



## Empowering Youth through Civic and Citizenship Education: The Case of Italy

Angelyn Balodimas Bartolomei<sup>1</sup>

North Park University, Chicago - Illinois, United States of America<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*Within the past decade, international organizations such as UNESCO, CoE (Council of Europe), IEA, and the EU Council have strongly advocated for citizenship and human rights education throughout the world. Aimed at promoting the core values of democracy, human rights, and equality among students, the essential theme has become an important component within national curricula across Europe. In recent times, the Ministry of Education, Universities, and Research (MIUR) has been focusing not only on citizenship instruction but themes that until now were rarely covered in class such as environment, peace, intercultural education, and anti-mafia education. Supporting the belief that education is the main channel for awakening and developing social, cultural and legal awareness, and consciousness against crime and the mafia mentality, the theme has been integrated into several educational youth-oriented activities and projects. MIUR encourages school leaders and teachers of all levels to support anti-mafia education, in the context of historical, geographical, and socio-historical instruction. It also encourages schools to establish effective partnerships and projects with local authorities, police forces, cultural and sports associations, and NGOs. The purpose of this project is to analyze and briefly summarize citizenship and anti-mafia initiatives in Italy while bringing forth new information and approaches that can empower Italian youth.*

**Keywords:** *anti-mafia education; civic and citizenship education in Italy*

### 1. Introduction

Within the past decade, international organizations such as UNESCO, CoE (Council of Europe), IEA, and the EU Council, have been a driving force in promoting citizenship education throughout the world. The term which carries a very broad meaning and is often referred to as civics, democracy education, human rights education, and education of legality, aims at spreading the core values of democracy and equality among students, while also serving as a prevention of human rights violations. The importance of citizenship education is globally recognized by most educational institutions while also being emphasized within several international agreements, documents, and studies [1].

Since 2010, the Council of Europe and European Union member countries have agreed to integrate citizenship education within their primary and secondary school curricula as either: a stand-alone subject; part of another subject; or a cross-curricular dimension of the curriculum. In addition to formal class instruction, schools are encouraged to participate in an array of ongoing citizenship and democracy projects and events that are organized and sponsored by the EU and the Europe for Citizens Programme [2]. While European and international dimensions constitute a part of the instructional content in European curricula and activities, most EU countries also emphasize a wide range of their own "national" topics such as the theme of the mafia in Italy.

The current study focuses on citizenship/anti-mafia programs and initiatives in Italy, a Member State of the European Union, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe. It examines the origins and status of civic education within the Italian educational system while briefly explaining its developing relationship to citizenship education, constitution education, and education of legality. Finally, the study investigates the anti-mafia movement and initiatives which are currently effective both within and out of the school environment.

### 2. The development of civic education in Italy

Civic education was first introduced into Italy's national curriculum in 1958, by Aldo Moro, and briefly taught within elementary and lower secondary history classes. In later years, it was treated as a cross-curricular theme across a wide range of subjects in secondary education including history, geography, social studies, and law in upper secondary schools; and history, civic education, and economics in technical and vocational schools [3]. Although it was expected to be taught in various subjects, instruction was considered unsuitable and rarely carried out [4]. Very few students actually studied the



theme because teachers, who had no in-service training in the area, were always too busy teaching other subjects [5]. Since civic education did not have its own time slot as an independent subject, it was less valued by students and teachers.

In the 90's, the need arose to focus on education to legality, particularly in regions where mafia organizations existed [4]. On October 25, 1993, after the mafia attacks of Florence, Rome, and Milan, it was declared through circular 302/93 that education to legality in Italian schools would reflect on the value of lawfulness and legality and particularly on anti-mafia measures [4]. However, the 2003 reform failed to include education to legality within its contents. In 2006, the Ministry of Education once again supported it in a ministerial directive through Law 169/2008. Civic education, now renamed, citizenship and constitution, would become a "dignified" compulsory independent subject in Italian schools with students being assessed on the constitution [6]. Due to political indifferences, none of this happened. Ministerial Circular number 86 of October, denied its status as an autonomous subject and once again, the theme would only be taught within history and geography. The disenchantment felt by many supporters, was soon reflected in Italian newspapers with headlines reiterating the popular phrase "Cambiare tutto per non cambiare niente" - "If you want things to stay as they are, things will have to change" [6].

