Teachers Training in Italy

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Introduction

This contribution’s primary goal is to analyse, mainly through a historical perspective, the teachers training and re-training system in Italy, with special attention to the current problem of the academic training of teachers of all grades of schools.¹

The contribution will also explain the Italian school system, in order to show the sociocultural links with the innovations and the internal contradictions of a rather young national school system (started in 1861).

As we see, it is difficult to talk about a “system”, because the Italian grades of school were often reformed as they were isolated entities, without regard of the whole, and the issue of teachers training was always neglected by these reforms, as it was an independent variable.

1. The dawn of the Italian school system (1859-1900)

1.1. The school system

An overview to the historical development of Italian school system, and in parallel to examine the solutions given to the problem of the teachers training

When Italy became a united nation, in 1861, the regional school systems were absorbed by the system of the regions from which the independence wars had been conducted, such as the Kingdom of Sardinia.²

The Casati Act,³ limited to the Kingdom of Sardinia in 1859, was extended to the whole State and shaped the primary education system.⁴ The

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² It was composed by the regions of Piemonte, Liguria, Valle d’Aosta, Sardinia and Savoy (given to France after the conclusion of the Second Independence War); Turin was the main city and the capital.

³ This act takes its name by the nobleman Gabrio Casati, Minister of Public education of the Kingdom of Sardinia, in the government led by the General Lamarmora. The act was established on the 13th of November 1859 (n. 3725).

⁴ The birth of the Italian Kingdom in 1861, a national unified State, extended the juridical system of the Kingdom of Sardinia (who acted as the leader of the military process of progressive conquest of new territories, like happened to
kindergarten was not mentioned in the curriculum, because it was thought not as a part of a school curriculum, but just in order to gave social answers to the social problem of working mothers. The primary school was based on a two-year curriculum, just to learn to write and read.

Primary education became compulsory in Italy only from 1877, through the Coppino Act. In the Eighties of the XIX century, the number of schools increased, but the rate of illiteracy remained the same (62% according to the date collected in the national inquiry about population in 1881). In this decade, the Italian school system was enforced by two reform plans at program level: in 1888, the Minister Gabelli, inspired by the positivistic philosophy, tried to renew the curriculum, introducing the teaching of physics and of natural sciences, strengthening the program of mathematics, and recommending that sciences should been taught according to the experimental method. In 1894 the Minister Baccelli enforced the practical aspects and the utilitarian goals of the elementary school learning and teaching.

1.2. The teachers training

The elementary teachers training was in charge of the so called “Scuole Normali”, implemented by the Casati Act in order to prepare male and female elementary school teachers: they could accept male teachers starting from 16 years old, and female one starting from 15. The Scuola Normale was organized on the base of a three-year curriculum, comprehensive of the foundation disciplines of the elementary school (language, mathematics, sciences, history, geography) and some basic rules of applied didactics.

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5 The act takes its name by the Minister of Public Education Coppino, and it was one of the main point of the liberal government of the prime Minister Agostino Depretis (King’s Act 15 of July 1877, n. 3961). Only the inferior grade of the elementary school was compulsory (the first three years): the municipalities, and not the State, were the public institutions who had the duty to implement schooling.

6 The implementation of the so called “patronato scolastico” (“school patronage”), established by the King’s Act 16 of February 1888 (n. 5292) tried to help the working class children in order to fulfil the school duty, but the scarce resources did non help the program.

2. The growth of the Italian school system (1900-1923)

2.1. The school system

In the first decade of the XX century, the so called “age of Giolitti”, the liberal prime Minister, saw the attempt to democratise the whole society, renewing in the meanwhile all the public institutions, and the school too. This age is a key period for the Italian school system and its history, even if the historiography has not given to it the right consideration.\(^8\) The Nasi Act (1903) forced the municipalities to improve the quantity and the quality of schools, for example implementing a central school director in the municipalities of at least 10.000 people, or anyway every 20 classes of pupils. The Orlando Act (1904) established six years of compulsory elementary school, until the age of 12; reformed the curriculum\(^9\) and modified the programs, introducing manual works. The Daneo-Credaro Act (1911), fought by the conservative and the Catholic components of the civil society, let the State become the main actor in school implementation: the most part of the former municipally managed elementary schools was transformed in national schools, widening the intervention of the State, which was already managing the secondary level of schooling. The act identified the Provincial School Council as the administrative institution of these schools, empowering in the meanwhile the school patronage,\(^{10}\) giving to it a juridical personality and founding one in each municipality, in order to obtain a real equality of educational opportunities for the poorest pupils; it also promoted the instruction of the military personnel and the people who was in the jail, both of them rather illiterate.\(^{11}\)

\(^8\) For example, a popular handbook of history of education (V. Sarracino, *Scuola e educazione: linee di sviluppo storico*, Liguori Editore, Napoli, 1992) has not a chapter or a paragraph specifically devoted to the age of Giolitti, giving some brief information about the birth of the professional associations of primary and secondary school teachers (pp. 36-37).

In the section of the sources, acts established in this period are not mentioned, and the only acts reported are the Casati Act (1859) and the Gentile Reform Act (1923). This vacuum is really surprising, for a textbook which has the goal “to constitute the first core of materials useful for the historical and critical reconstruction of the events which brought to contemporary setting of the Italian school system”.

\(^9\) For the pupils who went forward in the school curriculum, usually belonging to the upper class, the elementary school was reduced to four years; for the pupils who stopped the school, the elementary school was prolonged to six years.


2.2. The teachers training

The three acts we spoke before was also oriented in elevating the conditions of teachers, poorly trained and paid, and often subjected to the arbitrary power of municipal administrations. About the condition of teachers, the Nasi Act identified a track of career development both for teachers and school principals, giving them some assurances in terms of juridical position. For the first time, the salaries of the female teachers were equalized to those of the male teachers, but only if girl or a woman was teaching in a class of male pupils, or in a mixed one. The Orlando Act established a national fund for helping the municipalities with less financial resources to pay regular salaries to their teachers. The Daneo-Credaro Act gave funds in order to improve the conditions of the teachers in the rural areas of the country.

