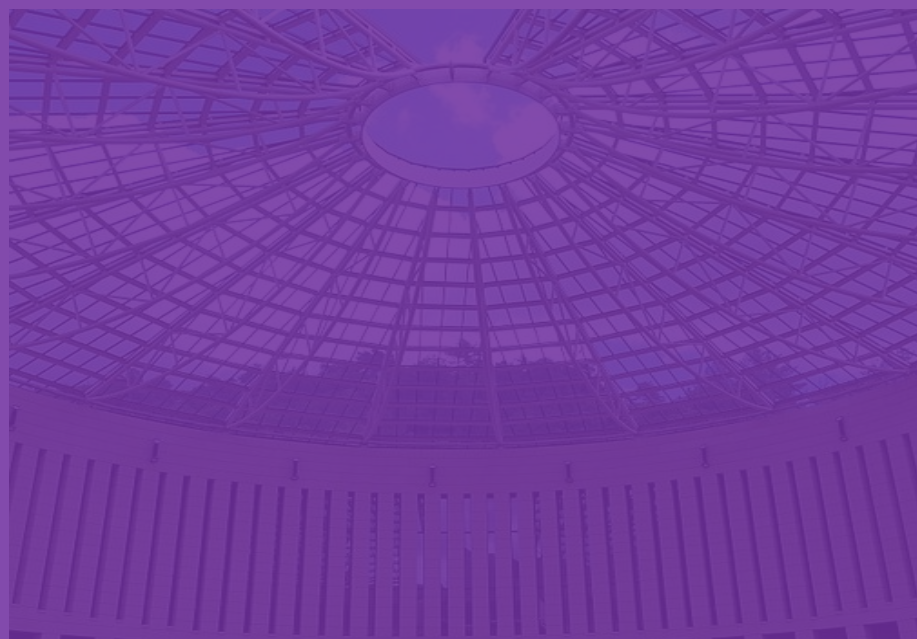


Scuola  
democratica  
First  
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Conference



# Proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica

**EDUCATION AND POST-DEMOCRACY**

5-8 June 2019 Cagliari Italy

**VOLUME III**

**Governance, Values, Work and Future**

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***Title* Proceedings of the First International Conference of the Journal "Scuola Democratica" - Education and Post-Democracy VOLUME III Governance, Values, Work and Future**

This volume contains papers presented in the First International Conference of the Journal "Scuola Democratica" which took place at the University of Cagliari on 5-8 June 2019. The aim of the Conference was to bring together researchers, decision makers and educators from all around the world to investigate the concepts of "education" in a "post-democracy" era, the latter being a set of conditions under which scholars are called to face and counteract new forms of authoritarian democracy.

Populisms, racisms, discriminations and nationalisms have burst and spread on the international scene, translated and mobilized by sovereigntist political movements. Nourished by neo-liberalism and inflated by technocratic systems of governance these regressive forms of post-democracy are shaping historical challenges to the realms of education and culture: it is on this ground, and not only on the political and economic spheres, that decisive issues are at stake. These challenges are both tangible and intangible, and call into question the modern ideas of justice, equality and democracy, throughout four key dimensions of the educational function, all of which intersected by antinomies and uncertainties: ethical-political socialization, differences, inclusion, innovation.

The Conference has been an opportunity to present and discuss empirical and theoretical works from a variety of disciplines and fields covering education and thus promoting a trans- and interdisciplinary discussion on urgent topics; to foster debates among experts and professionals; to diffuse research findings all over international scientific networks and practitioners' mainstreams; to launch further strategies and networking alliances on local, national and international scale; to provide a new space for debate and evidences to educational policies. In this framework, more than 600 participants, including academics, educators, university students, had the opportunity to engage in a productive and fruitful dialogue based on researches, analyses and critics, most of which have been published in this volume in their full version.

## Premise

Papers in this third volume discuss the way in which practices, actors and policies of the educational field interact with logics and stakes of the working world. The directions of the debate are various. On the one hand, there are questions about the autonomy of the school field with respect to the demands of the economic and professional systems. Pedagogies based on learning by doing experiences represent some focus of reflection. On the other hand, papers examine the elements that come into play in the transition from school/university to work, with particular regard to guidance practices. Attention is therefore drawn to the differentiation of educational and professional choices based on class, ethnicity and gender lines.

During recent decades unprecedented attention is being directed at “the quality” of teachers, educators and professionals in education systems and in formal and informal learning environments around the world by a small group of global and national actors. Since the early 2000s, there has been a “thickening” in the global governance of education. Both the OECD, and most recently the World Bank, have insisted on a new debate, and promoted new tools for the governing of educational realms, including teachers’ pedagogical practices potentially linked to student learning outcomes. Many outstanding scholars claim that over recent years, research has shown the ways that national governments have seemingly ceded some of their autonomy in education policy development to international organisations in the context of globalisation and one of its conduits, Europeanisation. Indeed, governance has been posing questions, dilemma, conflicts and polemics at national, regional and local levels with single educational institutes being affected.

Relationships among students, families, educators, evaluators, policy makers and administrative managers are characterized by the emerging role of non-state actors and changing role of the states who cooperate and compete in the designing of transnational education policies and instruments; those that are transposed into the national contexts. Traditionally, education, has been firmly controlled by the hegemonic state which held regulatory powers to force compliance. Within transnational governance of education, the authority – as legitimate power – is shared, negotiated and constructed by the various actors which apart from governments include also international organizations, transnational stakeholder associations, ranking agencies, experts and expert groups and others. Quality assurance and accreditation, international rankings and standardized measures of learning outcomes are some of the key instruments of the contemporary transnational governance of education policies; and they serve differently to different actors in their influence on issues, policies and instruments that shape practices of education institutions. Furthermore, the differences in actual implementation of transnational practices are usually attributed to the influence of national contexts,

but rarely are contextual factors fully understood or systematically investigated.

Education conceived as perspective for future generations opens up the opportunity to enlighten different epistemological discourses, with particular references to evolutions on global scale (post-democracy, post-capitalism, participation...), to the role played by research, technology and knowledge (knowledge for the future, knowledge of art and music...), to the most suitable methodologies (innovation, integrated schools, socialization, documentation, debate, workshops on future...).

What might happen to the ways in which we educate if we treat these questions as a way to be human? A question that can only be answered by engaging in education rather than as a question that needs to be answered before we can educate. Papers host different way to understand and approach education, focussing on important questions about pedagogy, community and educational responsibility. Why the question as to what constitutes good education has become so much more difficult to ask? How may the future of education be expected along a democratic control over values, ethics, science and knowledge?

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## CONTENTS

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PATTERNS AND INEQUALITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION DECISION-MAKING. A RESEARCH ON ITALIAN FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS	3
MARCO ROMITO	3
INSTITUTIONAL CULTURES AND THE EXPERIENCES OF NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS AT AN 'ELITE' UK UNIVERSITY	9
MADDY WINNARD	9
PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PRACTICES IN COMPANIES: THE CASE OF ARGENTINA	16
PABLO EDUARDO NEDER	16
LEARNER'S AGENCY FOR AN ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP. REDESIGNING EFFECTIVE LEARNING CURRICULA IN THE SCHOOL-WORK ALTERNANCE	21
VALERIO MASSIMO MARCONE	21
SOCIOLOGY DEGREE STUDENTRY: AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON THE TRANSITION FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL TO UNIVERSITY	28
MARIA CARMELA CATONE	28
PAOLO DIANA	28
THE REGIONAL NETWORK OF LIFELONG LEARNING IN CAMPANIA	35
GIUSEPPE LUCA DE LUCA PICIONE	35
LUCIA FORTINI	35
RAFFAELE SIBILIO	35
THE SCHOOL-FAMILY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROCESSES OF SIMPLIFICATION AND QUEST FOR COMPETENCES	41
ANGELO FALZARANO	41
THE CHALLENGE OF TRAINING ABOUT THE 'SECOND LEVEL' OF EDUCATION: DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING AN EXPERIMENTAL UNIVERSITY TRAINEESHIP	48
ANDREA GALIMBERTI	48
MARIA BENEDETTA GAMBACORTI-PASSERINI	48
A UNIVERSITY TRAINEESHIP EXPERIENCE FOR EDUCATORS. THE CASE OF THE BACHELOR DEGREE IN EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF MILANO-BICOCCA	53
FRANCESCA OGGIONI	53
CRISTINA PALMIERI	53
NARRATIVES AGAINST NARRATIVES. A GROUNDED AND NARRATIVE-BASED ANALYSIS OF DISCRIMINATIONS	58
MATTEO BOTTO	58
SCHOOL CHANGE AND INNOVATION: STRATEGIC PLANNING AS A LEVER FOR SCHOOL	64
FRANCESCA STORAI	64
SARA MORI	64
BETWEEN SIMILARITIES AND CULTURAL DIVERSITIES: INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE MEETS INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION. THE EXAMPLE OF TRADITIONAL SPORTS AND GAMES	70
FRANCESCA BERTI	70
VALENTINA LAPICCIRELLA ZINGARI	70
DICULTHER NETWORK AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN DEVELOPING CULTURAL HERITAGE LEARNING	76

LETIZIA BINDI	76
DEFINING MODELS TO OBSERVE THE MAIN PHENOMENA CHARACTERIZING THE ITALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM	81
MARIA-TERESA SAGRI	81
ELETTRA MORINI	81
GIULIA VENTURI	81
FELICE DELL'ORLETTA	81
SIMONETTA MONTEMAGNI	81
GPU 2014-2020 PON PER LA SCUOLA. SYSTEM MONITORING, FROM REPORTING FUNCTION TO SHARED INNOVATION OF SCHOOL SYSTEM	88
SAMUELE CALZONE	88
CLAUDIA CHELLINI	88
PATRIZIA LOTTI	88
MONITORING THE SCHOOL INNOVATION. THE DATA CONSTRUCTION AND MANAGEMENT IN THE <i>SCUOLA VIVA</i> PROGRAM	94
LUCIA FORTINI	94
DOMENICO TREZZA	94
AN EMPLOYABILITY-INDEX TESTED BY A NATIONAL DYNAMIC ADMINISTRATIVE DATABASE	102
SERGIO FERRI	102
FEDERICA DE LUCA	102
MICHELANGELO FILIPPI	102

## Patterns and Inequalities in Higher Education Decision-Making. A Research on Italian First-Generation Students

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**Keywords:** *Higher Education, Educational inequalities, Educational decision-making, First generation students.*

### Introduction

In the attempt to enhance global competitiveness, policy discourse of the 1990s and 2000s has identified increasing Higher Education (HE) access as a key strategy to secure economic growth and social inclusion. Raising educational aspiration has become a key policy discourse in many countries with the aim of increasing enrolments (Hinton-Smith, 2012). To secure more graduates, policy discourse is stressing the importance of favouring 'aware' choices in order to reduce university students' dropout (Musselin, Teixeira, 2014). In the policy discourse, students' decision-making is frequently addressed in the singular (Sabri, 2011). However, sociological research has shown the diversity of young people's transitions (Ainley, 2008) pointing out the mechanisms at stake in the production of inequalities in HE choices (Reay *et al.*, 2001) and giving voice to those choice experiences that are usually marginalized within institutional representations (Lee, LaDousa, 2015).

