzazione e formazione professionale per gli emigranti in Italia (1920-1926)*, «Rivista di Storia dell'Educazione», vol. 3, n. 1, 2016, pp. 177-192.

¹⁵ On this topic see the contributions by C. Lupi, *Qualche consiglio per chi parte. Le guide per gli emigranti (1855-1927)*, «Movimento operaio e socialista», nn. 1-2, 1981; Ead., *Partano pure ma senza imprecare: le guide per gli emigranti fra ideologia e consigli pratici (1855-1927)*, in E. Franzina (ed.), *Un altro Veneto. Saggi e studi di storia dell'emigrazione nei secoli XIX e XX*, Abano Terme, Francisci, 1983, pp. 168-174.

¹⁶ Q.C., *L'ostracismo agli analfabeti negli Stati Uniti*, «Rivista coloniale», vol. I, n. 4, Rome, 16-28 February 1913, pp. 113-124.

¹⁷ I. Manfredini (ed.), *“In viaggio all'estero”: le guide dell'emigrante del primo Novecento nelle collezioni della Biblioteca Statale di Lucca*, Lucca, Catalogo della Mostra, Biblioteca Statale di Lucca, Just in time, s.l. s.d., [2003?].

¹⁸ Cf. *Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, Elenco delle pubblicazioni del Commissariato dell'Emigrazione fino a tutto l'anno 1910*, Rome, Cooperativa tipografica Manuzio, 1911.

Along with this production of practical nature reporting the Committee's activity, from 1921 other documents were being published thanks to the contribution of anti-illiteracy entities¹⁹ that promoted several initiatives pro migrants: instructions manuals for migrants of significant editorial value, as well as some educational textbooks like the Primer [Sillabario]²⁰ specifically designed to educate migrants²¹. In Northern Italy was particularly significant the intervention of the Humanitarian Society of Milan [Società Umanitaria di Milano]²², which had among its members Angelo Cabrini²³, especially with respect to the migratory flows of the late nineteenth century. In Southern Italy the most relevant associations were ANIMI²⁴, born after the painful event of Messina earthquake in 1908, and elected in 1921 as anti-illiteracy entity in the regions Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia and Sardegna, and the Migration and Labour Consortium [Consorzio Emigrazione e Lavoro], born in 1916 to support the regions Apulia and Abruzzo-Molise²⁵.

¹⁹ Minister Baccelli issued the R.D.L. of 2 September 1919 n. 1723 which established the National Body for the education of illiterate adults, aimed at unifying in one independent entity all initiatives for fighting illiteracy. The R.D. of 28 August 1921, n. 240 gave rise to the *Opera* against illiteracy.

²⁰ Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, *Sillabario per gli alunni delle scuole per emigranti organizzate dal Commissariato generale dell'emigrazione*, Rome, Scuole per i contadini dell'Agro Romano e delle Paludi pontine, [19?].

²¹ «A new primer (composed according to the phonic method), made of 46 single sheets, collected under one cover, [...] proved to be very useful, by giving the learner the possibility to read again, review, and copy the words or sentences illustrated during classes at any time they wanted, or during breaks from work»: cf. *La preparazione culturale e professionale dell'emigrante in Patria*, cit., p. 15.

²² Established in 1893 by Prospero Moisè Loria, the Humanitarian Society worked from the very beginning for the educational and socio-cultural development of the working class and migrants. Among its most relevant projects, the organization promoted social housing and annexed educational structures, workhouses and employment offices, libraries and associations for the support of farmers. Thanks to the collaboration of politicians and intellectuals, such as Turati, Caldara, Ravizza and Montessori, the Society had a significant role in the political, social and educational life of Italy in the early nineteenth century. Cf. M. della Campa (ed.), *Il modello Umanitaria: storia, immagini, prospettive*, Milan, Raccolto, 2003.

²³ Angiolo Cabrini (Milan 1869-Rome 1937), a socialist activist, parliamentarian from 1900 to 1919 dealt with issues of social legislation and migration, and was highly committed to the issue of migrants' training.