There was also a vivid debate at the beginning of the XX century about the primary school teacher training: the “Scuole Normali” were strongly criticized both because the poorness of the curriculum and the uneffectiveness of the training. Two important meetings of the “Associazione Nazionale per gli Studi Pedagogici” (National Association for Educational Studies), led by Luigi Credaro, were held in 1909 and 1910, suggesting a radical reform of the elementary school training, based on the enforcement of the curriculum, parifying the “Scuola Normale” to a high school degree (called “Istituto Magistrale”), in order to renew the recruitment. Also the “tirocinio” (“teaching practice”) had to be reinforced, both in terms of times (it was very brief, at the end of the third year) and activities: the future teacher was supposed to observe the “real” practice, without any interaction with the class and the teacher.

But the burst of the First World War and the political difficulties of Italy at the beginning of the Twenties gave up to the idea of reforming the “Scuole Normali”, and the improvement of social conditions of teachers was put at the bottom of the governmental agenda. So the situation remained the same until the uprising of Fascism, in 1922-1925.

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12 Luigi Credaro was appointed also Minister of Education in the years before the Great War.
13 The students choosing the “Scuola Normale” were often the worst of the immediate lower grade, coming from a poor cultural background and with a high degree of demotivation.
3. The dictatorial modernization of the Italian School system (1923-1944)

3.1. The school system

At the beginning of the Fascism, the school system was reformed by the neo-hegelian philosopher Giovanni Gentile, who in 1923 shaped a very selective school system with a reformation act which was approved without any opposition: he stressed the primacy of classical studies, performed in the so called “Liceo Classico” (“Grammar School”), reducing in the meantime the numbers of technical schools. The fascist government spent the Thirties to modify Gentile’s idea and practice of schooling, first because the restriction of access to high quality schools and the reduction of vocational education did not fit at all with the aspirations of the middle class who had supported the fascist movement. The kindergarten was defined “grado preparatorio” (“preparatory grade”), propedeutical to the primary school but not compulsory, and renamed as “scuola maternal” (“maternal school”), centered on recreative goals, and not educational ones, stressing the importance of behavioural discipline. The primary school remained divided in lower and upper grades, and shaped according to the philosophy of education of Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, Gentile’s right arm for a long time: Lombardo Radice invented the concept of “scuola serena” (“happy school”), spiritualistically oriented, which took seriously in care the idea of giving educational answers to the children’s needs, but which was overwhelmed by the fascistic necessity of indoctrinate and militarise the Italian youth, especially starting from the Thirties.

In 1929, the Minister of National Education Belluzzo prepared the guidelines in order to compile the “testi unici di Stato” (“national school textbooks”), chosen by a centralised commission, with the cultural objective

15 Usually the historians distinguish the period from 22 of October 1922 (when the Kings encharged Benito Mussolini to form a new government, after the spectacular “March toward Rome”) to the 3 of January 1925 (when Mussolini declared in the Parliament that he was responsible for the political killing of the Socialist politician Giacomo Matteotti) as a sort of “general exercise” before the implementation of the totalitarian regime, starting just from that discourse and finishing the 25 of July 1943, when Mussolini was arrested and the general Badoglio became Prime Minister.

16 The bibliography about Giovanni Gentile is very wide. His most popular pedagogical texts are Sommario di pedagogia come scienza filosofica, 1912; Educazione fisica e carattere, 1920; La riforma dell’Educazione, 1923, all published at Bari by Laterza.

17 This act had a terrible impact on the growing industrial system (cfr. A. Scotto di Luzio, La scuola degli italiani, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2007, passim).

18 One of the most complete overview of the Italian school in the Fascist era is M. Ostenc, La scuola italiana durante il fascismo, Bari, Laterza, 1981.

19 The most famous text of this educator is
of promoting a fascistic civilization of the Italian people: this act was implemented in the schoolyear 1930-1931, and it was an element of real discontinuity with the pedagogical mastership of Gentile and Lombardo Radice. In 1934, the Minister Ercole implemented new programs, stressing indoctrination versus education (especially in a discipline like history, completely re-written in a neofascistic key), even if this ideological objectives was not fully reached because of the resistance of teachers, who were not necessarily anti-fascistic oriented, but had a strong idea of the independence of school which acted as a brake.20

The Gentilian re-foundation of the Italian school system was corrected during the Twenties and the Thirties, because it was very selective, but it remained the covered structure of the systems coming after the collapse of the Fascism, in the 1943-1945. The real fascistic reform was the so called “Chart of the School”, written under the supervision of the Minister Giuseppe Bottai in 1939, in which a new model of schooling, less differentiated and less selective, but also more ideologically oriented, was highlighted: but the Second World War let Bottai’s program a tragic dream.

3.2. The teachers training

At the beginning of Fascism, the teachers training was reformed too, following the same theoretical principles of Gentile’s idea of schooling: according to his neohegelian philosophical point of view, teaching was a set of sympathetic effect between the teacher and the pupils, whose success was due by the fact that the teacher had a strong cultural competence and a knowledge as wider and deeper as possible.

Consequently, for the primary school teachers, Gentile modified first the type of institution devoted to the training, and implemented the Institute for Primary Education (“Istituto Magistrale”), a high school level institute, based on a four-year curriculum, whose core were human sciences. Secondly, he empowered the classical subject matters (Latin language and literature, history, history of philosophy), following the principle that a good teacher is primarily a master of the disciplines which he/she wants to teach. Third, he suppressed any kind of didactics and/or methodology, according to his

20 This idea is hystoriographically argumentated in G. Genovesi (ed.), Il quaderno umile segno di scuola, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2008.
an idealistic view of knowledge: the method is embedded in the contents, and knowing these ones, the teacher will gain that one. Fourth, he suppressed also the “tirocinio” (“teaching practice”), hours spent by the students in the elementary schools, under the supervision of a special teacher, in which young girls were invited to observe how real teachers were teaching. In order to give a socio-political response to the problem of unemployment of the female students licensed by the “Istituto Magistrale”, Gentile implemented a special university course, the so called “Magistero” (divided in three main curricula: pedagogy, foreign languages, literature), the only course to which it was possible to be enrolled without a five-year high school degree.