Based on an ongoing qualitative study on students' school-to-university transition focused particularly on first-generation students (FGS) (Thomas and Quinn, 2007), this short paper provides a brief account of a sample of different patterns shaping HE decision in the Italian context.

### 1. State of the art

In the majority of European countries, working-class students still have lower probability to enrol in HE if compared to their middle class or upper-class colleagues (Marginson, 2016). Moreover, as they access a university degree, they have a higher risk of dropping out (Quinn 2013).

In order to interpret young people's HE decision-making, a lively research stream is drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, cultural capital and field. These concepts allow to account for the role of identity and cultural elements in the choosing processes and to value the intricate set of routine-based, emotional, pragmatical elements shaping students decision-making (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). Research has indeed widely criticized (Hatcher, 1998) those approaches obscuring the role of cultural elements and assuming that educational decisions are the outcome of rational calculation rooted within uneven distribution of (mainly economic) resources (Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997). In this regard, studies have shown how university choices can be framed as choices of lifestyle or as practices of social distinction (Ball *et al.*, 2002). It has been pointed out how choices are shaped by differential perceptions of the HE field based on social, ethnic, temporal and spatial dimensions (Baker, 2019; Reay *et al.*, 2001). It has been emphasized that HE decision-making, particularly for non-traditional students, can be made complex by intricate negotiations around identities: between the benefits of social mobility and the costs of losing

one's working-class identity (Archer, Hutchings, 2000). Mobilizing the concept of habitus, scholars have stressed that students' choices are shaped by the perceptions of their *fitting* within different institutions and degrees (Reay 2018). Moreover, by making reference to the concept of 'institutional habitus' research has shown how the different organisational cultures of secondary educational institutions frame – in an interplay with familial habitus – HE choices (Reay, 1998). This is particularly relevant within rigidly tracked secondary school systems, such as the Italian one, where HE transition rates vary tremendously according to previous schooling (Ballarino and Panichella, 2016).

This brief paper cannot fully account for the theoretical debates around Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus and the study of HE choices (Webb *et al.*, 2017). Its aim is instead to put-at-work the ideas and concepts available in this literature to provide a draft interpretation of some of the evidences emerging from an ongoing qualitative research on FGS. After a brief methodological overview, the result section will focus on the role played by familial habitus and institutional habitus on HE decision-making.

## 2. Methodology

The empiric material analysed in this paper has been gathered through in-depth qualitative interviews carried out with 45 newly enrolled first-year, FGS, in a university located in the second largest city in the North of Italy. Interviews are part of a larger ongoing longitudinal research project involving a second round of interviews with the same subjects 'one year after' their enrolment.

A two-step sampling process has been designed. First, three bachelor's degrees have been identified based on the proportion of newly enrolled FGS<sup>1</sup>: Political Sciences and Economy, showing a higher proportion than the average; International Relationships, below the average. Second, within these three degrees, students have been sampled based on their parental level of education (below secondary education), previous schooling – with particular reference to secondary tracking (general education, called *Liceo*, technical and vocational education) – gender and immigratory status. Interviews have been tape-recorded (lasting 1 hour and half on average), transcribed and analysed through a QDA software. This short paper accounts for the main elements of commonalities and difference shaping interviewee decision-making emerged in these analyses.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. *Parents' ambivalent role in the choice to pursue a University education*

It is well known that familial habitus and cultural capital has a paramount role on educational decisions and trajectories. In this regard, FGS share the exceptional condition of being potentially capable of breaking the intergenerational cycle of social reproduction. By getting in a university degree they are indeed in the position to undertake a social mobility path. However, as interviews point out, the decision to pursue a university education is taken within a familial context characterized by a high level of ambivalence.

My dad is bipolar... sometimes it seems he wants me to study at the university, sometimes he seems he does everything to tell me not to do it. Sometimes he is

---

<sup>1</sup> The three degrees do not have anything peculiar in terms of admission policies. As for the majority of bachelors' degrees students are free to enrol without passing any selective examination.

sort of proud of the family tradition, hard worker, working-class tradition... sometimes, rationally, he says to study, so that I can have a better life in the future (Silvio)

As this excerpt illustrates, familial habitus in many instances activates situational responses that might be read as reproductive. Silvio's dad ambivalence emerges as an impulsive (although recurring) reaction linked to the desire to preserve the continuity of the family's working-class identity. A desire that coexists, however, with the perception that university education is something that 'has to be' encouraged in order to favour social mobility («a better life in the future»). The outcome of these contradictory desires is to be found in an attitude shared by almost all interviewees' parents: that of taking a relatively marginal role in the choosing process and that of leaving their children entirely free to choose whatever they like.

I had many doubts about what to do after secondary education, but I had no one to speak about it. My parents tell me 'do what do you want'. I don't have... I should have some point of reference, someone that can tell me 'it is better to do like that and that'. I am doing everything based on my own thinking (Martina).

As this excerpt shows, most of the FGS interviewees' narratives reveal how their parents lack the cultural knowledge and sense of entitlement (Lareau, 2015) to guide them throughout the decision process. Similarly to Martina, the FGS interviewed have coped with HE decisions without adequate familial support: a condition that may favour a less aware decision.

In this context, secondary schools can play a key role. For students who cannot count on familial cultural capital and whose parental habitus is fractured between contrasting dispositions and expectations about HE, schools may constitute a key source of information, advice and encouragement.

### 3.2. *Secondary schools' institutional habitus*

Italian secondary school is rigidly tracked. The *Liceo* track is traditionally perceived as the major route to university. The technical and vocational track, although granting access to university, are intended to provide more immediate access to the labour market. In this context, interviews reveal that post-secondary schools' decisions are constructed not only on the basis of the views and expectations of the family, but also in relation to teachers' and school friends' expectations and advice. In this regard, while *Liceo* students perceived themselves as being firmly entitled to pursue a university education, the choices of technical and vocational students are much more complex and need to be negotiated with friends, families and teachers.

To me, enrolling at university has been something that I built up through time. Being enrolled in a *Liceo*, somehow, I knew I would have continued studying and I think this also played a part in convincing my parents. [...] To me it was more a question about what to choose and this is what we have been discussing most at school in the last year, but also before (Silvia)

In our school (vocational track) nobody was expecting us to go to University and nobody gave us any information about it. The only thing they did has been giving us some flyers. Most of my friends just did not care about it, they were more interested in finding a job (Mattia)

As these excerpts illustrate, interviews reveal the existence of distinctive institutional habitus with consequences on the shaping of how FGS experience

their decision-making. More subtle within-track differences according to the specificity of each school have been also detected. However, due to the rigidity of the Italian secondary tracking system, these latter differences are less significant than the more general ones. Overall, *Liceo* students describe their choices to pursue a university education as an almost taken-for-granted decision and they point out that secondary schools constituted their main source of information and advice. On the contrary, in technical and vocational secondary schools, students report lower expectations for students to pursue a university education and that this may have had an impact on how they define their own identity and sense of entitlement.

Interviews report as well that *Liceo* students are immersed within a social environment where information and knowledge about the university world circulate through school friends' networks, teachers, alumni and guidance activities. On the contrary, within technical and vocational schools, students cope with the decision to pursue a university education in isolation or with the support of few meaningful relationships (one or two school friends, a teacher)<sup>2</sup>. On the one hand, they are more at risk of founding their choices on poor, misleading or inaccurate information. On the other hand, as the following excerpt shows, being their choice perceived as a rupture with what is perceived as a 'normal' trajectory within their secondary schools, they constantly need to legitimize it to their family and to their school friends.

I had many doubts. And I still have. My friends went straight to work. They tell me it is cool I go to the Uni, but... you know, they have already a salary! I have always had these two options: university and work. My parents, they put me pressure because they say 'if you don't pass exams straight away, better go to work'»

*Researcher: so, what made you choose to enroll at uni?*

I actually choose to enroll at uni because I have known from a friend of mine that it is also feasible to work and study at the same time. So I said 'ok I choose a degree that is not very difficult so I can do both, working and studying (Tania)

Beside some specific cases, FGS students, particularly from vocational and technical school, experience HE decision-making journey with doubts, always oscillating between two different and not easily compatible options: that of furthering their education and that of finding a job. Tania's decision to enrol in Political Science echoes the narratives of many interviewees. Although they had strong university aspirations, their decisions were taken within an everyday setting made of specific social interactions, routines, contrasting expectations and desires. Difficult negotiations had to be found and, as the above excerpt illustrate, their choices are based on relatively poor awareness about their interests and academic requests.

## Conclusions

In a country, such as Italy, where access to university is subjected to a regime of (almost) free-choice, students' decisions to further their education after secondary school, do not unfold in a social vacuum and cannot be fully captured by a model of rational action. This paper has focused on FGS and has described some of the processes characterizing their HE decisions. First, it has been outlined that FGS can rarely count on meaningful support within their family environment. On the one hand, although parents may aspire for their children to

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<sup>2</sup> A recent study has shown the key role of teachers in encouraging working-class students to go on to university in Italy (Parziale and Vatrella, 2018)

have a better future, their relationship with HE is ambivalent because it is perceived as a rupture with the familial social world and with their working-class identity. On the other hand, FGS's parents lack the cultural knowledge and information to support their children in the decision-making.

In this context, this paper has emphasized a second key dimension in HE choice: secondary schools' *institutional habitus*. Within the Italian rigidly tracked secondary school system, students are exposed to distinctive social environments, teachers and school friends' expectations and organized guidance practices. While *Liceo* students approach HE as a relatively anticipated, unproblematic choice and can base their choices upon a variety of information acquired at school, students from technical and vocational schools face the decision to pursue a university education in isolation or with the support of few teachers and friends. These students' decision-making is, consequently, often poor and sometimes based on misleading information. A condition that subjects them to a higher risk of early HE dropout.