²⁴ Cf. M. D'Alessio, *L'ANIMI "per la scuola rurale". Un settennio di attività contro l'analfabetismo in Basilicata (1921-1928)*, in A. Barausse, M. D'Alessio (edd.), *Processi di scolarizzazione e paesaggio rurale in Italia tra Otto e Novecento. Itinerari ed esperienze tra oblio, rappresentazione, propaganda e realtà*, Lecce, Pensa MultiMedia, 2018, pp. 155-190.

²⁵ The National Consortium for migration and labour, led by the Senator of the Popular Party Luigi Montresor, which was engaged in the moral and civil assistance to migrants, was established in December 1916 and became charitable trust after the R.D. of 26 October 1919, n. 2146. On account of the work done in favour of education and training (by means of the diffusion of books and culture, the establishment of libraries for teachers, the support to kindergartens, the assistance to teachers), the Consortium was entrusted with the management and foundation of day schools, evening schools and Sunday schools in the regions of Campania, Molise and Puglia. Cf. Consorzio Nazionale di Emigrazione e Lavoro, *Tredici anni di attività scolastica (Per delega del Ministero*

2. *Migrants' training and the teachers' work*

Providing some training to those who were about to leave Italy in early twentieth century was strongly perceived as a need by the interpreters of the phenomenon of migration.

The subject focused on two different aspects: training migrants, also by means of professional schools (courses in both agricultural and manual jobs were offered in training centers such as the «Cement workers school» in Veneto); training migrant's teachers.

This latter aspect refers to the training of a special team of teachers, who were called to fulfill a «task of high social protection», as Bernardo Attolico recalled in his inaugural speech to the Course of Teachers' Conference in 1912 in Bari:

The teachers' role is going to be more and more significant in the support to migrants; teachers are the very core of popular schools, and will prove themselves capable in choosing the right set of knowledge that migrants need to possess to cope with this new challenge represented by labour migration²⁶.

Teachers soon appeared to be the principal mediators between State and migrants, despite all the local Committees, about 4.000, established by the Law of 1901 for the assistance to migrants and that were doomed to rapidly extinguish for lack of financial support:

by perfecting their knowledge in this area by means of these courses, teachers will be able to describe to migrants their future host countries and warn them about all the issues related to migrations; they will remove illusions and correct mistakes, and take on themselves the migrant's complaints about any scam or fraud suffered either at Home or abroad²⁷.

The debate around the teachers' work started in Milan in 1906 at the first Congress on Popular Education and went on during the Congresses on the secular assistance to migrants and the Congress of Friulian migrants in 1911. The topic of migrants' education, so dear to Cabrini, was also presented at the first Congress of Italians abroad in 1908, but it was not debated. Nonetheless, alongside with this signals of public concern around the teacher's role in the cultural and intellectual training of migrants, especially in rural areas, new initiatives were taken to solve the issue. In particular, on the private initiative of Mrs. Angelica Devita Tommasi, in 1909 started in Rome the first teachers'

della Educazione Nazionale), Rome, Tip. Consorzio Nazionale, 1934 and for an analysis of the Consortium's work in Molise, see A. Barausse, *Le scuole rurali in Molise tra idealismo e fascismo (1922-1938)*, in Barausse, D'Alessio (edd.), *Processi di scolarizzazione e paesaggio rurale in Italia tra Otto e Novecento*, cit., pp. 93-137.

²⁶ Attolico, *L'Emigrazione e i maestri. Prolusione al Corso di Conferenze magistrali sull'Emigrazione, detta in Bari addì 8 settembre 1912*, cit., p. 22.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

course for migrants²⁸ with the purpose of disseminating a «specific culture with regard to migration among all Italian teachers, especially in less central provinces which, nonetheless, were giving the biggest contribution in terms of number of migrants». This initiative was supported by the Commissioner for Migration Vincenzo Giuffrida²⁹, then by Cabrini and Di Fratta, who was at the time Commissioner General³⁰, in the same offices³¹.

After a while, Cabrini himself became the promoter of local courses for migration; he was supported in this endeavor by both the Directorate General for Primary Education and the Committee for Migration. Attolico retraces the life of the course that took place in Rome, and of its local «competitors», «intensive» 8-day courses that took place in some designated locations, and that were paid with a daily allowance to the respective teachers. In 1913 Attolico points out that, in spite of the good intentions of their promoters, and of his own support, these intensive courses have

killed the central and more systematic course established in Rome in 1909, longer but less paid, which therefore lost value even to the effects of competitions for teachers³².