This system was not modified in the successive years, but the attempt to control everything happening at school, according to the totalitarian turn of the Thirties, started to reduce the role of teachers to clerk, rather then professional educators. The neohegelian version of the “ethical State” promoted by Gentile was converted in a heavy massification of schooling, a situation in which pedagogics and didactics came down directly from the central level, along a hyerarchical chain of command, resembling the military organization.

4. The take-off of the Italian school system (1945-1968)

4.1. The school system

After the Second World War, the school system was formally democratised, but it remained strongly controlled by the central level, the Ministry of Public Education, and shaped according the Gentilian ideology.

The elementary school curriculum was firstly reformed in 1945 by Carleton Washburne, who tried also to promote non-formal organizations like the scout movement, in his effort to defascistize the Italian school system and the mainstream mentality.\footnote{The new programs were first implemented in February 1945, in the parts of Italy under the control of the Allied Armies, then revised in May and fully implemented and extended to the whole Nation the successive year by the liberal Minister Guido Gonella (Ministry Act, 8 of Novembre 1946).} In 1955, the Christian-Democrat Minister Ermini newly reformed the elementary school curriculum, limiting the effects of the activistic movement\footnote{Due to a courageous patrol of philosophers of education like Lamberto Borghi, Tristano Codignola and Aldo Visalberghi, John Dewey’ texts started to be translated and spread in Italy: the first complete translation of \textit{The School and Society} (1899, 1915) appeared in 1949, and the first four editions were sold in a while.} and shaping it as a sort of extended Catholic
education program, according to a large number of historians of education.\textsuperscript{23} The Orientamenti per l’attività educativa della scuola materna (Guidelines for the educational activity in the kindergarten), approved in the meanwhile, represented the logical background of that elementary school curriculum: they were mainly operative common-sense-based notes, and not methodological prescriptions, based on an idea of kindergarten centered on the dual relationship between the teacher, substitute of the mother, and the children.\textsuperscript{24}

Starting from the Sixties, some important reforms were implemented: the first was the implementation of the so called “Scuola Media Unica” (Unified Junior High School),\textsuperscript{25} after a decade of thorough debate among the political parties and their cultural orientations. The reform (Act 31 December 1962, n. 1859) passed with the heavy votes of the leftist parties, joined with the more open-minded part of the Christian Democrats: a selective school which based its criteria of selection on social level was not anymore sustainable. The reform, passed without an adequate plan of in-service training, left the teachers alone, facing a huge mass of students, once channelled to vocational education or to manual jobs, now enrolled in a Junior High School with more theoretically oriented subject matters: in the middle of the Sixties, many students, all coming from lower classes, were stopped and had to repeat the same year also twice. This school scandal, partly due to the lack of a global curriculum reform, made arise the voice of a priest, don Lorenzo Milani, who implemented a private school at Barbiana (Tuscany), trying to help the children of rural families to get the junior high school degree.\textsuperscript{26}

4.1. The teachers training

The teachers training continued to be given in charge of high schools (“Istituto Magistrale”) for the elementary school teachers, and to the national practice of the national examination for the secondary schools. In this last case, teachers were hired after they had obtained an academic degree in a


\textsuperscript{25}After the primary school, there were two differentiated track of schooling: the lower Gymnasium, for children who wanted to go forward in studying, or a short three-year curriculum called “Avviamento” (Propedeutics), for children who were obliged, by social circumstances, to go to work at the age of 14 years.

\textsuperscript{26}The experience of Barbiana is told in the famous pamphlet Lettera a una professoressa (Letter to a female teacher), LEF - Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1967, written as a collective exercise of composition by don Milani’s students.
discipline and they had passed an examination based on contents, rather than teaching methods or psychopedagogical attitudes. The result was that teachers were often well prepared, but they had to acquire the teaching skills by their own, usually in the first years of service.

The only academic course in order to train school personnel was the “Diploma di Vigilanza Scolastica” (“Course for School Supervising”), who was implemented in the Facoltà di Magistero (Schools of Primary Education) in the Fifties and the first part of the Sixties: elementary school teachers who wanted to become principals had to follow this three-year study program, acquiring pedagogical and methodological skills. Examining the didactical materials produced during the course, we can easily discover the situation of the elementary school teachers in Italy at that time: the teacher was alone with his/her overcrowded class (even 40-45 pupils per class!), usually not well seen by the rural proletarian families, forced to adopt traditional methods instead of experimental ones (coming from the more up-to-date pedagogics). The critical situation of this profession was the first reason, for these teachers, to try to improve their job position, becoming principals.

Concerning a particular area of training, physical education, a discipline always considered a sort of Cinderella in the Italian school curricula, in 1958 the “Istituto Superiore di Educazione Fisica” (Higher Institute for Physical Education), better known with the nickname ISEF, was implemented: it was equivalent to the University level, in theory, but it was
not perfectly fitted in the University system. The curriculum was based on
traditional gymnastics and sport practice, taught in a context of military
discipline;\textsuperscript{31} very poor was the contribution of psychopedagogics and
didactics. It is important to remember that ISEF formed secondary school
teachers (junior high school and high school), because in the primary school
the responsible for physical education was the regular teacher of the class,
who had in charge the whole curriculum.

The lack of well-trained teachers was seen as a problem after the
implementation of the Unified Junior High School: for example, as a solution
for the missing teachers of foreign languages (French and English), the
Minister of Public Education hired many graduates in Political Sciences, just
because in their academic curriculum there was one compulsory exam of
foreign language.\textsuperscript{32}


5.1. The school system

Forced by the economic and social development, the Italian school
system started to renew itself just from 1968, when the Scuola Materna
Statale (State Maternal School) was created, followed one year later by the
“Orientamenti per la Scuola Materna Statale” (National Curriculum for the
State Maternal School).