In 2009, there was a renewed regional interest in teaching both education to legality and anti-mafia education. Several initiatives were financed in areas where the organized criminality phenomena were full blown and where the mafias had territorial control as opposed to regions where prevention was a necessity [4]. To date a number of regions, Tuscany (1994), Liguria (1995), Marche (1995), Piemonte (2007), Emilia Romagna (2011) and Lombardy (2011), have issued important laws enforcing education to legality and/or initiatives for fighting organized criminality. Today, citizenship and constitution education, under which education to legality falls, continues to be treated as a cross-curricular theme in Italy. The Ministry of Education, Universities, and Research (MIUR), encourages school leaders and teachers of all levels to support it, in the context of historical, geographical, and socio-historical instruction [7]. All schools are required to establish effective partnerships and to carry out projects with local authorities, police forces, cultural and sports associations, and NGOs [2].

### 3. Anti-Mafia educational initiatives

For decades, the European Union has provided funding for a wide range of projects that contribute to economic growth in EU member states. The European Union Regional Policy, also referred as the Cohesion Policy, has the stated aim of removing economic, social, and territorial disparities across the EU, through a wide range of projects including education and training. In Italy, four Southern regions – Campania, Sicily, Calabria, and Apulia – fall under this category (EurActive, 1999-2014). The Programma Operativo Nazionale (PON), an EU funded investment program has played a key role in supporting education and training policies across Italy, specifically within the four regions. Supporting the belief that education is the main channel for awakening and developing social, cultural, and legal awareness and consciousness against crime and the mafia mentality, several PON anti-mafia projects and programs have been achieved through partnerships between MIUR.

Within the past few decades, numerous anti-mafia organizations and associations have been established within Southern Italy. Among these is the Libera Association - an umbrella organization that aims at promoting outreach activities against the Mafia phenomena and organized crime in the twenty regions of Italy and also internationally. Libera was founded on March 25, 1995, by Don Luigi Ciotti, an Italian priest from Turin. One of his first actions was the gathering of one million signatures against the mafia that led to the 1996 law (n109) granting the use and reinvestment of confiscated Mafia land and assets to social cooperatives and agriturismi (agricultural tourism). Since then, more than 4500 real estate properties (apartments, villas and lands) have been confiscated in all of Italy and especially in Sicily, Calabria, Campania, Puglia, and Lazio [9]. Over 1,600 national and local organizations and social cooperative groups cooperate with Libera. The association also works with more than 4500 schools in Italy and the rest of the world. Libera's main goal is to spread a culture of responsible citizenship and raise awareness about the fight against the mafia [8].

Outside the classroom, students from both Italy and across the globe, can participate in internships, anti-mafia education camps, and as volunteers on one of the many Libera Terra cooperatives in Sicily, Calabria, Campania, Puglia, and Lazio. Wine, pasta, olive oil, jams, and tomato sauce are among the many mafia-free organic Libera products produced on the cooperatives. The products are then sold online and also in COOP and Botteghe del Mondo supermarkets and Altromercato fair trade shops in Italy. As of recently several stores across the EU carry Libera products.

Addiopizzo (meaning "Goodbye extortion payment") is another local non-partisan and volunteer association that partners with schools, businesses, courts of law, and agriturismi. It was founded in



2004 by five graduates who wanted to open a bar in Palermo but were against paying a Mafia tithe. Addiopizzo aims at educating others in supporting only "Pizzo-free" stores, hotels, and restaurants – all which display Addiopizzo stickers on their doors. Today there are over 800 Pizzo-free establishments in Palermo alone. Its website provides listings of school projects, events, and tours; Addiopizzo establishments; and an online store with Addiopizzo products [9].