Some of these local courses on migration were organized for rural teachers in the first part of twentieth century, especially in Southern regions with a bigger number of migrants.

Noteworthy were the Conferences organized in Abruzzo on the initiative of the Humanitarian Society, thanks to the support of very active local teachers. The report written by the teacher Postiglione after the third Teachers' Congress in Chieti in September 1909 informs us about the work of local teachers against illiteracy. These teachers had expressed right away the need to organize courses aimed at making migrants aware of the political, social and economic bodies of the host countries, and, also, at teaching values such as solidarity, decency and respect of the rules in force in those countries. They were therefore requiring a bigger involvement of the Government in the protection and support to migrant workers. Likewise, it was stated that teachers, «inspired by their educational and social mission, had to provide migrants with all the necessary civil assistance»³³.

²⁸ Cf. Di Fratta, *La tutela dell'emigrante. Conferenza detta l'11 febbraio 1912 per l'inaugurazione del Corso magistrale romano dell'emigrazione*, cit.

²⁹ Vincenzo Giuffrida (1878-1940) was nominated Commissioner for migration in 1910.

³⁰ Pasquale Di Fratta, State Counsellor, appointed Commissioner General from 1911 and 1912, later became Member of the Council for Migration, in charge from 1911 to 1917.

³¹ Cf. B. Attolico, *Dei Corsi magistrali per l'Emigrazione*, Rome, Tipografia dell'Unione Editrice, 1913, pp. 1-2.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Postiglione affirms the crucial role represented by education, and states that the teachers' work is fundamental for transferring useful notions to migrants, and especially «proletarian migrants», by means of preparatory training and support in and out of the Country. Postiglione brings as evidences the beneficial work of training and support provided by the Humanitarian Society of Milan that, ever since the year 1904, had granted financial support to schools and Secretariats, as well as opening libraries and publishing guides and handbooks to prepare migrants in Northern Italy. The main objective of this activity is to make migrants «aware of places and their respective rules, and of the principles of solidarity with local workers».

In the wake of the actions promoted by the Humanitarian Society, that in the meantime had started to pay attention to Southern regions, as well, in 1909 was enacted the Statute of the Secretariat for migration in l'Aquila, containing guidelines for teachers involved in the support to proletariat. The action of the Secretariat started from organizing a number of conferences on hygiene, society and legislation held by important speakers; later on, it was addressed to raising funds from local bodies and drafting monthly information bulletins. The specific work of teachers in schools and secretariats resulted in a dense program for migrants, with over 150 lessons and more than 1000 auditors, public conferences, advocacy works, support in paperwork processing. Teachers, therefore, add to their «mission as masses redeemers» this «new role of practical usefulness for the economic good of the outcasts»³⁴. In response to this educational impulse in favor of migrants, Postiglione expressed the importance to establish evening or Sunday courses for training migrant workers on a yearly basis, which had to be mandatory for the very issue of passports and other fundamental documents.

A set of interventions was planned to eradicate illiteracy, namely: a greater attention to primary schools, pay raises for the teachers involved in this new task, prompting State interventions in favour of popular education, which is in fact considered «the keystone of social structure».

However, if we exclude the conferences of l'Aquila on the fight to illiteracy, which became a much more relevant topic in relation to migration and the need of teaching workers how to manage in foreign countries, very few were the initiatives carried out in other southern regions. For this reason, Cabrini promoted a set of crash courses on migration in order to create opportunities for the «special» teachers of migrants even in the South.

³⁴ A. Postiglione, *Le scuole per gli emigranti. Relazione fatta al 3° Congresso Magistrale Abruzzese tenuto in Chieti il 5 settembre del 1909*, Sulmona, Premiata Tip. Angeletti, 1909, p. 19.