Another important reform was the introduction of the so called “social
management of the school”, with the insertion of representatives of parents
and students (these ones only at the high school level) in the class and
school councils. This happened in 1974, through the juridical instrument of
the “Decreti delegati”, acts written by the Government after having received
the task from the Parliament. There were many expectations from this
structure reform, but the real impact on schools was very light, because of
the lack of real power of the councils in which parents and students were
elected.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31} There were very few Institutes in Italy, and the students lived in a dormitory (event that in Italy was not so common
like in the Anglosaxon context), supervised by trainers and teachers grown up during the Fascism.
\textsuperscript{32} Even if it could sound weird, Political Sciences was the only Faculty to have this rule: of course, the study of foreign
languages was oriented to prepare administrators for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for the Italian embassies all
over the world. No one of the graduates who started to teach French and English in the junior high school had received
a didactical training at the college.
\textsuperscript{33} After some years of great participation to the elections, especially parents showed disaffection to the problem, and in
many cases in some classes the council had no parent representations.
In 1979, 17 years after the implementation of the Unified Junior High School, new programs were licensed for this grade of school, but conceived in an old fashion way: the programs remained focused on disciplinary contents, without imagining a new and up-to-date psychopedagogical framework and methodological approach; different commissions of disciplinary experts worked without any interaction, producing contradictions and repetitions.

Very different was the track of the reform of the primary school curriculum: the new programs licensed in 1985, inspired by the cognitive psychology and by the curriculum theory, were elaborated by a commission who worked first on the general pedagogical foundation of the school, and only in a second time on the contents of the disciplinary fields. The effect was the production of very broad programs, according to which the role of the teacher was imagined as a curriculum planner, whose daily school practice was a synthesis between students’ needs, social expectations and educational goals and contents.

The long season of reform was closed in 1990 by the implementation of the Nuovi Orientamenti per la Scuola Materna Statale (New National Curriculum for the State Maternal School), in which the focus was posed on the new children’s needs in a quickly changing society, reducing the image of a pre-primary school, as it was traditionally conceived, also forced by the experiences of many municipal kindergarten, especially the so called Reggio Emilia Approach, an innovative system of infant toddler centers and kindergarten set up by the educator Loris Malaguzzi from the end of the Second World War.

The problem was, as we will see now, that these many and varied reforms in the school system were not followed by adequate renewal of the teacher training system and practice.

34 In a conference held in Reggio Emilia, in 1990, for the monitoring of the implementation for the programs, Elio Damiano, professor of didactics at the University of Parma, after a detailed examination of the relationship between contents and school time, said ironically that the programs for the primary school had contents also for the whole junior high school, and perhaps something also for the first year of the high school.

35 The name “kindergarten” is not used anymore in Italy (literally translated in Italian as “giardino d’infanzia”), even if it had some fortune at the beginning of the XX century. The most popular name of the school for children from 3 to 6 years in Italy was “Scuola Materna” (Maternal School), because of the high percentage of private catholic-oriented schools. The municipal school started to call themselves “Scuole dell’Infanzia” (Children’s Schools) in the Seventies, because this name seemed more appropriate to a school that was more than a temporary substitute of mother’s care.
5.2. The teachers training

While school was changing, the teachers training remained the same, without any specific academic level institution devoted to the task. Usually, after (and not before) any reform act a program of in-service refreshment course was implemented, in order to explain the contents of the reform to teachers used to act in a traditional way.

To tell the truth, there was an attempt of establishing a sort of grounded system of teacher in-service training: one of the “Decreti delegati” of 1974 introduced, at regional level, the Istituto Regionale di Ricerca, Sperimentazione e Aggiornamento Educativi – IRRSAE (Regional Institute of Educational Research, Experimental Practice and In-service Training): for the first time, in Italy teachers had a standpoint to refer for their in-service training, according to the European model of a teacher who was not considered only a content giver according to traditional methods, but also a researcher about contents taught and methods used.

The real problem was the lack of an academic training for teachers: as we know, preschool and primary school teachers had a high school degree, while secondary school teachers had a disciplinary academic degree, but no training at all, unless having been hired after a national examination. The Act 477 (1973) proclaimed for the first time the issue of academic training for all the teachers, from kindergarten to high school, but it remained a word written on the sand until 1990.

The pedagogical debate started to identify two tracks of teacher training, one for the elementary school teachers and the other for the secondary school teachers. The former had to be a four-year academic curriculum, divided in two parts: the first two years devoted to the foundations of teaching and disciplines, the last two years differentiated for kindergarten teachers, focused on psychological children’s needs, and primary school teachers, focused on the enforcing of disciplines and their specific didactics. The latter had to be a two-year postgraduate program following a regular academic disciplinary track, mainly focused on psychopedagogical foundations of teaching and didactics, because of the students of the

36 For a long time, teachers of kindergarten and preschools had a three-year school degree, got in the “Scuola Magistrale” (School for Preschool Teachers), a very poor school laying a stair down the “Istituto Magistrale”, about which we have already talked about.
program had never been taught to teach before. But 10 years had to pass before this ideas were in a certain way realized.

The role of the elementary school teacher, for example, was completely changed by the programs of 1985, which modified the management of the primary school classes: five years after the implementation of the programs (Act n. 148, 1990), the single teacher was abolished and teaching was assured by a group of three teachers on two classes (or three on four), each of them specialized in a specific field of the curriculum (language and literature, maths and sciences, expressive arts). The enrolment, however, remained traditionally managed, with national examination after the high school diploma, or the organization of special course, called “abilitanti”, reserved to substitute teachers who had taught at least two years in the school.

6. The Italian school system facing a global society (1991-2009)

6.1. The school system

In the Nineties, the process of school reforming were brought also at the high school level: the so called Brocca commission, lead by a Christian-Democrat politician, elaborated a new high school system, first of all proposing a common biennium for all the high schools (with the introduction of subject matters like foundations of economics and law) and second reducing to 10 the most of 100 existing curricula of the triennium. The model of the new curricula was the Liceo (lyceum or grammar school), in the very difficult operation of empowering the humanities and maintaining some practical outcomes, in the same time. The new programs were established according to the model of the primary school programs of 1985, with a huge commission who fist worked together to the common foundations and then divided for shaping the specific curricula, and the discipline internal to them.

37 This decision was strongly supported by the progressivistic pedagogics, according to which the era of a single teacher teaching everything was a relic of the past, but it was also harshly criticized by some conservative parties, also because it seemed a solution pushed by the school trade unions, in order to give jobs to many substitute teachers.

