

**A45**

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**Unconscious government assessment policy: language tests for immigrant students in Italian schools**

In recent decades, the number of foreign students entering Italian schools has burgeoned (6.4% of the school population in 2007-2008). This is a consequence of the presence of a critical mass of immigrant workers with an increasingly stable migration plan.

The sociopolitical effects of this situation were felt immediately, resulting for the first time in the history of the united Italy, in blatantly discriminatory government policies. The recent "Cota Bill", proposing *bridge classes* for foreign pupils who fail a language test, is the clearest evidence of a centralistic language policy focused around Italian language acquisition, with the sole aim of creating forms of exclusion.

This proposal will be introduced into a situation in which an assessment culture has yet to be established. Furthermore, politicians show an approach that is largely oblivious to scientific debate on the matter, and gives a distorted reading of data on foreign pupils' scholastic achievements.

This paper aims to give a detailed analysis of the above situation, showing the distortions created by a centralised style of government language policy that is completely deaf to requests coming from actual schools, which have for years been striving towards a democratic coexistence between Italian and foreign pupils.

We will look in particular at the proposal to use language testing to determine whether individual pupils are to gain access to a given class or type of school, showing how the risks of this type of approach, already amply illustrated in other contexts, are exacerbated in an Italian context.