3. *Courses for the «special» teachers of migrants*

We are able to know in details the organizational modalities of these special courses thanks to the retrieval of a number of booklets that were published to report the experiences carried out in some towns of Southern Italy, like Ariano in Puglia³⁵. It is read in the preambles of the Ministerial Order of 1913 that: having regard to the Laws of 15 July 1906, no. 383 and 30 June 1910, no. 464; taking into account the views of the central Committee established by the Article 73 of the said Law 15 July 1906; having ascertained «whether it is advisable to equip primary school teachers with the essential knowledge for dealing with migrant's education effectively»; it is set forth in Article 1:

This September, on the dates that will be hereinafter specified, will be held courses on migration addressed to teachers in the following sites: Frosinone, Fabriano, Avezzano, Ariano di Puglia, Aversa, Matera, Taranto, Monteleone calabro, Cagliari and Caltagirone.

The course lasted 8 days and consisted of «speaking classes, held by Ministerial appointees, writing exercises and other tests supervised by the said appointees». Each course was chaired by a Royal School Inspector appointed by the Ministry. Two teachers chosen by the Inspector acted as secretaries and were duly remunerated. The course program was illustrated in details.

During the opening speech of the Conference on migration, Inspector Raffio addressed all those teachers who «were giving proof of their dedication [...] to popular education and School in general, to which the Nation owed a big part of its economic, cultural and moral greatness». The Inspector recalled the complex issue of popular education, which had been dealt with by the Laws of 1903, 1904, 1906, and 1911; at this respect, he underlined the relevance of the «normal school reform» topic and linked it to the issue of improving teachers' training, «which was crucial to make school more effective». The Inspector therefore mentioned the Ministry of Public Education and the Central Committee for Southern Italy which had been organising courses on hygiene and migration to the purpose of enriching the teacher's culture. In fact, in concurrence with the Ariano Conferences, a number of courses in pedagogy and hygiene were taking place in 25 towns of Central and Southern Italy, and special courses on migration were taught in other ten sites. The editor of the journal «La vita italiana all'estero» [Italian Life Abroad], Dr. Preziosi, in his capacity as chairman of the Ariano Conference, said:

Consider that over 6 million of Italians are scattered worldwide and that every year about 300.000 of our fellow citizens migrate across Europe and the Mediterranean basin and other 500.000 migrate overseas. Nowhere's too far for an Italian workman, though. Minister

³⁵ *Corso magistrale sull'emigrazione in Ariano di Puglia (20-27 September 1913)*, Ariano di Puglia, Prem. Tip. Raffaele Mariano and sons, 1913.

Credaro, in celebrating our migrants during the last «Dante Alighieri» Congress, pointed out that «in the Argentinian *estancias*, in the Brazilian *fazendas*, in the mines of Pennsylvania and Colorado there is a whole network of Italian workforce. From Australia to Labrador, from Persia to Brazil, our migrants have worked hard to transform the wilderness into lands thriving with products, which today we can find in markets worldwide. Italians have contributed in improving transports, industry, trades. The New York subway, the Sempione tunnel, and the Loeschberg tunnel, are due to the Italian labour. [...] We need to turn our constant and brotherly thought to these human energies, so that they may represent abroad an intellectual and moral force, other than just physical.

He therefore celebrates all the teachers in the room:

To you, teachers, this noble and difficult duty is assigned; the Ministry of Public Education and the Central Committee for Southern Italy – worthily represented by Commissioner Camillo Corradini – have introduced these courses on migration to the purpose of extending your knowledge even to this complex field of human activity. At work, then, with courage, because your work is made of faith and sacrifices, for the sake of thousand Italian workers!³⁶

Preziosi covers all the topics related to migration, defined as the «most complex phenomenon that shakes the third Italy», and clarifies that he won't deal with the issue by wondering whether this is good or bad, because this is what literature did so far, regarding the issue as a cause, and not an effect. Instead, he speaks about the laws providing for the migrants' protection, and links this topic to that of training migrants at Home, in order to enable them to use those laws to protect themselves against abuse and oppression. The problem of migrants' ignorance is in fact relevant; it is not likely to be solved in the short term, but the plague of illiteracy can be defeated by working on the youngest generations. The courses have been organized to the very purpose of containing the consequences of this situation; the courses

should train teachers on how to prepare migrants to expatriate, by providing them with the ground literacy, and informing them on the economic and social conditions of the countries they are headed to, as well as on the regulation in force; teachers must as well be able to caution them against various systems of exploitation and teach them how to perform their rights and duties³⁷.