38 The national examination furnishes the so called “abilitazione” (teaching license), the equivalent, to say, of the California Basic Educational Skill Test (CBEST), the test which enables a teacher to teach in the California and Oregon primary schools.

39 The Italian high schools were (and still are) divided in Lyceum (classical, scientific, linguistic, artistic, musical); Technical Institute (for clerks, for geometers, for skilled workers in factories, and so on) and Vocational Institute (a three-year program prolongable to five, oriented to an immediate job).

40 Two of the main critiques to the Brocca programs were first that the disciplinary contents were not measured on the real school time, and second that there were too many subject matters for each curriculum (even 12 or 13), splitting the
It was time, however, to think to a global reform of the school system, just because, as we have seen until now, it was always reformed in parts, often without thinking of the effect of the changing on the following school grades.

In the late Nineties, the Minister Luigi Berlinguer started to work to the “Riforma dei cicli” (Curricula Reform), a huge effort to reach homogeneous levels of teaching and learning from the children’s school to the high school. The project contained revolutionary ideas, for example the transformation of the last year of the children’s school in the first year of the compulsory school system, or the reduction from five to four of the high school curricula, before becoming official (Act n. 30, 2000), it was sent by the Minister to all the schools to be discussed, but it was never implemented, because the government fell down.

One of the main points of the program of the new government, led by Silvio Berlusconi, was to abolish the Berlinguer reform, and so happened. The Minister of Education Letizia Moratti, nonetheless, followed the track of his predecessor toward a global system reform, giving the task to elaborate a draft to a small commission of experts, rigorously in line with the Minister’s dictations: they elaborated the cultural and educational profile of the learner, listing the skills that a student had to perform at the end of 8 years of school. The first structural effect was the joining of the primary school to the junior high school, conceiving them a unique curricular block, according to the idea of his (criticized) predecessor. The second effect, more pedagogical, was the implementation of the Indicazioni Nazionali per i Piani Personalizzati delle Attività Educative nelle Scuole dell’Infanzia – nella Scuola Primaria (National Guidelines for the Individual Plans of Educational Activities in the required knowledge in too small blocks.

A macroscopic example of this disfunctional way of proceeding is the following: from 1985 the primary school started to work with programs focused on psychopedagogics, and 5 year later children were enrolled in a junior high school still working with the programs of 1979, focused on disciplinary contents.

This project was conceived as a reward to the children’s school, for the first time officially considered part of the national school system.

Italy is one of the few European countries in which high school is 5 years long, and not 4.

This was revolutionary, too: it was the first time in Italy.

The changing of the name of the Ministry, with the abolition of the adjective “public”, was criticized by the leftist parties, because they feared the dismission of the public school system in favour of the private schools, especially catholic-oriented, who fiercely had adhered the Berlinguer reform.

The leader was Giuseppe Bertagna, professor of pedagogy at the University of Bergamo.

In part, this decision was motivated by factual reasons, rather than pedagogical ones: in the Nineties, for lack of resources, many different institutes (usually a children’s school, a primary school, a junior high school) had been united in a “comprehensive institute”, with one director (instead of three like in the past). Often, the schools were hosted in the same building.
Children’s School - Primary Schools), a complex text that, picking up ideas from everywhere, from the programs of 1985 to the concept-based curriculum of Elio Damiano, gave a big shock to the Italian school, used to work traditionally in blocks or grades. Under the Minister Letizia Moratti, also a reform of the high school curriculum was implemented, with a “decreto delegato” dated 17 of October 2005, n. 226, the general norms and the essential levels of high school outcomes were licensed, with a particular attention to the learning of English and sciences.

The first ten years of the XXI century were characterized by a harsh political debate, between a centre-right coalition versus a center-left one: the winning coalition usually started the government action destroying or nullifying the decisions of their predecessor, in search of short-term results. This is not useful for a school system, in which reforms need long times in order to see effective results. So sometimes, words are not followed by facts, and the two coalitions are forced to adjust the decision of the predecessor, without being able to abolish them at all. This happened to the center-leftist Minister Giuseppe Fioroni (2006-2008) and to the present center-right Minister Maria Stella Gelmini (from summer 2008), both of them involved in managing the Moratti reform.

As we will see in the next paragraph, this political struggle had also effect on the issue of reforming the teachers training system. For the reason why we are going to talk about the present situation, we will divide the problem in three parts, in order to clarify our discourse.

6.2. The teachers training

6.2.1. Kindergarten and primary school teacher

As we anticipated, in the Nineties, finally, an important reform in order of teacher training was implemented, the most important in one century of schooling in Italy.

First of all, in the early Nineties, the old and glorious “Facoltà of Magistero” was transformed in the “Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione” (“School of Education”), with three main curricula (Sciences of Education,

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48 According to Damiano, the educational task of the school is to teach concepts, and not to reach behavioural objectives.

49 The complete text is in the handbook by USR – Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per l’Emilia Romagna, La Riforma del secondo Ciclo. Testi normative – Commenti e riflessioni, Notes 1, February 2006.
Care-giving, Expert in Training Processes): it was not anymore a “minor” Faculty, but a Faculty devoted to the training of educational professionals.

In this renewed academic structure, in 1998, the “Corso di Laurea in Scienze della Formazione Primaria” (Degree Program in Sciences of Primary Education), was implemented: for the first time in the history of Italian teachers training system, an academic track was specific for teachers of children’s school and primary school. This program has a close number of students,\(^{50}\) fixed each year by the Ministry of Public Education in each site in which it is implemented:\(^{51}\) there is one course in each region, usually in the biggest University.\(^{52}\)

The Degree Program in Sciences of Primary Education was, and still is, a four-year curriculum organized on a first common biennium of foundation disciplines\(^ {53}\) and a second biennium of specialization,\(^ {54}\) toward children’s school or primary school, for a total amount of 180 credits.\(^ {55}\)

Psychopedagogical and disciplinary contents\(^ {56}\) are taught first in academic classes (3 – 6 credits), often joined in integrated course;\(^ {57}\) then deepened in laboratories (2 credits),\(^ {58}\) in which students starts to join theoretical knowledge to teaching practice;\(^ {59}\) and at last put in practice in the “tirocinio”

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\(^{50}\) Selected by a multiple choice test of 80 questions (basic knowledge, reading skills, logics and mathematics, sciences, history, geography, Italian law, foundations of education).