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## Institutional Cultures and the Experiences of Non-Traditional Students at an 'Elite' UK University

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**Keywords:** *Institutional culture, Student experiences, Institutional habitus, Bourdieu*

### Introduction

Although for policy-makers the hierarchical UK higher education (HE) sector represents a «diverse, competitive system» that has opened up «real choice» for students and reflects their «diverse needs» (Johnson, 2015), the hierarchy of institutions is stratified along social class lines and has resulted in the emergence of new inequalities between students.

Qualified candidates from low socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to apply to higher-ranking universities than their more advantaged peers. Existing interventions primarily aim to resolve this by changing the individual under-represented student rather than the system through aspiration-raising initiatives, which encourage learners to make HE choices deemed 'correct' in the current neoliberal and individualistic policy climate.

This paper is based on research that seeks to problematize this. It looks critically at a key institutional practice of formal dinners to explore the dominant culture of one 'elite' UK university. Drawing on the concept of «institutional habitus» (Reay, 1998), the paper will highlight how the university is an active «intervening variable» (ibid.: para 1.3) in the reproduction of inequalities in HE and demonstrate the need for the university to change itself in order to promote equality of access and experience.

### 1. Policy context and literature background

#### 1.1. *Diversification, stratification and new forms of inequality*

The 110 universities that form the UK's mass HE sector vary greatly in social prestige and compete for the top positions in the numerous different national league tables (e.g. The Guardian, 2019), as well as within global rankings.

Universities that top these league tables have under-representations of those from less advantaged backgrounds. Cambridge and Oxford Universities, which take the top places nationally, had a combined average of just 60.8% of their entrants coming from state-funded schools in 2017-8 (HESA, 2018), compared to 94% being educated here nationally. Just 4.4% of entrants came from low HE-participation neighbourhoods – 7.2 percentage points lower than the UK sector average (ibid.). The reverse is true of the universities in bottom of the league tables, which in some instances have intakes that are 100% state-educated and have 19 percentage points higher than average recruitment from low participation neighbourhoods (ibid.).

Dominant UK government discourse emphasises the benefits of a diverse HE sector that empowers applicants to choose the best university for them. Competition within the sector is advocated as benefitting all by encouraging the raising of standards and high-quality provision across the board (e.g. Department for BIS, 2016).

However, this is contradicted by the fact that employers use league tables to inform their recruitment: it is graduates of high-ranking universities that see the highest financial returns and dominate the professions (Bradley, Waller, 2018). This social segregation among the sector has consequences for social justice.

### *1.2. Exclusionary cultures*

Existing literature that explores students' HE choices has found that students are highly aware of the dominant demographics and therefore classify certain universities as places not suitable for people like themselves, even when appropriately qualified, and opt to go elsewhere in order to «mitigate their position as 'other'» (Read et al., 2003: 265).

Research has highlighted that these perceptions are somewhat true in reality as elitist student cultures have been found to dominate these universities (Cheeseman, 2018; King, Smith, 2018). It has also been found that top-down institutional practices can encourage feelings of privilege among students (Dacin et al., 2010).

### *1.3. Deficit conceptualisations*

Instead of dealing with this by tackling the exclusionary cultures themselves, policy interventions tend to focus on «raising aspirations» of school pupils (Thornton et al., 2014) on the rationalist assumption that this will make them choose higher-ranking universities.

Although these interventions may be useful in part, this research wants to move beyond individualistic deficit conceptualisations and draw attention to the responsibility of institutions to tackle their exclusionary cultures.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

This paper draws on the Bourdieusian conceptual device of habitus - which is the norms, practices and ideals particular to a social class that informs an individual's behavior (Bourdieu, Passeron, 1977) - and its more recent application by McDonough (1996) and Reay (1998) to organisations in the form «institutional habitus». As with the individual habitus, the collective concept refers to the «set of dispositions» of an institution (Ingram, 2009: 432). It is dialectical in nature, being a product of both past and present and structured in its formation and structuring in its consequences (ibid.)

Analysing how it is structured by certain powerful actors and structuring on the habitus of individuals can highlight «the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behavior as it is mediated through an organisation» (Reay et al., 2001). By recognizing the potential of the university to reproduce, rather than just reflect, inequalities, institutional habitus allows attention to be given to the ways in which the institution can «bring about an adjustment in the habitus of individuals within it through its collective actions» (Burke et al., 2013: 173) in ways that may alienate and exclude non-traditional students.

## **3. Methods**

This research is an institutional ethnography of Durham University, comprising repeat semi-structured interviews with first year non-traditional students, observations of collegiate life, and analysis of university promotional material.

The case study university, Durham University, was founded in 1832 and is the third oldest university in England. It is located in the north east of England

and sits within the top ten in national league tables. It had a higher proportion of privately educated entrants than Cambridge in 2017-8 and has very low numbers coming from low HE-participation areas (HESA, 2019). As similar to Oxbridge - but different to other 19<sup>th</sup> century UK universities (Silver, 2004: 125) - it is collegiate, with students required to be a member of a college. Many of the colleges still practice traditions such as the requirement of dressing in academic gowns for college events and the hosting of formal dinners.

A recruitment call was circulated to first year undergraduates asking for the participation of students «for whom going to university was uncommon/ not the norm». As 'non-traditional' is a subjective concept, allowing for self-identification was seen as an appropriate method to gain a sample constituted by students who feel different.

#### **4. Formal dinners**

The broader research on which this paper is based is still ongoing. Therefore, this paper focuses on one institutional practice that is emerging as providing key insight into the nature of this habitus: formal dinners. Formal dinners are three course meals that are served to students and academic staff in colleges by catering staff and take place from twice a term in some colleges to bi-weekly in others. Formal wear is required for attendance at all colleges, and at over half this should be accompanied by an academic gown. Academic staff sit separately to students on their own 'high table'.

#### **5. Institutional habitus of the university**

The institutional practice of formal dinners is indicative of the university's habitus having its roots in its historical provision of an education solely for the 'elite'. Catering within the university began in 1846, when previously bringing a servant was required (Moyes, 1996). Still, in the 1840s the archetypal Durham student was «well-connected» and «well-off» (Watson, 2007: 19) and, like at Oxbridge, the hierarchical nature of college dining «reflected the British Class system», as «fellows and students were drawn almost exclusively from its upper reaches and served by waiters and butlers whose primary objective was to protect the privilege of the former» (Dacin et al., 2010: 1413). Dinners played a key role in socializing students to become «a homogeneous governing class» (Soffer, 1994: 24-5 quoted in Silver, 2004: 125).

The continuation of this archaic institutional practice in an era where the sector is facing pressure to widen participation indicates a habitus reluctant to change. In fact, the university advocates the context from which formal dinners stem as legitimating their continuity on grounds of tradition: Hatfield College (2019) advertises that formal dinners there provide students with «an unrivalled experience» as they are «laced with tradition».

However, Durham is going through a period of significant expansion with the creation of new colleges to house the greater numbers of incoming students (Durham University, 2016). One that has opened this year is self-catered in provision and does not have a suitable venue for dinners. Instead, their students move around other colleges, who take it in turn to act as the host site for formal dinners. The now-irrelevant context of their creation and their commencement in environments with neither a historical link to, or appropriate physical venue for, them indicates that, as an institutional practice, formal dinners are an

«invented tradition» (Hobsbawm, Ranger, 1983), with purely symbolic value rather than a clear function.

As Ingram (2009: 432) reminds us, a collective habitus is «durable and long-lasting but not static» - this lack of change is not inevitable. Formal dinners in the modern day have taken on a new symbolic value: to act as a marketing tool in maintaining the prestige for the institution. The University states that the collegiate environment, of which formal dinners play a key role, is «critical to our business model» in offering «a unique student experience» and thereby «integral to attracting staff and students» and «support[ing] the university's reputation» (Durham University, 2016).

Thus, the university habitus is characterized by elitism; rooted in its historical purpose of serving the next governing class and continued in order to attract students from the advantaged strata of society to compete in the marketised and «highly stratified and struggle-filled» educational field (Atkinson, 2011: 337), over and above wanting to diversify its culture and student intake.

## **6. Non-traditional student habitus: «I don't fit in here. I don't like this»**

The participants in this research did, surprisingly, report being attracted to the university by these practices. Hannah said, «I wanted a gown, I wanted to feel like I'm at Hogwarts, I wanted that feeling». When prompted, she said that the feeling was pride. Belle spoke of a similar sentiment, saying «I feel proud in my gown for getting in somewhere like this». These contrived institutional practices are equated with notions of high quality and distinction to the rest of the sector.

Tony said that he was «really looking forward» to formal dinners, as he imagined that they would be «a nice community thing». For these students who have bucked the trend and applied to this university, the archaic practices are seen as having the potential to facilitate feelings of inclusion and are not at first so incompatible with their habitus that they are put off from applying.

Yet many of the participants found that in practice they dislike attending formal dinners. With regard to his perception of them fostering community spirit, Tony said «they just don't» in reality. He explained that «everyone around you is wearing watches that cost as much as you do. You just get the distinct feeling of I don't fit in here. I don't like this». Tony has not attended any other formal dinners following this initial traumatic encounter of feeling inferior due not having the 'correct' apparel to take part.

For Belle, the inherently hierarchical nature of formal dinners caused her to stop attending. She said, «there were people around the same age as me serving me food and they were wearing white gloves and our head of catering was ordering them around and it really got to me [...] I felt so bad, I said to my flat-mates «I don't like being served, I'd rather go up and get my own food [...] this isn't right, I don't like this»». Belle works at her parents' Bed and Breakfast. She is used to being the one serving rather than being served. The incompatibility between her habitus and the institutional habitus presents Belle with a choice of succumbing to taking her place in the hierarchy that the university has established or refusing to take part. She opts for the latter.

The formal dinner therefore represents a disjuncture of the habitus of the students from that of the institution. Students who were previously eager to participate in collegiate activities change their dispositions once they encounter the problematic realities of a dinner.

## **7. Habitus of privately educated: 'a fish in water'**

This contrasts greatly with the case of the habitus of students from wealthy backgrounds, particularly the privately educated. Participant Rosie describes how certain male students who have come from public schools – the UK's most expensive private schools – wear emblems of their schooling background to dinners. Due to this they have been able to form a club called the 'Elite League of Gentlemen', with only those who have been to such a school invited to join:

«The boys from Eton and Harrow have that [...] vibe. And I think they still wear their Eton suits for formals. I think they have cufflinks. They have a tie or something that shows that they're from Eton [...] They have a meeting on my friend's floor [...] and we'll hear them with the champagne».