Preziosi underlines that the final aim of those Conferences is to «prepare teachers to provide cooperation by setting up secretariats³⁸ and corresponding

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁸ N. Mazzoni, *Che cosa è il segretariato dell'emigrazione e come funziona*, (Società umanitaria, Ufficio dell'emigrazione), Milan, Tip. Degli Operai, 1908. For further reference see also the Secretariat for Migration of Belluno, *Commissione per le scuole degli emigranti. Relazione sulle scuole invernali per gli emigranti istituite nell'inverno 1908-1909*, Belluno, Tipografia commerciale, 1909.

offices³⁹ to replace the unsuccessful action of district or town committees». He argues:

It is a new field of human solidarity that teachers shall embrace, since they have so far demonstrated a spirit of sacrifice and fondness for the humble.

Preziosi highlights the relapse that migration has on education, by triggering a need for literacy promoted from abroad:

In every letter they send to their wives, migrants urge them to send children to school, and their pleas have proven to be more effective than every law on compulsory education. Migrants demonstrate to have understood the practical value of education in the fight for life.

In conclusion:

It is undeniable that illiteracy is decreasing in the South, and this is due to migration much more than to politics⁴⁰.

Other scholars express the same ideas on migration as «the best friend of literacy». In fact:

The migrant embodied the usefulness of primary education, in a more effective way than the same old moral exhortations or the penalties imposed to the violators of school duties for themselves and their children⁴¹.

4. *The courses contents*

The Ministerial Orders reveal the contents of the local special courses, thanks to the reports that were printed before the classes and that have been retraced for many towns of Central and Southern Italy⁴².

³⁹ Id., *Vademecum pei corrispondenti*, (Società umanitaria, Ufficio dell'emigrazione), Milan, Tip. Degli Operai, 1908.

⁴⁰ *Corso magistrale sull'emigrazione in Ariano di Puglia (20-27 settembre 1913)*, cit., pp. 36-37.

⁴¹ Cf. F. Coletti, *Dell'emigrazione italiana*, Milan, U. Hoepli, 1912, p. 257.

⁴² Attolico, *L'Emigrazione e i maestri. Prolusione al Corso di Conferenze magistrali sull'Emigrazione, detta in Bari addì 8 settembre 1912*, cit.; *Corso magistrale di conferenze sulla emigrazione transoceanica tenuto dal prof. Francesco Carlucci in Barletta, maggio-giugno 1912*, Bari, Società tip. Editrice barese, 1912; *Corso magistrale sull'emigrazione in Benevento (17-24 settembre 1912)*, Benevento, Tip. Nazzareno Borrelli, 1913; *Corso magistrale sull'emigrazione in Ariano di Puglia (20-27 settembre 1913)*, cit.; C. Petrocchi, *Riassunto delle conferenze sull'emigrazione tenute in Salerno dall'8 al 15 settembre 1912*, Salerno, Tip. Fratelli Jovane, 1912.

Other than being informed on the courses' objectives and modalities, it is important to know their contents in details⁴³. From the documents found we learned that these courses were organized in two levels: the first covered general notions on labour migration. The following topics were part of this module: Italian migration and its progress; international and internal migration; overseas and continental migration; the balance of Italian migration and related figures and opinions. A lot of room is given to the impact of migration on national economy, in demography, in social and family life, in military defense.

The second level concerns more specifically «what needs to be taught to migrants» which mirrors the specific «culture» that migrants' teachers had to possess. The main topics are the following: overview of the necessary paperwork before departure (passport, assistance, handbooks for migrants, information on travel and medical check-up); information on the sea transportation; arrival to destination (Italian authorities, assistance bodies⁴⁴, Italian schools); sending money home; information on the preferred destinations; dangers and traffics; economics fundamentals. A particular attention is given to the issue of social morals. Reference is made to the defense of national dignity, to the importance of maintaining a sense of belonging and a patriotic spirit as a «cement» for all migrants. It is also underlined the importance of solidarity with the other workers coming from the same country. The program also provides for written and oral tests on the foreign country's language, job training and worker's life.

