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THE ARCHIMEDES INSTITUTE FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF SCIENTIFIC-EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS: THE ROLE OF SCHOOL MUSEUMS IN TRACING THE HISTORY OF DISCIPLINES

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The Museo della Scuola e dell'Educazione "Mauro Laeng" of the Università degli Studi Roma Tre (MuSEd), established in 1874, is Italy's oldest museum dedicated to the history of pedagogy and education. Preserved at the museum are a few instruments for the teaching of physics originally manufactured by the Archimedes Institute in Rome. The scientific instruments were produced in the early 20th century and were used in the Physics Laboratory of the normal school at the Conservatorio della Divina Provvidenza in Via di Ripetta, Rome. Archival investigation, currently still in progress, has uncovered an intense debate, beginning in 1916, around the national manufacture of teaching aids in the scientific field, a debate characterized by deep discontent related to dependence on foreign manufacturing, mainly German, and the celebration of Italian potential in manufacturing which led to the foundation of an Institute for the manufacture of teaching aids in Rome. Characteristic of these exchanges is a letter by Prof. Quirino Majorana, dated Turin, October 1919, praising the initiative: "And I, on my own part, place my modest contribute at the disposition of its [Archimedes Institute NDR] management, committing myself to give all the suggestions that will be requested of me." This research aims to illustrate how even a small number of scientific instruments can be a significant asset for a museum dedicated to the history of education such as MuSEd.

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