Formal dinners act as an extension of the public school experience and facilitate the bonding of students from this background. As a consequence, this publicly-educated demographic that forms just 0.15% of British society (Verkaik, 2018: 289) are still today, a «fish in water» (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992: 127) in this type of university, at the expense of others who face isolation. It is clear that formal dinners as an institutional practice do not merely operate at the level of symbolic value, but amount to symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1996), as they channel the preferences of the publicly-educated student over and above promoting an inclusive college environment.

Unlike Dacin and colleagues (2010) who found that the identities of students from different backgrounds at Cambridge University tended to converge as a result of socialization at formal dinners, this research demonstrates a clear split in the experiences of students, dependent on their habitus. The publicly-educated student habitus and the institutional habitus is highly compatible, and the opposite is true for students from less advantaged backgrounds. As a concept, institutional habitus draws attention to how the habitus of members can remain different, but are fundamentally inter-related (Burke et al., 2013: 177): as privileged students come to the dining hall decked in expensive items and initiate new hierarchies between students according to background, it pushes the participants in this study away.

## **Conclusions**

The collective habitus of Durham University is characterised by elitism as a result of its historical purpose, as well as current pressures in the higher education field. Throughout, it has channelled the preferences of middle-class students into its institutional practices and specifically, those coming from public schools.

Many participants self-excluded from the practice of formal dinners, refusing to allow the institutional habitus to mediate their personal habitus. Although exercising agency, it results in exclusion and contributes to the domination of the privately educated in university life.

As a consequence, the university's habitus is structuring, firstly, on the habituses of privately-educated students who fit in like a «fish in water» and use the opportunities provided to extend their boarding school experience rather than adapt to their new environment; and secondly, on the habituses of first-generation students who become uncomfortable in taking part in a key institutional practice.

By promoting these institutional practices as key to who they are as an institution, the university is an active agent in reproducing the new inequalities in the

UK university system. It is unhelpful and inappropriate to encourage students to merely «raise their aspirations», when they are likely to face negative experiences at these universities.

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## Professional Training Practices in Companies: the Case of Argentina

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### Introduction

The history of vocational training (VT) is linked to economic development models and conceptions about the education-work relationship. These elements have influenced vocational training models in different countries by projecting diverse experiences in their implementation. In Germany, the company is the main responsible for training; the state vocational school, under the responsibility of the *Länder*, is complementary. The British model, conversely, encourages a strong presence of the private sector in the task of extending and improving Vocational Training. This model is based on the notion that employers know what kind of workforce is needed and, therefore, what kind of vocational training is required. Two government initiatives respond to this approach: the TECs (Training and Enterprise Councils), responsible for promoting the achievement of professional qualifications by young people who leave the school system at 16 years old and the CTCs (City Technology Colleges), responsible for qualified training. In France, the social partners, business groups and trade unions play a crucial role in the development of education policies.

These models were based on an initial conception according to which the ways of acquiring professional knowledge consisted of starting as an 'apprentice' in small businesses, workshops, family-type farms or businesses, starting with the achievement of tasks without prior knowledge requirements, from the bottom and supporting the most qualified person in a very straightforward way. This training was completed through the different scales or levels of responsibility and knowledge that were tacitly established in all trades.

In the case of Argentina, the primacy of general and academic education strongly influenced the historical development of vocational training. VT practices in companies in Argentina are commonly referred to as 'internships' The 'citizen knowledge' to which it was aimed was conceived as different from the knowledge of work and it was considered that the school should provide a humanistic culture, without differentiation.

### 1. The complex relationship between education and work

The starting point to carry out this research process is part of the education and work dyad and the complexity involved in the analysis of that relationship, always in the process of transformation and dispute between the fields of responsibility and analysis. This connection has been approached from different scientific fields, such as sociology, economics, education sciences and political sciences, among others, each with its specificity and interests, resulting in multiple analytical perspectives that tell us about theoretical disagreements and



alternative perspectives in the approach (Spinosa and Drolas, 2009; Planas, 2018, Spinosa and Delfini, 2008; Jacinto 2015). In general, studies on the problem published in our field range between anchoring in education or a positioning from the world of work, taking for granted the difficulty in the disciplinary and theoretical articulation concerning the relational field between education and work.

The analysis from the educational system tends to visualize the world of work as the finishing line, without still having been able to explain and put in relation the internal structure that this space presents, which assumes the fate of people once they have left the education system. The functioning of the job market, the work processes and their relationships, tend to be presented as a given data, which should orient or not, according to the perspective, the functioning of the formal education instances. In contrast, this perspective is comprehensible considering that the educational logic is substantially different from the logic of the job markets. For this reason, the education system should not lose its specificity in relation to the people who go through it and are part of its dynamic.

On the other hand, in the analyses positioned from the world of work, education is thought of as a 'giver of conditions' so that men and women build the basic requirements for entry or journey through productive organizations. In this way, there are no considerations about the learning processes or their importance in the trajectories of the subjects, but only the result accrued from the educational system in terms of 'capacities' to act and intervene in the context of production. Furthermore, when these considerations and practices appear, they usually overlap with the processes of the education system, thus tending to a kind of tangle of training offers that people face without knowing in many cases the real impacts that these offers will have on their trajectories, especially in relation to their certifications and approvals.

In the first place, and following Briasco (2011) it can be argued that the relationship between education and work must be understood in view of the regimes of accumulation, formed by technological patterns, productive organization, labor relations, income distribution, demanded qualifications, etc. Beyond this necessary interweaving, this does not imply that education constitutes a reflection of the accumulation pattern, but that education and accumulation regime sustain an articulated and over determined relationship.

From a clearly located perspective from the labor market or productive needs, the relationship between education and work is the link between the supply of work (composed of people and their qualifications) and the demand for work composed of entrepreneurs and self-employed or freelance (Planas, 2018). Thus, education plays a central role in the process of shaping the job offer, although this involves a difficult problem to solve for educational policies, which is the difference in the rhythm of changes. While the rhythms of productive changes are faster, transformations in the education system are slower. According to Planas (2018), educational management in its connection with work produces a 'disharmony' associated with the different rhythms in the evolution of labor supply and demand.

However, the disharmony and the difference in the rhythms of formation of the labor supply and the rhythm of the demand may exhibit certain differentials according to the regime of accumulation depending on the proximity between the rhythms of the reproduction of the labor force and the ways of reproduction of capital. While in the pattern of dominant accumulation since the early 1980s, productive and organizational technological transformations have developed at such a rapid pace that the formative phenomena linked to the supply seem to be well behind the speed of changes. Although these differentiated processes in the education-work articulation can be explained relatively in terms of the

money invested by Fordist companies in the formation of their own workforce and in the importance given to training at work (as opposed to later processes in which this responsibility is transferred to the State and the education system), in this context an interrogation arises related to that takeoff and how education articulates the recurrent transformations.

Then again, from the theory of human capital to the different branches of sociology of reproduction, the educational system has been analyzed as a dependent variable of the productive system and, when the data shows that people with a training level or specialty are not where they should be, is analyzed as mismatch or declassification. This limited view of the relationship has moved to educational policy and planning and has become hegemonic (Merino et al., 2011).

## **2. Certification as an integration variable between education and work**

The quest to be able to integrate the educational phenomenon to the demand of the productive world also contains another fact of vital importance for this articulation, such as certification. The relationship between education and certification is one of those associations that, for being socially naturalized, often operate as synonyms. As in all naturalization processes of social relations, the factor that facilitates this operation is usually the reduction of one of the terms to one of its possible expressions. Therefore, in the case of education and certification, the association comes from reducing education (or more explicitly learning) to the actions carried out institutionally, and certification as the only form of expression of social recognition (Spinosa, Drolas, 2009).

Linked to this relationship between certification and education is the equally naturalized association between certification and learning. The legitimacy of the education system as an institution of social classification, finds support in the measure that the equality of results in terms of learning is presupposed, as a product of the journey through the educational system in its various levels and modalities.

Thus, the social acceptance regarding the value of the certifications, rests on the conviction that all the people who access any of them have made the same learning, have had the same (or homologated) educational trajectory. It is this belief that sustains its legitimacy and the high appreciation of the knowledge built on its path compared to other learning resulting from social experience. This potentiality requires the recognition of the differences presented by the knowledge built in and for work and experience, with those that are systematized in the curriculum; as well as its epistemological and pedagogical articulation possibilities (Spinosa, Otero, 2008; Spinosa et al., 2007).

These positions have as a correlate a broader vision of education, incorporating the acquisition of knowledge by other means and spaces, such as the world of work. That is to say, education as an incorporation of knowledge is not only tied to the institution as such or to schooling, but education or training are given by different means where schooling and the certificates obtained in that framework form a part of it. In this sense, and following Planas (2005; 2018), it is advisable not to reduce education to schooling. That is, education as the result of a process of knowledge acquisition that is carried out throughout life, regardless of the means and moment in which they were acquired. They can be acquired through formal education or through what the author calls «training» understood as the extremely diverse set of possible non-school educational

experiences. Thus, education would be shaped by the sum of schooling and the certifications provided by the training (Planas, 2005 2018).

In relation to that and as a consequence of the unemployment problems that begin to develop since the 1990s, there are two certification processes that would make the subject that carries them a 'more employable' subject: on the one hand, certification-training and, on the other, certification-learning (Spinosa, Drolas, 2009). The first implies the certificate credential as a corollary of a specific training process. The second implies the credential as a certification of knowledge learned outside of educational institutions. Both perspectives coexist today, but they take on different importance according to their own historical moment and the socio-economic conditions (in addition to being sustained by different institutional forms). The concern and the question about the possibility of multiplying the forms of certification that became legitimate credentials for obtaining employment are being modified (Spinosa, Drolas, 2009).

## Conclusions

It is important in the context of this research to fully understand the idea of work, holding a different idea that breaks its association with employment. While the latter assumes a salary relationship and is defined by it based on a remuneration for the tasks performed around the capital-labor relationship, the former appears as broader and exceeds the wage ratio in a strict sense. The work can be paid within the framework of a salary relationship and can be developed outside of it or not be paid, and in this sense, it appears as a collective and identity experience to the extent that it places the subjects according to what they do. Precisely, this idea of highlighting work as a concept above employment has been imposed to the extent that it is a fundamental activity of the human being.