It is stated that teachers who attend such courses are entitled to a daily allowance of 8 *lire* to cover for travel, room and board. Also, it is specified that at the end of the course an attendance certificate is issued and that this can be valued as an «advantage in the selection of teachers for migrants' schools».

From the introductory speech to the lectures that took place in Benevento in September 1912⁴⁵, we learn that, in accordance to the ministerial order, the courses sites of Spoleto, Campobasso, Chieti, Teramo, Benevento, Salerno, Bari, Cosenza and Caltanissetta shall host a maximum number of 100 attendants which does not include female teachers; such a provision was subject of discussion and debate. Under the direction of the Inspector Guglielmo Ciarla, the speaker's role was taken by Professor Valar, a representative of the Humanitarian Society of Milan of German heritage.

The major of Benevento insists on the importance of giving training to these «voluntary exiles», because «the more educated are our fellow countrymen abroad, the more they stand out from the citizens of other countries»; he therefore stresses the need to instill in migrants the value of national dignity and attachment to the distant birthplace, with its traditions and religions. For

⁴³ Particularly relevant is the possibility to trace back the names of all the teachers who came to attend the courses from the various southern districts.

⁴⁴ L. Bodio, *Sulla emigrazione italiana e sul patronato degli emigranti* (Relazione al Primo Congresso Geografico Italiano, Genova 1892), Genova, Tip. del R. Istituto sordo-muti, 1894.

⁴⁵ *Corso magistrale sull'emigrazione in Benevento (17-24 settembre 1912)*, cit.

this reason, he underlines the crucial task that teachers have to fulfill by means of these courses on migration:

If the State has political duties, teachers have moral duties. And these lectures on migration are more important for the fate of our Country than any other course on hygiene, pedagogy, or school illnesses [...]⁴⁶.

He finally expresses the conviction that it is «a highly patriotic and moral duty to liberate our fellow countrymen from ignorance so to make them fit to the fight for life»⁴⁷.

The same ideal is shared by Attolico who expresses the urge to «build in migrants a conscience of dignity, honesty and bravery at the same time» by means of these courses. These reflections are particularly relevant as they help to understand what is the cultural and moral role entrusted to teachers, regarded as «the ministers of one of the highest forms of social protection». Teachers are addressed to as the «apostles» of culture for migrants, according to a vision where school comes into direct contact with people and responds to the social needs and conditions of that time.

5. *The criticism to local course*

Some examples of secondary literature (such as reflection booklets on study programs, teachers and migrants) offer interesting considerations as to the evaluation received by these courses. Although their primary function of arousing the teachers' interest, «by working as a driving force», is generally praised, a few critical aspects are taken into account as well.

Attolico himself addresses the topic by highlighting critical points and possible solutions. The course's length, limited to just eight days, is deemed too short compared to the vastness of the program, and it's thought that it should be brought to ten days minimum. Also, study materials on practical issues, such as statistical and legal documentation, as well as Committee reports on migration, should be provided to teachers. Another critical point is represented by the necessity of delivering final tests, so that teachers may receive special teaching appointments on the basis of successful outcomes rather than their mere attendance to the course.

Another sensitive issue is represented by the unjustified absence of female teachers. Moreover, it is suggested that specialized libraries should be set up and that the program should be integrated with elements of social security. It is furthermore proposed to arouse the teachers' interest in the cause by issuing

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

study grants and free travel tickets. All these elements are not only aimed at improving the quality of teacher's preparation, but also at regulating their relations with local administrations: in other words, they are enabled to reach «a higher level of independence, that makes teachers the real guardians of migrants' rights», in replacement of town Committees.

6. *Manuals and textbooks for migrants' teachers*

A useful field of investigation, in connection with the preparation of migrants' teachers, is the analysis of the textbooks in use. If recently the attention has been focused especially on the textbooks addressed to migrants, thus confirming the fecundity of the study field represented by school manuals, on the other hand, the research focus shifts on the production of manuals aimed at the preparation of migrants' teachers. We have hereby the occasion to name a few of those, starting from the one whose very title anticipates its destination: *Il maestro degli emigranti* [The migrants' teacher] by Angelo Cabrini⁴⁸. In his introduction to the manual, Credaro expresses the urge that to such teachers is given a «special» preparation, of political, cultural and didactic kind, to enable them to carry out a difficult but socially relevant task.