\(^{51}\) The number of students enrolled each year is supposed to be calculated on the trend of the labour market. For example, the course of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia had 150 students per year since 2008; in the academic year 2009-2010 this number was increased to 200, according to studies of the Regional School Office.

\(^{52}\) For example, in Piemonte it is in Turin, in Lombardia it is in Milan, in Tscany it is in Florence. In Emilia-Romagna there are two courses, one in Bologna and the other in Reggio Emilia, which by an administrative point of view are one course split in two sites.

\(^{53}\) Mainly the areas of Psychopedagogics (Education, History of Education, Psychology, Sociology, Teaching Methods), some basic disciplines (Mathematics, History, Italian Language, Natural Sciences) and other disciplines like Physical Education, Design and Visual Communication, Musical Education.

\(^{54}\) It is an in-depth approach to specific problems of the type of school: in the Kindergarten Curriculum we find, as an example, Psychodynamics of Familiar Relationships or Mathematical Abilities in the Kindergarten; in the Primary School Curriculum we find mainly the duplication of the basic disciplines.

\(^{55}\) As known, the credit is the basic measurement of academic work, corresponding to 25 hours of classes, lab activities, exercises, self training and any other activity required in order to reach the diploma.

\(^{56}\) The whole curriculum has tried to balance the request of the so called discipline-oriented experts (they think that the curriculum has to be based on a strong part of disciplinary contents) and the transversal-oriented one (they think that the curriculum has to be based on a strong part of psychological pedagogical, sociological, anthropological and didactical).

\(^{57}\) The integrated course can join similar disciplines (for example, Aesthetics, Iconology and Children’s Literature) or a discipline and its specific didactical approach (for example, Mathematics and Didactics of Mathematics).

\(^{58}\) Laboratories can be held by University professors or lecturers, but also by external personnel, usually skilled in a special field of activities non covered by the academic disciplines: for example, actors, artists, musicians, skilled teachers coming form schools, and so on.

\(^{59}\) Laboratories are small groups of students (normally not more than 25) who learn how to put in practice particular aspects of the theoretical knowledge typically taught in the academic classes: for example, in the class of Children’s Literature, the teacher explains contents, authors and themes of the disciplines; in a Children’s Literature Lab students learns how to construct a “material book” for children of the kindergarten, or how to make puppets and how to play a puppet story for children of the primary school. Labs are supposed to be strictly connected both with the academic
(school practice), a period in which students go to schools in order to prove them as teachers in a real operational context (almost 10 credits per year). At the end of the curriculum, students discuss a written dissertation (often linked to the school practice activities) in front of a commission, in which is incorporated an inspector of the Ministry of Public Education, because the final exam has the value of official enrolment in the list of teachers of public schools.

In the same time, students could be enrolled in a biennial Special Education Program, parallel to the second biennial curriculum or following it, at the end of which they are qualified as Special Education Teacher, for children’s and/or for primary school.

In their track toward the degree, students are helped by the “supervisori di tirocinio” (school practice supervisors), very important collaborators of the whole training project: they are expert tenured teachers in the State Maternal School or in the National Primary School, selected by a mixed commission (University teachers and officers of the Regional School Office), who continue to work for half of their job time in the school, and spend the other half in the University, as a support of the practical part of the curriculum of the students. They follow a small group of students (usually 20-30 per year) in their contacts with the schools who will accept them for practice, in their writing the teaching project, in their implementation of the project among the school, and in their self-evaluation of the experience, through a final paper.

According to Sira Serenella Macchietti, “the higher education for children’s school teachers is a recent conquest and the result of a long and not easy track, whose beginning starts from the Aportian asylums”, but we can extend this consideration also to the primary school teachers training.

6.2.2. Secondary school teachers

classes and with the real school practice.

60 In the first year students are trained to observe the educational environment, often with the support of audiovisual materials; in the second year they enter in a school and try to understand the way in which the school works; in the third year they collaborate to implement a teaching project, in a tram of teachers; in the fourth and last year, they are supposed to implement their own teaching project, always under the supervision of the class teacher, but with more autonomy.

61 Also the curriculum of this Special Education Program is organized in classes, laboratories, practice and a final dissertation.

The second revolutionary reform in the teachers training system in the Nineties was the implementation, in 1999, of the “Scuola di Specializzazione Interateneo per la Formazione degli Insegnanti di Scuola Secondaria” (Interacademic Graduate School of Secondary School Teacher Training), a very long denomination often shorted in the acronymous SSIS, that we will use hereafter. With the implementation of this institution, finally all the future teachers of the Italian School system had to receive a specific training at academic level.

The SSIS was a regional institution, formed by a consortium of the Universities of the region and governed by a director. This decision of joining the single universities was probably due to avoid the proliferation of school for teachers and the consequent unemployment of the most part of postgraduated students. The SSIS had a close number of students, established by the Ministry of Public Education, according to the trends of the labour market.

The curriculum was organized on a two-year program: in the first year classes of the so called “Area Comune” (Common Area) are taught and some disciplines and their didactics; in the second one, the “Area di indirizzo” (Specialization Area) only the disciplines and the didactics of the school subject matters which will be taught in the secondary school. At the end of the training course, and after a national examination, students are enrolled in a “classe di concorso” (class of teaching), giving them the qualification for teaching a specific subject matter in a specific branch of the secondary school system.