Work, while remaining a central source of value in the capitalist world, transcends that single wage dimension to the extent that it entails a process of personal fulfillment, integration and means of social bonding, and of course as a weighted space for knowledge building collective. Understanding it in this way draws up the possibility of finding in the same act of work learning processes and developments anchored in it that go beyond the enabling credentials granted around formal education.

In summary, the articulation between education and work has shown different points of view. Nonetheless, from the views presented here, it is sought to show that education and with it, the learning processes can be developed beyond certification institutions such as schools. However, the legitimizing nature of the qualifications achieved through formal education constitutes a central knowledge validation system at the current stage of development. In addition, the education system is (with all its failures and shortcomings) the most democratic and democratizing structuring in the construction of knowledge and learning processes.

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## Learner's Agency for an Active Citizenship. Redesigning Effective Learning Curricula in the School–Work Alternance

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**Keywords:** *Agency, School–Work alternance, Curriculum development, Life-long learning, Work based learning.*

### Introduction

In Italy since the early 2000s, the adoption by the European Union of policies based on the concept of Lifelong learning (Alberici, 2002, Di Rienzo, 2014) and the appeal to the plurality of formal, non-formal and informal contexts for learning have begun to modify in depth the scope of the school- work alternance.

Hence the need to redesign effective learning curricula (Marcone, 2018) in secondary schools centered on a combination of general knowledge, technical skills and soft skills in order to facilitate transitional school-work processes to tackle especially the 'dramatic phenomenon' of the 'Neet' (Not in education, employment, or training).

According to Eurostat data (2017), Italy ranks among the top countries by percentage of NEETs (15-29 years) along with Greece and Bulgaria, going from a share of 18.8% in 2007 to 24.1% in 2017, the year in which the European average stands at 13.4%. If, on the other hand, we are going to examine young adults (20-34 years old), according to Eurostat data for 2017, the percentage of NEETs in Italy increases by almost 30%, a value above the European average of 12.3% percentage points. (Eurispes, 2019). One of the causes of the dramatic 'youth issue' is undoubtedly the structural distance between the educational system (school, university) and production systems (companies), which can already be identified in the 'first transitional phase' (from secondary school to the world of work). In fact, another critical issue in Italy in addition to the growing number of NEETs is the so-called 'skill miss match', with a high gap between skills offered by companies and those demanded by students coming out of tertiary education. On this issue a careful reflection must be made on the design of new curricula starting from secondary schools that can anticipate these so widespread problems, which can integrate multiple aspects not only didactic but also social. In this perspective, the school-work alternance, promoting social and participatory learning, activates processes of awareness, change, skills, which involve (students, teachers), institutions (school and business) and territorial contexts. Among the problem-questions, on which we therefore ask ourselves, are the following: how to facilitate the transitional processes from school to work starting from the structural dimensions? How to train new talents in the face of rapid changes in the work of Industry 4.0?

### 1.Theoretical background

#### 1.1. Towards a learner's agency

The complexity connected to the new transformations of Industry 4.0 will have to face with a new worker-individual whom we can define as 'agent', able to understand the new paths and critically rethink his activities and behaviors through processes of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). In front of the

scenarios of the fourth industrial revolution and of the generative potential of the disruptive economy, the new worker will have to operate more and more a possible choice process. It cannot be framed within of the utilitarian paradigm based on rationalism, but rather referable to a structure in which the agent's disposition to understand, affirm, modify his set of preferences, interests, ends, values defined and socially redefined is fundamental (Wallerstein, 2006). Umberto Margiotta (2014), underlines that «it is also true that schools are often given an impossible task when they are asked to adapt to the needs produced in young people and families by the global forms of contemporary change and the changing expectations of societies whose populations do not always know clearly what they really want from the school». Then, from which school to start again? That of the traditional lesson and of the transmissive teaching? There is no doubt that starting from school means changing in teaching. In this scenario, starting from the initial training paths becomes central in order to educate and train new talents and prepare them for this revolution. Starting again from secondary school means redesigning new capacitive learning curricula, placing the student in the school/work context in a theory and praxis duality (Marcone, 2018). The growing awareness that work-based learning can foster a gradual transition from training to work has 'reinvigorated' interest in apprenticeship (see, for example, the Bruges Communication, 2010), stimulating European countries to implement a reform of vocational education and training programs, with a view to strengthening the link between training institutions and companies. To this aim, programs characterized by a strong component of WBL represent valid methods to prepare young people for specific professional activities, and thus favor their transition to the world of work. «Work-based learning is a way to enable individuals to develop their potential. The working component contributes substantially to developing a professional identity and increasing individual self-esteem» (The Bruges Communication, 2010). Therefore, the quality of WBL is a central aspect for improving the quality of education and vocational training. The innovations and good practices of WBL developed in recent years are a significant path also within VET experiments. The WBL also enhances the advantages of alternating between classroom learning and learning in the company and therefore implies a link between formal, informal and non-formal learning, in correlation with the needs particularly emphasized by the European Union. In order to explore work-based learning pathways it is crucial to understand the learner's point of view and the benefits of such educational. A key advantage for those taking part in WBL's pathways is that they develop their professionalism not only through the acquisition of technical skills, but also through soft skills. In this respect, therefore, also the agency capabilities are strengthened, fundamental for implementing, in an autonomous, active and aware way, lifelong and life-wide learning processes and programs (Alberici, 2002).

### *1.2. The educational value of work-school alternation*

The school-work alternance is a teaching methodology that allows students who attend secondary schools (professional institutes, technical institutes, high schools) to carry out a part of the training course at a company or an institution. It is, at the same time, a tool for combining theoretical classroom study (scholastic preparation) with forms of practical learning carried out in a professional context (MIUR, 2016). The SWA has established by Law 53/03 and Legislative Decree 77/05 as a «teaching modality that the student can choose to have some learning in working places as part of the curriculum of their secondary studies». Law 107/15, so-called 'Good School', has emphasized the importance of the role of work school alternation, increasing the hours assigned to all types of secondary institutes of second degree, thus approaching the German dual system.

«The school-work alternance is an innovative teaching method which, through practical experience, helps to consolidate the knowledge learned at school and to test students' attitudes in the field, to enrich their training and to orientate their studies and, in the future, work, thanks to projects related to their study plan» (MIUR, 2015). From 2019, the school-work alternance has changed and called PCTO, an acronym for courses for transversal skills and orientation (*Percorsi per le Competenze Trasversali e per l'Orientamento*). The number of hours has instead reduced, and we are currently awaiting the decree establishing the new guidelines.

Therefore, the SWA is a methodology configured as a learning situation (Lave, Wenger, 1991) but different from other experiences such as internships and apprenticeships, just because it presupposes an alternation between work and study. Alternately, the student works and acquires skills in the workplace, but then s/he goes back to school to redefine the skills themselves, to systematize them from a theoretical-formal perspective and above all to reflect on their own experience and give them a sense from a personal point of view. In this regard, the Alternation achieves more than other methodologies learning for skills according to the European definition outlines. Therefore, this methodology is useful for non-formal learning, considered fundamental by European documents to effectively achieve and practice competences. The school has the duty to promote and take up this experience to give it meaning and meaning and to give it to the reflection of the pupil so that it becomes not only technical knowledge, but also personal patrimony for the development of the young student's identity. A deep awareness of oneself, of one's own knowledge, abilities and competences, a correct self-esteem and ever more agency capabilities favor, then, to promote lifelong, life-wide and life-deep learning perspective. Lifelong education is a crucial matter to dealing with today's challenges concerning societies, cultures, economies, health and progress (Aleandri, Girotti, 2011). In addition, these enhance a broader knowledge and awareness of the various social and environmental contexts, essential for achieving educational goals for sustainable development, as advocated in the UNESCO Agenda 2030 (ONU, 2015).

## **2. Research design**

The research carried out during Ph.D. programme (Marcone, 2017), aimed at identifying the training 'variables' characterizing work-based learning processes. According to Margiotta (2015), the training experiences of young people involved in programmes of 'dual learning' (both in the classroom and at work) must be considered for what students learn, but also for the characteristics of cognitive processes activated, for the recognition of changes in the relationship with knowledge, and in the participation in the process of constructing meanings. The concepts of reflexivity (Dewey, 1910) transformation (Mezirow, 1991), and centrality of the subject are identifiable in a training dimension of dual learning characterized by mixed practices of theory and practice, knowledge and action, in school and in the enterprise. Training, therefore, does not only concern structured learning situations, but includes everything that makes 'significant' actions aimed at creating value. The empirical- descriptive research developed has been intended to answer some of the questions: how design new effective curricula to improve learner's agency? How can work-based learning be formative and generative for personal development of learner in his/her transition from school to work, not only in order to become a 'good worker', but also a 'good citizen' for lifelong, life-wide and life-deep learning? How can teachers facilitate student learning to improve their ability to learn to learn? The methodological

approach has based on the standard canons of empirical research in the educational fields. Therefore, we chose to use the technique of focus. Interpretative analysis has carried out in order to identify the most significant descriptive variables of the studied phenomenon. In details, the case study presented in this paper focuses on experience of work-related learning within two Technical and vocational Institutes in the north of Italy. The Participants are students of age 16-18, from two different formation paths, i.e. the graphical and geotechnical didactic pathways, as well as Vet Teachers.

**2.1. Methodology**

The survey has required the construction of a pedagogical device «Taxonomy of Quality Indicators (TIQ)» related to the study of work-based learning processes. The taxonomy of quality indicators was elaborated for my empirical research of PhD project at the Ca 'Foscari University of Venice. It derives from the aim of transferring the principle of education and training into a schematic way in order to settle a 'road map' within the practice communities of trainers, training process experts in the field of work-based learning processes. Within this device, the researchers have 'explored' five indicators containing each two dimensions. Below, furthermore, it has reported the table with the Taxonomy built for empirical research:

**FIGURE 1. TIQ –WBL (Taxonomy of quality indicators of WBL)**

Indicators	Dimensions	Description
1.RIFLEXIVITY	<i>Self-awareness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the learner able to practice cognitive with regard to professional practice, including through the tutor's mediation?</li> </ul>
	<i>Self-orientation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the learner able to independently elaborate development objectives of his work-based learning path with particular attention to improving his / her strengths ('professional mastery')?</li> </ul>
2.PARTECIPATION	<i>Identity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The learner is able to elaborate in a personal way a conscious participation in the work activities related to his learning path, configuring his identity, in different relational contexts (school, company)?</li> </ul>
	<i>Responsability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the learner capable of developing 'responsible' behaviors in the context of learning at work (an idea of mutual commitment, of shared values, of legitimizing one's own 'membership' in the group)?</li> </ul>
3.AGENCY	<i>Personal development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the learner able to identify the goals of his professional development by negotiating with the tutor, medium-long-range training objectives?</li> </ul>
	<i>Self-efficacy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the learner able to develop his potential autonomously in an effective way?</li> </ul>
4.CAPABILITY	<i>Projectuality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the learner able to exercise his ability to act on a project level, pursuing his / her objectives as values through negotiation with the tutor and the group?</li> </ul>
	<i>Functionings</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can the learner develop observable skills of action in relation to the professional context that characterizes his process of learning at work?</li> <li>▪ Has the learner acquired the necessary learning to develop a consolidated and adaptable mental and professional habit for new work contexts?</li> </ul>
5.GENERATIVITY		

source: personal processing



## 2.2. Qualitative tools: focus groups

The focus group is a tool enhancing the analysis in depth rather than the extensive type, effective to collect in a limited time a range of points of view on the same theme, variable both for content and for emotional intensity and expanded by the interaction among the participants. Especially, for the proposed case study ten focus groups had activated up to 120 students. The intent through this research tool was to carry out a reflective activity in the classroom with the students involved in the experience of alternation and the presence of an internal tutor. Through the reflective activity made possible by the 'focus', many interesting aspects linked to the indicators contained in the Taxonomy of quality indicators of work-based learning processes have emerged.