The *Maestro degli emigranti* is a real handbook for teachers, and especially rural teachers, as it illustrates teaching objectives, teaching methods, contents and references to relevant books, as well as references to educational bodies and complimentary books published by the Committee. Published in 1912, the book put together ideas and contributions collected by Cabrini as a parliamentarian, journalist, and man of culture, in some of his writings on curricula, schools and teachers that were presented at the Conventions of the National Teachers Union (for example, in Rome and Ancona in 1910). During these congresses it was underlined that «the issue of migrants' protection was closely connected to the education of migrants' themselves»⁴⁹. Illiteracy appeared as the major cause of weakness of migration policy. It is therefore stated that:

The real education, the one that can transform the masses, has to be taught in here, at Home, by operating on the migrants of today and tomorrow⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ A. Cabrini, *Il maestro degli emigranti (Guida per lezioni e conferenze a preparazione degli emigranti italiani)*, Imola, Coop. Tip. Edit. Paolo Galeati, 1912.

⁴⁹ Id., *La preparazione dell'emigrante italiano. Programmi, scuole, maestri. Relazione e proposte dell'on. Angiolo Cabrini*, Milan, Stabilimento "La Compositrice", 1911 (Congresso dell'Unione Magistrale Nazionale di Torino, 5, 6, 7 september 1911), p. 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

On this basis, a need of cooperation arises between the State and the teachers to cope with the general problem of fighting illiteracy with education.

In his contribution, Cabrini goes through the very first experiences of secular assistance to migrants: in particular, the secular secretariats related to the Humanitarian Society of Milan, opened schools and training courses for migrants especially in Northern Italy, with very few exceptions like the school of l'Aquila, that we have mentioned before with reference to the work *Il Maestro degli emigranti*.

In particular, other than reaffirming the importance of training the expatriates, Cabrini illustrates two formats of lectures, of 12 hours each, to be held in towns where migration is massive, and divided into overseas and continental migration. He therefore explains the contents of the training program which, on the one hand, aims at persuading migrants on the importance of knowing the laws and regulations in force at Home, and, on the other hand, proposes a series of readings on the customs and traditions of hosting countries, without losing sight of «the Italian spirit and the sense of solidarity with fellow countrymen».

The objective of these courses is to fill in the gaps of popular education and, even more, to «equip migrants with a necessary set of knowledge to help them find their way, avoid middlemen, and assist themselves in each host country».

On such basis a debate arises about the disparity between North and South in terms of assistance to migrants; the South «is a desert»: it lacks Committees, Secretariats, schools and courses. Although in 1910 the biggest number of migrants come from the South with a percentage of 46,6%⁵¹, which makes migration primarily a phenomenon of the South, all the measures provided for by the Law are lacking. It is therefore necessary to start an orderly training action for these migrants, especially those coming from rural areas, as well as requiring the State intervention for the dissemination of culture and consolidation of popular schools in their practical aspects, like providing proper training to migrants.

A task of primary importance is therefore entrusted to teachers, but they need to be well trained for this. Hence the urge:

the teacher's preparation must be our first concern⁵²,

in accordance to what the Central Committee of Southern Italy had already expressed in 1909, when it requested new schools for migrants to the Ministry

⁵¹ Statistical data on the migration phenomenon, which analyses the departures from the various Italian towns towards European and trans-oceanic countries, can be found in the very lessons of the «intensive» courses we are dealing with: see, for example, the data on territorial distribution provided by Petrocchi, *Riassunto delle conferenze sull'emigrazione tenute in Salerno dall'8 al 15 settembre 1912*, cit., especially the table at p. 13.

⁵² Cf. Cabrini, *La preparazione dell'emigrante italiano. Programmi, scuole, maestri. Relazione e proposte dell'on. Angiolo Cabrini*, cit., p. 12.

of Public education to the purpose of filling their «educational deficit». Hence the decision of the Minister Credaro to nominate a Commission for drafting the teaching programs of such schools. It is proposed that the teacher's training should be pursued through three main strands: male and female normal schools, with lectures on migration and migrant's training to be carried out during the last year of course; pedagogic school and summer/fall school for upgrading the teacher's culture; special courses on migration.