Personnel of the SSIS is both formed by academic teachers and expert tenured secondary school teachers, hired with a part time contract with the role of school practice supervisors. This interchange of personnel partly

63 One School for each Italian Region, except Valle d’Aosta (united with Piemonte) and Molise (united with Abruzzi).
64 Selected with a written and an oral examination, and the further evaluation of their curriculum.
65 The four disciplines of the Common area are General Education, Teaching Methods, Psychology of Education, Sociology of Education; all of them are supported by a lab program of practical activities.
66 In many SSIS classes are organized in three parts: Foundations of the Discipline, Didactics of the Discipline, Laboratories of Didactics of the Discipline. In the first part students gain or deepen contents, in the second they start to reflect about teaching contents, in the third they start to exercise in organizing a teaching and learning environment. The laboratories are often taught by supervisors, and not by academic professors.
67 The name of the “classi di concorso” (“subject matter groups”) are established by the Ministry of Public Education: Italian Language and Literature, Latin Language and Literature, Greek Language and Literature, Foreign Languages and Literatures, Mathematics and Sciences, Chemistry, Informatics, Technology, History, Philosophy, Education and Social Sciences, Physical Education, Fine Arts.
68 Their role is the same of the supervisors of the Degree Program of Sciences of Primary Education.
covered the gap between the two institutions, university and high school: by the point of view of the training program, university filled the curriculum of high quality disciplinary knowledge, sometimes unreally applied to high school, and high school gave the real context in which sound the theories, sometimes oppoing traditional way of doing to methodological innovation and cultural deepening.

This double model of teachers training, one simultaneous and the other consecutive, worked for the first 10 years of the XXI century, a season in which, as we have seen in the past paragraph, the alternance at the government of the State of centre-left and centre-right coalitions produced, and is still producing, many adjustments, not all of them pedagogically founded, such as the so called Moratti Reform.69

The same problem happened about teachers training. When Silvio Berlusconi formed his third government (2008), the Minister Maria Stella Gelmini announced a revolutionary reform of the teacher training system; according to the Italian way of doing, a commission was set up, led by the mathematician Giorgio Israel, with the task to identify a new track of teachers training, giving a new shape at the same time to the Degree Program of Sciences of Primary Education and to the SSIS.

In the academic year 2008-2009, the former was implemented, but the latter, the SSIS program, was suspended: for one year, Italy did not provide a training for its secondary school teachers, a rather weird event for an almost hyper-western and post-industrial society.70

Since February 2009, the first result of the commission are public, and the outcomes are really surprising. For the children’s school and primary school teachers, there will be a five-year study program, giving the double chance to teach in both schools.71 The commission had chosen to decrease the weight of transversal curriculum, leaving for example only a few credits to

69 As an example, the so called “Indicazioni Nazionali” (“National Guidelines”) introduced the portfolio in the Italian school, without clarifying if it was to be considered a formative evaluation instrument or a summative one, producing debates and confusion at all levels.
70 According to some rumors internal to the academy, the SSIS had become a centre of academic power external to the traditional ones (University and Faculty), and a lobby of University professors hostile to SSIS was able to press the Minister in order to dismantle this parallel organization.
71 With the present norms, students can get only a licence, for one or the other school; it often happens that students licensed for children’s school are enrolled the successive year for getting the primary school license, and vice versa. Ironically, they are obliged to pass another time the multiple choice test for the selection.
psychological disciplines,⁷² and reinforcing in an innatural way the disciplines,⁷³ especially maths and sciences, with the abolition of the formal difference between “disciplines” and “didactics of the discipline”.⁷⁴

For the secondary school teachers, all the aspirant teachers should have followed a 3+2 academic program,⁷⁵ and will be enrolled in a sixth year⁷⁶ of “tirocinio formativo attivo” (formative active school practice), managed by a University with the assistance of the Regional School Office. The role of the disciplines is very limited, and the main activities will be the school practice and the didactical laboratories, idea borrowed by the Degree Program in Sciences of Primary Education, but oriented towards the high school disciplines. According to some philosophers of education, the problem of “teaching before teaching” is still opens, just because the road along which the commission is moving is another time disciplinary-oriented, without focusing the specific epistemological and methodological issues of teachers training and practice.⁷⁷ Particularly dangerous seems to be the lack of awareness toward what Giovanni Genovesi, professor of general pedagogy at the University of Ferrara, calls “the Science of education”: “From the Science of education we obtain not only the conceptual device for founding the practice of the teachers, but also the framework for unifying the multiple activities of the different subjects in the school context”.⁷⁸

At the present moment, a new academic year has begun, 2009-2010, without any precise political directions in order to start with the new teacher training programs.

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⁷² In the present curriculum there are at least four “heavy” classes of General Psychology, Psychology of Education, Social Psychology, Clinic Psychology and other more specialized classes; in the commission proposal only a few credits of Psychology of Education.
⁷³ The credits for each discipline are quite doubled.
⁷⁴ According to many educationists, the distinction has to be maintained, just because many University professors have not any competence in didactics: the real risk is that their course will be filled of contents, without regard of the problem of teaching these contents. As we can see, the neohegelian idea of Giovanni Gentile (a good teacher is primarily who has a high level knowledge of the discipline) is still living, and like a ghost it appears in the unexpected moments.
⁷⁵ The two-year courses, the so called “corso di laurea magistrale” (Master Class), are in charge of the Facoltà (Schools), and could contain some psychopedagogical classes. For example, the School of Sciences could set up a “laurea magistrale” didactically oriented, with disciplines like education, special education, general didactics, didactics of scientific disciplines, and so on.
⁷⁶ The model of SSIS had the same years: 4 years of an academic degree and 2 years of teacher training, in total six years of training.
⁷⁸ Ivi, p. 11.
6.3. Physical education teachers

The physical education teachers training, as we have seen before, was a “world apart” from the regular training, and remained in this situation until 2000. In this year, the ISEF reached the full academic level, being transformed in the “Corso di Laurea in Scienze Motorie” (Degree Program of Physical Education and Sport Sciences), a four-year program like the other academic degree programs. The ISEF were dismissed in the next two years, their students got the diploma and their teachers were only in part recycled as researchers or associate professors in the new academic courses. But the next year, the newly born School was invested by the wind of the Bologna process, with the shift of the university system towards a 3+2 curriculum, and another course was implemented again, with the effect that for some years three different curricula was coexisting.

But in the meanwhile, as we know, the SSIS had been implemented, and so the task of training physical education school teachers was given to the SSIS: after a four-year degree, graduated in physical sciences who wanted to teach in the secondary school had to be enrolled in a two-year program of SSIS, organized on the same basis of the other programs.

In this case, remembering the metaphor of a past paragraph, Cindarella became a princess, because the physical education teacher training became the same of the other teachers, coming out from the state of minority in which it was confined for some decades.