## 3. Findings

The perceptions of the students that emerged as a synthesis have summarized in the following table. The synthesis work allowed the mapping of nine 'learner's conceptions'.

**FIGURE 2. 'Learner's conceptions'**

Learner's Conceptions	Description
1. Perception of the separation of the 'two worlds' (school-work)	The different positioning of the two worlds has not overlooked by the student, both in terms of communication strategies and in terms of expected and accepted behaviors.
2. Difficulties in transferring learning in most of the cases of the students	The student cannot perceive clearly the logical and methodological links between what learned in the classroom and what at the workplace.
3. Acquisition of responsibility for behaviors at work	The student feels invested with completely different expectations and responsibilities in working contexts in the sense that in working contexts he/she becomes deep awareness in perceiving responsibility.
4. Self-orientation	The student acquires a greater awareness of his/her 'professional vocation' by understanding the more or less congenial activities for his/her future.
5. Collaborative relationality	The student at the workplace understands the added value of the 'help relationship' with the colleagues or the experienced adult more than he can do in the classroom.
6. Increase of reflective capacity	The student perceives his / her ability to exercise a reflexive action while acting (knowledge in action) and then learns by doing.
7. Alternating negotiation management in the relationship with the tutor	The student understands the role of the tutor as a mediator in the work environment perceived as 'hostile' and 'cold'.
8. Perceptions of the positive value of the practice for the acquisition of skills	The student understands that putting knowledge into practice (using laboratory tools and tools) involves reinforcing his/her skills.
9. Orientation integration of work with life experiences (family, groups of equal, free time)	The student understands that the reference communities (family, peer group, etc.) are in continuity and that the permeability of boundaries can be a value added for his/her growth.

source: personal processing

## Conclusions

The agency, according to Amartya Sen, consists in the actual possibility and ability of the subject's action in pursuing goals and objectives to which he assigns value, regardless of whether or not they have a relapse on their immediate well-being. Agency is a central capability for every individual especially to realize his/her freedom (Sen, 1999,2004; Nussbaum, 2012). In work-based learning, in a continuous virtuous combination between theoretical knowledge learned in the classroom and practical skills in action, it is fundamental to understand the concept of agency (Costa, 2016). Human development could have considered as the only condition for the expansion of the freedom of the subject and of social groups. The capability approach becomes itself a pedagogical principle (Alessandrini, 2014). For this reason, it is essential to redefine new curricula in secondary schools and initial training that focus on student learning and that can help develop an ability to adapt to the changes in society and work, in order to be a good, active, inclusive and collaborating citizen.

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## Sociology Degree Studentry: An Empirical Research on the Transition from Secondary School to University

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**KEYWORDS:** *Studentry, University student identity, Student Socialization, Quantitative research*

### Introduction

This article examines the process of socialization to university context of the first-year students. In particular, we present the main results of an empirical research aimed at investigating the delicate transitional moment from secondary school to university of the first-year students of the 1<sup>st</sup> level degree course in Sociology at the University of Salerno (Italy). This phase, defined as 'studentry', is connected to a set of fractures that involve a multiplicity of aspects of the student's life such as the possible difficulties met by learners in adjusting to the university environment, the changes in their practices of study, the transformation in the dynamics of social relations up to a redefinition of their identity representation. The choice to carry out an empirical research on the first year students' experience is also due by our interest and involvement to provide an high quality teaching at university level. According to some research that we carried out over last years (Diana, Catone, 2016; 2018; 2016; Catone, Diana, 2016) an high quality teaching is represented by a 'situated' integration of a set of components (Cochran et al., 1993; Van Driel et al., 1998) that imply an in depth reflection on 1) the characteristics of discipline; 2) the pedagogical approach in terms of teaching strategies and learning processes 3) the characteristics of the students and 4) the socio-economic-cultural context and conditions in which they operate. Related to the last two aspects, our research on studentry process has been planned and implemented in order to acquire a more specific knowledge of our target of students and to provide them a customized educational path, according to their specific socio-cultural characteristics, learning needs and psychological features. These aspects are explored in the following sections of this article.

More specifically, starting from a general overview of the studentry phenomena from a theoretical point of view (section one), we present the methodology adopted (section two) and the main results (section three) of the empirical research we carried out in 2018/2019 a.y. at the University of Salerno.

### 1. Studentry to define socialization process of university students

Social sciences usually deal with the adolescence and the various aspects of the university experience as an important moment of the first stage of socialization, which is preparatory to entry into adulthood (Ciampi, 2017). More specifically, the issue of student socialization in the university context and in particular the transition of first year students from high school to university represents a crucial phase in the student identity process as it marks the shift from adolescence to post-adolescence, i.e the passage towards the adult condition. It can

be conceived as an interactive process, where the student as an active subject moves in a specific environment within new and different social groups that impact on his/her identity, as well as on the ways of thinking and acting.

The entrance to university system is indeed connected to a series of fractures which involve a set of aspects of the student's daily life, such as the detachment from the family, the friendship relations, the lifestyle until to the method of study. According to different researches, the changes due to these fractures, experienced by students in the first months of university life, should be internalized in order to allow them to better adapt to the new rhythms and to successfully complete the university path.

The term 'studentry', used in this research, comes from the *Age, Social Structure, and Socialization in Higher Education* article of Parsons and Platt' (1970) who explained that this particular phenomenon includes a stage of existence that lies between the adolescence and early maturity; it represents the new socializing model of young people within the university context and it is analyzed as a continuum of adolescent socialization. In other words, studentry, is not a simple moment of transition, but it represents an existential phase in the path of socialization, during which students should also account for their decisions, plans, and future perspectives.

Within a short time, students live both educational and psychological discontinuities as well as tensions between past and present (Cottle, 1974) as «the personal wishes and aspirations that contributed to the determination of career early in life must now undergo transformation» (Cottle, 1974:32). In this delicate process, students begin to acquire, recognize and activate the skills and abilities in order to actively participate in the complex modern society (Ciampi; 2017). They learn to challenge themselves, encouraging the creation process of their autonomy (Bourdieu, Passeron, 1971) which develops starting from the separation from the family (Cottle, 1974). The socialization to university takes place under precarious conditions, feelings and attitudes: students should learn and internalize common values of the university organization, without having a full awareness of how these are used and evaluated by other actors; in this perspective, they have to acquire the main roles and expectations of the integration process by recognizing and overcoming different levels of achievement (Ciampi, 2017); moreover, from an educational point of view, this articulate phase determines a reorganization of the times, spaces and methods of study and of the overall approach to the complexity and specificity of knowledge: these factors allow students to develop and make own the rules of the academic world (Ciampi, 2017). In addition to the conception of studentry as a new phase in individual biography, this term has also been used to identify young people, not only as university student culture but more widely as youth culture (Bovone, 1973). From this point of view, there is a distinction between young people who are already working and those who continue to study who are less likely to represent themselves as adults.

## **2. Methodology**

The research was carried out using a structured questionnaire self-administered to the 70 students of the first level degree course in sociology at the University of Salerno, a.y. 2018/2019; the group of students – characterized by a prevailing female component (89.7%) - has an average age of 20 years. The questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the second semester during the frontal lectures provided by the educational offer of the academic year. This choice to collect information in this period was due to the need to develop in the

student the process of socialization to the context and to university life in its many dynamics that could take place in the first five months from the time of enrollment. However, we are aware that this choice has affected the number of respondents involved in the survey: indeed, since the introduction of the university reform which became effective with the 270/2004 decree and implemented with further regulations, the 1st level degree in sociology at the University of Salerno has been characterized by consistent levels of dropouts (ranging from 35-40% from the first to the second year) and this configuration is already observed in the transition from the first to the second semester.

The questionnaire, which has been designed taking into account these temporal aspects, is comprised of 25 closed ended questions, aimed at exploring the concept of studentry articulated in the following conceptual macro dimensions:

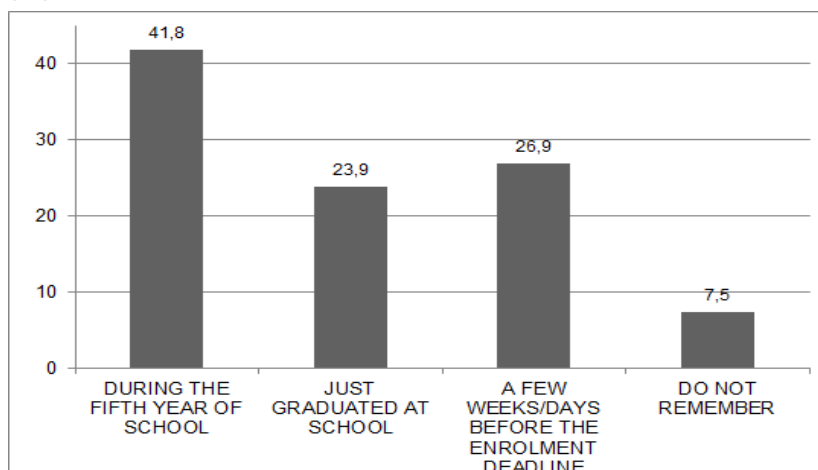
- high school-university transition: choices and motivations underlying the sociology course decision have been investigated;
- socialisation to the context of the University of Salerno: this section of the questionnaire aims at analysing the time, places of study as well as the social relations with peer groups and professors;
- perceptions of future perspectives, taking account the academic and working paths as well as the psychological dimension of the self.