The program of the latter, based on the model of the social legislation schools in London, Berlin and Milan, it is very similar to the one that was carried out in the special Course on migration organized in Rome by Mrs. DeVito Tommasi and assigned to valuable figures such as Giuffrida and Petrocchi. From this source we therefore find out that the program covered by the ministerial orders of 1911 and 1913 is modelled on the first courses that were promoted in Rome by private initiative, as a result of Cabrini's constant concern and encouragement.

These proposals are followed in 1912 by a few State decisions that provide for the opening of some schools for migrants in about 200 provinces of the south, by appointing the same teachers that, in September 1911, attended the intensive courses on migrants' training in Umbria, Abruzzi, Lazio, Campania, Basilicata and Calabria.

The training work of the General Committee terminated in 1921 when other bodies involved in the fight against illiteracy took over.

At that time, about 800 evening courses were opened; they consisted of 100/110 lessons of 2 hours each in 580 towns of the South and the islands (with 15.184 successful students over 29.953 attendants). A «specialized team» of teachers was created in 1922 on the proposal of the Credaro Commission, which included Cabrini himself, Mr. Corradini, representing the Minister of Public Education, Vincenzo Giuffrida on behalf of the Office for Migration, the parliamentarian Mendoza, professor Osimo on behalf of the Humanitarian Organization and *Commendatore* Pironti for the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The related courses were addressed to the about 10000 senior students of normal schools, or graduate students (about 6.000).

However, the commitment to popular and migrants' education, as well as to teachers' training, would finish at the end of this favorable season of the early twentieth century, when the concern to migrants was paramount. Shortly thereafter, in 1927, the General Committee, whose work had been «so successful in the past» was converted into the General Direction of Italians Abroad, of political nature, coming out of the Minister of Foreign Affairs⁵³.

⁵³ On the final hours of the Committee see Grassi Orsini, *Introduction* to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Directorate on migration and social affairs, historical – diplomatic Archives, *Il fondo archivistico Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione (1901-1927)*, inventory by Piero Santoni, cit., especially pp. 62-63.

7. *Conclusions: historiographical themes and future investigation pathways*

As a conclusion, it seems relevant to highlight a few historiographical themes that deserve further investigation by the historians of Education.

The relation between literacy, migration and teachers represents a very promising new pathway for the historic-educational historiography, in particular as it contributes to illustrate the State policies with regard to «the need for training» and protection for migrants, especially in the early twentieth century when the «migration flow» was at its highest.

- From the analysis of sources thus far unexplored or considered of minor importance, it is possible to shed some light on the policies connected to the phenomenon of migration in Italy, especially with reference to the preparation of teachers and migrants at Home and abroad; particular attention is given to Southern Italy that put in place some attempts to «keep up» with the new social emergencies.

- Moreover, it seems appropriate to give a more detailed profile of the protagonists of politics and education who contributed to the cultural, pedagogical and political debate around the process of migration, in and out of the Country.

- The theme of a specialized culture for teachers aimed at training migrants adds further elements to the investigation on the teaching profession in the South, in particular for what concerns teachers' training and recruitment, and the need to equip them with appropriate tools; moreover, it was important to make them aware of their social duty in the situation of emergency that hit the beginning of twentieth century, when, by quoting Andreina De Clementi, migration rushed down like an avalanche and grew like a river⁵⁴.

- It is worth analyzing the theoretical strategies and the practical implementation of the services managed by the General Committee on Migration in relation to the equipment provided to expatriates, with a baggage of moral advice and useful warnings.

- Also, it would be necessary to regulate the specialized editorial production which includes guidebooks, handbooks and manuals on migration.

- Finally, it would be interesting to analyze the textbooks aimed at training the teachers of migrants, in and out of the Country.

In conclusion, we can say that the historians of school and education have at their disposal a number of investigation pathways, with regard to the relationship between the dissemination of knowledge and human mobility.

⁵⁴ A. De Clementi, *Di qua e di là dall'oceano. Emigrazione e mercati nel Meridione (1860-1930)*, Rome, Carocci, 1999.