Another significant organization is the Fondazione Giovanni e Francesca Falcone, co-funded by the "Europe for Citizens" Programme of the European Union. Every year the foundation organizes the *Waves of legality, Waves of Citizenship* project that aims to promote awareness of the role of organized civil society in combating organized crime and mafias in Europe. Two main activities are held for young people, ages 18-30, from all over Europe. The first is an international seminar on organized crime that is held in a European city. The second activity consists of numerous events in Sicily commemorating the murder of Judge Falcone, particularly La Nave della Legalità (the Legality Boat) that travels from Rome to Palermo. To date over 5000 Italian students have participated in this educational cruise [10]. Young adults in Italy can also participate in the Anti-mafia Caravan. Established in 1994 by Arci Sicilia, the Caravan organizes annual events against crime. In 2005, the Italian Caravan for Legality became international, traveling along both EU and non-EU countries.

#### 4. Conclusion

Within the past few decades, thanks to the support of international organizations, citizenship education has become a global priority among educational systems throughout the world. The importance of promoting the core values of democracy and equality among students and also preventing human rights violations has made it a valuable and critical component of school curricula. Both the European Union and CoE are striving to assure that students in Europe learn what it means to become a good citizen and what citizenship entails. Whereas in Italy, education to legality has gained more significance, a systematic approach is still lacking. It is through the generous support of the European Union and numerous associations, projects, and initiatives that Italian youth can become knowledgeable, empowered, and responsible for combating organized crime while striving for a future that is free from mafia and corruption.

#### References

- [1] UNESCO, 2010. "Teaching and learning for a sustainable future. Citizenship Education". [http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme\\_b/mod07.html](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_b/mod07.html)
- [2] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017. "Citizenship Education at School in Europe – 2017", Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. [http://eurydice.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Citizenship\\_education\\_Final-Report-2017-1.pdf](http://eurydice.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Citizenship_education_Final-Report-2017-1.pdf)
- [3] Losito, B. 2003. "Civic Education in Italy; Intended curriculum and students' opportunity to learn", *Journal of Social Science Education*, 2, pp-1-15. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238744596\\_Civic\\_Education\\_in\\_Italy\\_Intended\\_Curriculum\\_and\\_Students%27\\_Opportunity\\_to\\_Learn](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238744596_Civic_Education_in_Italy_Intended_Curriculum_and_Students%27_Opportunity_to_Learn)
- [4] Bombardelli, O. & Codato, M. "Country Report: Civic and Citizenship Education in Italy: Thousands of Fragmented Activities Looking for a Systematization", *Journal of Social Science Education*. Volume 16, Number 2, Summer 2017, 73-85.
- [5] Torney-Puerta, J. "Italy's Participation in Three IEA Civic Education Studies" (1971-2009). *Giornale italiano di pedagogia sperimentale* 17(1):9-19
- [6] Intravaia, S. "Via la Costituzione dalle scuole. "Non è una disciplina autonoma". *La Repubblica* .10 novembre 2010. [https://www.repubblica.it/scuola/2010/11/10/news/costituzione\\_scuole-894052](https://www.repubblica.it/scuola/2010/11/10/news/costituzione_scuole-894052)
- [7] MIUR, Ministero dell'Istruzione dell'Università e della Ricerca. "Cittadinanza e Costituzione", Governo Italiano. 2019. <https://www.miur.gov.it/en/cittadinanza-e-costituzione>
- [8] Libera International. "About Us", 2018. [http://www.liberainternational.eu/?page\\_id=10](http://www.liberainternational.eu/?page_id=10)
- [9] Addiopizzo. <http://www.addiopizzo.org/>
- [10] Fondazione Falcone <http://www.fondazionefalcone.it/>