The architectural, organizational and relational morphology of the University of Salerno, characterized by the structure of the campus, has been taken into account in the articulation of the concept in the three dimensions. In other words, we have explored the student's experience in a peculiar, highly integrated context where academic life in its facets (services, teaching, leisure and sports facilities, etc.) takes shape, affecting the social and identity processes of the student.

### 3. Results

About 40% of the students who responded to the questionnaire are living away from home, as a demonstration of independence and responsibility choices. In addition, almost 21% state to feel like a student-worker or working-student, indicating a different status from the 'pure student'. The following results should also be read and interpreted in the light of this articulated composition of the students.

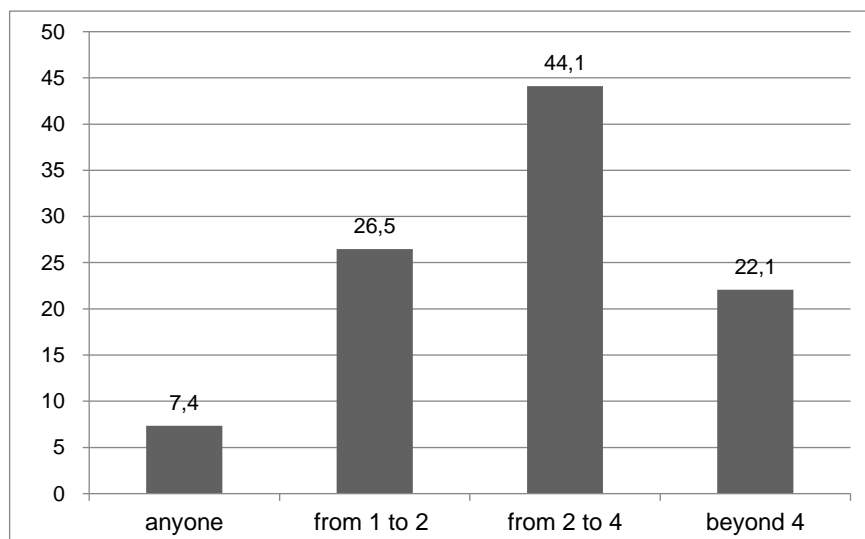
**FIGURE 1.** *When did you decide to enrol in the degree course in Sociology? (%)*



With respect to the first dimension – related to the choices and motivations – as shown in Figure 1 we identified three ways of achieving maturity of the university choice that could suggest different levels of awareness: a first group (41.8%) has already decided to enroll in the degree course in Sociology during the last year of school; respondents in the second group made this choice just after school graduation (23.9%); finally, 26.9% represent «last minute» enrolments as it includes students who decided to attend the Sociology course only in the last weeks/days before the registration deadline. This first-year student profile is identified in social sciences university degrees (Facchini, 2015).

The moment of university choice is a process that develops through several factors as high school graduates could undertake different paths such as to continue the university education, to follow a non-university education or to directly be part of the labour market. For these reasons, they were asked to express if their sociology university choice was influenced by personal reasons, family or friends advices as well as by the experiences of other people. The results show that personal motivations play a central role (86.8%), suggesting a certain level of awareness to one's own choice. Next, friends or family advices can be considered as an element of security in the process of choice. Family's advices, which have influenced the university choice of 39.7% of the interviewees, have played a fundamental role in the choice; this maybe because sometimes young people are unconsciously willing to satisfy the wishes and ambitions of family members because of a possible condition of confusion or uncertainty about their future. A further influence on the choice is given by the friends network which, however, has affected the choice for only 17.6% of the students.

**FIGURE. 2.** *Thinking about your typical week, outside of class hours, how many hours do you spend on average on Campus? (%)*



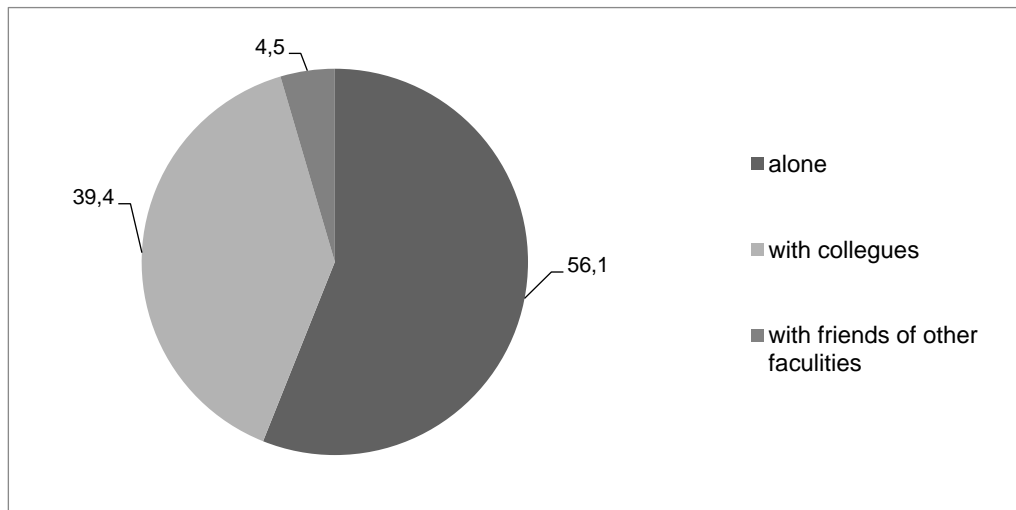
Moving to the second dimension, it has been important to investigate the time spent on the campus - net of lesson hours - because it could be considered as an indicator of a path of socialization to academic life. More than 44% of the respondents spend on average their time on the campus from 2 to 4 hours, while almost 8% usually live the campus to only attend the classes (Fig. 2). It is also interesting to note that the bar/pub (73% - very + quite often), the free classrooms (66%) and study classrooms (59%) are the most attended places of the Campus. Other spaces of socialization present in the university related to sports facilities, theater and associations are much less experienced. This

configuration indicates in the first-year students a process of socialization mainly limited to the study dimension and it demonstrates a lack of openness in the first months of academic life to the cultural and social activities, even if available on campus.

However, 79% of the respondents state that university experience allowed them to expand their network of friends; 37% also said that they usually attend their colleagues outside of university.

Instead, the exam preparation remains, for more than 56% of the first-year students (Figure 3), an individualistic moment in which the interaction with the colleagues is rather marginal. Moreover, about 40% also express that 'to prepare for an exam, I consider it more useful to stay at home rather than attending university classes' (Table 1). These data could highlight, on the one hand, a certain attitude of distrust of the newcomer students towards the academic institution and the social networks that are generated in it, and, on the other hand, a strong self-esteem in the ability to face the educational path in an independent manner and to achieve specific learning aims. At the same time, however, about 6 out of 10 students say that, if there were a chance, they would change their approach adopted in the first semester.

**FIGURE. 3.** Thinking back to the first semester, with whom did you study to prepare for the exams? (%)



**TABLE. 1.** Method of study (%)

	not at all/not much	quite a lot/a lot
To prepare for an exam, I consider it more useful to stay at home rather than attending university classes.	57,4	42,6
Studying together with my university colleagues is much more productive than studying alone.	42,6	57,4

Finally, the investigation focuses on the analysis of the socio-psychological dimensions. According to the data in tab. 2, students recognize that the university experience has allowed them to become more enterprising (85.3%); moreover, the interviewees believe they also feel appreciated by others (67.6%). A negative factor, on the other hand, is the growth of anxiety caused by academic life (58.8%); this because the entrance to a university is a sensitive period in an individual's life span and students have manage new stressors during this period (Al-Qaisy, 2011).



**TABLE. 2.** *Psychological dimension of Self (%)*

	<i>not at all/not much</i>	<i>quite a lot/a lot</i>
I feel very appreciated by others	32,4	67,6
Faced with the difficulties I feel discouraged	61,8	38,2
In some situations I lose my mind, I don't control myself	71,6	28,4
University life makes me anxious	41,2	58,8
University life makes me more enterprising	14,7	85,3

In order to have a more detailed overview of the characteristics of the newcomers, it has been interesting to know their perception of the future and also in this case the analyses offer interesting results: a) only 60% are sure to achieve a Bachelor's degree; b) 35% are sure to not to change faculty; c) 20% do not know if they will change their degree course. These data play a greater relevance if we consider that the respondents represent a group of students who have passed the first semester and in a certain sense, they represent the «survivors» of the first wave of the early dropouts.

## Conclusions

This paper has allowed us to offer a small space for reflection on the phenomenon of studentry and on the dimensions in which it is articulated. The results underline some difficulties among the first-year students in facing new professional, social and cultural life, even if the respondents showed an high level of satisfaction of the overall university experience, giving a final score of 7.1 on a scale from 1 to 10.

The beginning of the university path is an important phase of a life project that requires a strong commitment as well as the need to demonstrate different types of capabilities. The student, for example; often begins the university experience without knowing anyone: he/she has to often manage a multiplicity of changes without a specific support able to face with a possible condition of disorientation. From these difficulties, according to us it is needed to organize and implement specific intervention activities and methods capable to not leave the student alone and to support him/her in the new educational path.

In this perspective, it would be useful to implement a more comprehensive systematic monitoring and counselling project in order to have a more in depth understanding of the social, psychological, organizational, educational dynamics throughout the entire university experience and to have a complete overview of the evolution of the process of socialization during the years spent by students at the University.

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## **The Regional Network of Lifelong Learning in Campania**

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**Keywords:** *Education, Learning, Networks, Co-planning, Training*

### **Introduction**

The current European program identifies with the smart, sustainable, inclusive growth: the necessary conditions for facing the current economic difficulties in Europe, with the hope of reaching greater competitiveness and higher levels of productivity as to achieve the so-called «sustainable social market economy» (Butera, 1998). This program, therefore, aims to address and assist in overcoming critical issues such as the school drop-out rates, an increase in higher education qualifications, an effective and permanent reduction in unemployment and those currently in a state of despair - social exclusion.

It is a response to the rapid and not always predictable changes in the economic and social scenario caused by the unfolding of the processes of globalization with direct consequences on people's lives and their legitimate request for active and responsible citizenship.

Moreover, the current technological revolution and the emergence of the 'knowledge-based society' require greater flexibility, including the mobility needs among different work activities and the necessary skills learned from continuous training to anticipate changes in the workplace environment. Mobility in a current labor market brings with it the need to acquire ever-changing skills redefined throughout life (Quaglino, Carrozzi, 2003).