Conclusions

The Italian teacher training system grew up, starting from the beginning (the Casati Act) to nowadays (the recent proposals of reform by the so called Israel commission) as a sort of appendix of the whole school system, without a general framework able to identify social needs and training abilities.

The political level of decision always neglected the need of existing teachers, following the way of inverting the logical sequence of the reform acts, first reviewing the state-of-the-art (and teachers are an important

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79 At the beginning, these courses was inserted for the most part in the School of Medicine (only a few in the School of Education), starting a sort of “medicalization” of the curriculum.

80 Many Universities set up special one-year program (60 credits) in order to allow the former ISEF students to got an academic degree, necessary condition for being enrolled in the SSIS.
component of this state) and then proposing solutions to the weak point of the system.

As we have seen also recently, the idea seems to be that teachers have to obey to the new decisions about the school system, without having contributing to form them: the approach of reformers is engineering-oriented.

The reaching of the academic level of all the teacher training courses is really important, but it is not sufficient: many new decisions about the school system were implemented in the early 2000 without thinking of the impact they would have had on the teacher training system, in charge to another Ministry.\textsuperscript{81}

The national system of teacher education is still based on the co-existence of the so called “simultaneous model” at the level of kindergarten and elementary school teachers, and the so called “consecutive model”, at the level of secondary school teachers: while in the first model the professional skills are embedded in the whole curriculum,\textsuperscript{82} in the second one a strong disciplinary competence is required, followed by a one- or two-year program of teaching-oriented curriculum.\textsuperscript{83}

The presence of a teacher training system internal to the academy permitted the growth of a large mass of researches about the main objects of the learning and teaching fields: the psychological foundations of learning and teaching, the beliefs of teachers at the beginning of their career, modular organization of the curriculum, the impact of ICT in the teacher training system, didactical communication and educational relationships, evaluation and improvement of the quality of the training.\textsuperscript{84}

Another problem never solved is the absence of a career plan for tenured teachers, unless considering seniority: there is not a system of evaluation permitting to differentiate the role of the most motivated and clever teachers.

\textsuperscript{81} Starting from the Nineties of the past century, there is a Ministry of Public Education for the children’s, primary and secondary schools, and a Ministry of the University and Scientific Research, who has in charge the Faculties of Sciences of Education and the other schools for teacher training.

\textsuperscript{82} For instance, in the course of Sciences of Primary Education, the school practice starts since the first year of the program.

\textsuperscript{83} This was the model of the past SSIS (a two-year post-bachelor school), and this is the model also of the so called “active educational practice”, a one-year program at the end of a long academic curriculum 3+2, according to the guidelines of the Bologna process.

\textsuperscript{84} An example of this kind of research is the collective volume is G. Domenici (ed.), \textit{La ricerca didattica per la formazione degli insegnanti}, Atti del V Congresso Scientifico della Società Italiana di Ricerca Didattica (SIRD), Bologna, 15-16-17 dicembre 2005, Monolite Editrice, Roma, 2006. It collects the works of the Fifth Congress of the Italian Society for Didactical Research.
The only opportunity to improve their career is to become a principal, through a national examination,\(^{85}\) but that means to switch job at all. All the attempts to link the teacher career improvement to an in-service rational plan of compulsory refreshment courses failed after a few years.\(^{86}\)

Last but not least, there is a hidden conflict between the political level of decision about the school system and the teachers training, and the school environment: the times of this two level are different, because the former needs short times in order to get consensus between the taxpayers and electors, and the latter needs long time for metabolizing innovations and decisions. For instance, one recent case of conflict in represented by the introduction of the portfolio as an evaluation instrument in the Italian school, made through the *Indicazioni Nazionali per i Piani personalizzati delle Attività Educative nelle Scuole dell’Infanzia – nella Scuola Primaria*, that we already talked about referring to the reform acts of the Minister Letizia Moratti. The ministerial portfolio, completely absent from the Italian pedagogical tradition, even if used in some particularly advanced contexts, and quickly designed by the restricted Bertagna commission, was a confused mixture of formative and summative instances, not controlled by the main experts of the field. Instead of asking first what kind of portfolio Italian schools needed, end if they needed it, portfolio was imposed to teachers at all the school levels (except high school), leaving the school councils without guidelines in order to its implementation. The result was a teacher riot, and the Minister was forced to establish regional commission of experts trying to explain the pedagogical implications of the instrument.\(^{87}\) When the government changed, after Berlusconi’s defeat by the center-leftist leader Romano Prodi in 2006, the new Minister Giuseppe Fioroni gave up immediately the project, and the following center-right Minister Gelmini made the same in 2008, remembering the chaotic situation created three years before. Regarding the teachers training, it is to remark the lack of a

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\(^{85}\) In Italy, the principals and the school directors in the public schools are former teachers, starting as substitute principals and then applying for the national examination. But after that, the career of a principal is still based on seniority rather than managerial skills and fulfilling of educational objectives.

\(^{86}\) In the schoolyear 19987-1998, the Ministry of Public Education stated that all the tenured teachers had to follow at least 150 hours per year of refreshment courses, accredited nationally or locally by the school administration: the participation was linked to the passage to an upper level of salary. Especially at local level, many courses were accredited without strict control (even courses of bridge, chess and cuisine were accredited), and the successive year the plan was abandoned.

\(^{87}\) A typical history of this event is told in L. Rondanini, *Valutazione formativa e portfolio*, ….
preliminary exam of the state-of-the-art of the portfolio in the Italian schools, the lack of a plan of in-service training in order to explain the instrument to schools where the portfolio was not used, the lack of consideration of the real condition of teaching.\textsuperscript{88}

In conclusion, the Italian teachers training system is at the same time very young, and it lacks of sounded experiences in order to take decisions, and very weak, and it is exposed to the wind of political changes: instead of growing as am autopoietic system, able to give itself the rules of working, it depends by external decisors, often in strong distony with the real need of a school system and a teacher training system strictly connected and functionally co-operating.

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\textsuperscript{88} The Ministry did not consider that helping a student to compile a portfolio needs time, and this time was not considered as working time, so there were no financial resources for this additional time. The effect was that the first opposition of teachers to the introduction of portfolio was not supported by cultural or pedagogical reasons, but by tradeunionist rivendications.


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