Therefore, it is necessary to focus on lifelong learning recalled by the Council Resolution in a renewed European Agenda for adult learning of 2011: the Europe 2020 strategy for intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth recognizes that lifelong learning and skills development are key elements to respond to the current economic crisis, the demographic aging and the wider social and economic strategy of the European Union.

In our country, the European legislation is first adopted by the Labor Market Reform Act 92-2012 which defines lifelong learning as 'any activity undertaken by people in a formal, non-formal and informal way, in the various stages of life, to improve knowledge, skills and competences, from a personal, civic, social and employment perspective'. It provides the adoption of legislative decrees for the definition of general standards and essential levels of performance, for the individualization and validation of the learning nonformal and informal, regarding the national system of certification of competences - an indispensable tool for the valorization of people's cultural heritage.

### **1. From standard to organization**

The Agreement of 20<sup>th</sup> December 2012 emphasized that lifelong learning policies are implemented primarily through the territorial integration of education, training, and employment services, also through the promotion and support of

building networks. In this context, lifelong learning is no longer a 'service to the person' but a life-long and life-wide learning right, in such a way that individuals may be equipped to cope with the constant changes in society. It is, therefore deduced that the person's right to learning is enforceable. In other words, the citizen, on request, may be considered for and access to guidance, support, and recognition services of previous experiences.

It implies a severe and profound rethinking of not only the role, functions, and activities but also the culture of stakeholders who are involved in the development system, enhancement, and provision of services connected with lifelong learning (March, Olsen, 1986). In this reference framework, Law 92-2012 indicates an innovative organizational arrangement and for the regional networks to establish an integrated system of lifelong learning.

To support local development is necessary to adopt an organizational model of the regional network according to the choices of the Regions, and it should include an enhancement of the services of permanent guidance, identification and validation of skills as transversal services in the educational, training, and work systems and the areas of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Real support throughout one's life in a perspective of inclusion, employment, and active citizenship is an integrated system of education, vocational training, and work involving all formal, non-formal, and informal areas.

It is of paramount importance, finally, that the strategic role of the CPIA (Provincial Centers for Adult Education and Training) is to build the integrated system for lifelong learning as recognized by the Agreement of 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014. The CPIA represents a stable, structured and widespread institutional reference to coordinate and implement – to the extent applicable - actions of reception, guidance, and support aimed at the adult population, and especially at disadvantaged groups.

That is the reason why building a network for lifelong learning requires:

- Generating synergies for the growth and development of the territory;
- Allowing inter-organizational dialogue;
- Creating open and dialogue organizational models that share objectives, tools, and methods;
- Making it available for citizens to have the right to a continuous, diversified, and easy to access local education.
- Preventing school drop-out, reducing the number of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), increasing education levels, strengthening essential skills and fostering inclusion at every level;
- Making recognition systems and certification of the credits widely used to enhance and enable the person to an easy capitalization of the personal skills offering the opportunity to enter or re-enter the labor market;
- Ensuring that the world of work and training are not separate and non-colloquial entities.

In other words, the network, thanks to a shared and participatory project, helps to reduce the long-standing and ancestral mismatch between the two worlds. Moreover, we are in the Information, Knowledge and Advanced Technology Society, where within the global village the relationships take place according to the logic of the grid, for this reason, it is also called the *network* society. We are at a decisive change speed in services and technologies, with the resulting organizational complexity. Hence, the network is a necessary tool for developing a high-quality offer to promote cohesion between different stakeholders to improve governance processes. So, a network to grow, to be protagonists, to generate projects that only together can be realized to obtain financial resources otherwise not available. In this context, aggregating and establishing a Network represents a real strategic opportunity to be put in place to grow while

maintaining and enhancing one's individuality. Collaboration within a network, in fact, amplifies the opportunities for innovation in an area where competition is increasingly global and less and less local.

It would suffice to think only of the higher bargaining power of the external environment, in the realization of investments at greater convenience, the organization of actions to collectively promote products and services, the professional growth of human resources with shared training programs about the distinctive upskilling of the individual operating entities (March, Olsen, 1989).

## **2. A motion for Campania: the reference framework**

Specifically, the law - which has planned the birth of the CPIA - provides for the realization of a strong synergy with the Vocational training stakeholders to broaden the training offer foreshadowing paths that complement the skills institutionally attested, validated and certified by the CPIA. Thus, it is more attractive to the CPIA choice by potential users. It characterizes the education of adults not already, and only, as an institution responsible for the release of traditional qualifications and literacy but, as a system that outlines training opportunities in line with territorial needs and it allows professional qualifications thanks to certified skills in the adult education system.

In this way, it is emerging a path that follows the achievement of compulsory education through the development of an integrated project between institutionally validated skills within the CPIA and abilities, which are mostly technical-professional. They are necessary for the acquisition of the different professional qualifications both usually established by the regional registers of the requirements and by professional figures, in their various aspects, of the IEPT (Institute for the Employment and Professional Training) system. In both cases, the paths for achieving the qualification provide, already within them, skills to be acquired previously released by the CPIA, thus allowing a continuation of the way with a decisive expansion of the training offer. For this reason, it is crucial to create a network agreement between the regional CPIA extended to all those stakeholders who, in different ways, participate in the project and operational implementation of the post-obligation paths of education.

The network agreement makes it possible to develop a shared project between CPIA, territorial economic, Vocational training, Local Authorities stakeholders, etc. in order to more carefully plan the training offer also based on the indications of the results from research and development activities emerging from individual territorial contexts.

### *2.1. The organizational model*

The network agreement initially involves the subscription by the Executives of the regional CPIA. The Executives, along with the representatives of the Research, Experimentation, and Development local Center and the leader to be identified, create a scientific committee based on the information found in the individual territorial contexts, which will explain the strategic objectives. Within those the operational implementation of the activities will be carried out with particular reference to the interaction between education and professional training.

In this context, the role of school leadership is characterized by its predominantly managerial nature by distinguishing the individual functional responsibilities related to the valorization of the distinctive skills of the individual. Whereas the individual will coordinate the different organizational areas of the network,

enhancing the role against the known difficulties due to the profound changes of recent years in the world of education (Serpieri, 2013).

In turn, the decision-making process will have to be ensured by a correct and timely territorial collection of information. It will be centralized to the leader and generate a regional training offer with the consequence of delineating more opportunities by choice for not only CPIA users already enrolled but also for any of the numerous potential users who wish to enroll in the future.

In close contact with the Scientific Committee, a commission of coordination should be set up to support the project and operational implementation of the integration activities between education and training. The Committee will have the task of interfacing to a priority extent with the various committees of the training pact set up within each CPIA. Also, to produce shared project hypotheses, the Committee, internally, will have to provide experts in the training program. It includes the CEO of the companies operating in productive sectors identified as strategic in the regional context and representatives of employer and employee organizations. It will be able to produce, in a sort of co-planning, activities characterized by a greater legitimization of provided courses and a higher consistency between the skills acquired in the CPIAs and those of a technical-professional nature to be verified in the internships planned for the acquisition of professional qualifications. Of course, it is necessary to consider the adoption of a regional electronic platform to enable the sharing of both the information and the expertise and products supplied by individual local units. It will produce more efficiency in the activities offered in the network agreement to capitalize on the different experiences and avoid the current duplication of both materials, information, and skills.

Adhering to the network agreement are the following: the regionally accredited vocational training stakeholders. The companies and their reference organizations, which operate in different territorial areas and consistent with the strategic priorities established at the regional level. The public authorities aimed at fostering the construction of an integrated system that connects the adult education with the declined opportunities from the activities of the vocational training stakeholders. Trade union representatives, etc.

In the case of specific territorial needs, it may be easier to enable the realization of *ad hoc* protocol agreements between each Regional CPIA, regionally accredited vocational training institutions and individual companies operating in the relevant territory. With the support of the Planning and Operational Coordination Committee, which will have the task of rationalizing the set of resources and competences in the different territorial contexts to facilitate, thus fostering a real sharing: the path from education to vocational training. Of course, as we have verified over time, the world of training, education, and the labor market itself have not always developed effective synergies. For this reason, one of the objectives of the network, and specifically the planning and operational commission is to project educational initiatives/updates of CPIA personnel aimed to a better understanding of acquiring vocational qualifications and reading of the requirement expressed from the productive context. Hence, it is expected in every single CPIA to set up a group of teachers who, thanks to the training received, are in constant connection with the committee at an intermediate level to be able to foresee from the onset, the entire path of opportunities to grasp thanks to the institutional skills issued by the CPIA.

In conjunction with the formalization of the regional network for lifelong learning, operational Commissions take shape which, in summary, are indicated by their functions:

Project Executive Committee for Integration Education and Vocational Training:

- Assisting the network's members in the project and operational implementation of the linking activities between education and vocational training also through the application for competitive notices issued by Public Bodies (e.g. Regions).
- Planning and implementing training courses/updating of CPIA personnel on knowledge and interpretation of the world of vocational training and labor market trends, also through the candidacy for competitive notices issued by Public Bodies.
- Planning training courses/updating of CPIA personnel on the knowledge, interpretation of the world of vocational training, and labor market trends.

Local authorities and institutions relationship Committee:

- Raising awareness of the role of CPIAs to Local Authorities and Institutions.
- Maintaining constant institutional relationships aimed at sharing environments, technologies, etc.
- Research and Internationalization Committee:
- Capitalizing and disseminating research results
- Encouraging the link between research results and educational experimentation
- Promoting internationalization processes by connecting with European programs in particular for the exchange of experience and resources

Guidelines and financial education Committee:

- Encouraging the implementation of shared methods and tools procedures for a homogeneous orientation system in the regional area
- Providing the project and application of financial education activities necessary for completing the acquisition of citizenship

Training agreement and certification of competences Committee:

- Standardizing laws and rules at a regional level, concerning the definition of the training agreement and stabilizing procedures methods and instruments for the certification of skills, particularly those relating to the informal, should be established.

Communication Committee:

- Building and monitoring the portal of the regional training offer.

## Conclusions

Public and private entities will supplement the committees, other than the educational institutions that adhere to the permanent territorial network agreement, concerning their role within the regional territory. Moreover, the task of vocational education and training is to anticipate current trends foreseeing possible scenarios: in other words, having a vision of the near future to endow people with skills that can facilitate their life paths.

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## The School-Family Relationship between Processes of Simplification and Quest for Competences

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### Introduction

The era in which we live is characterized by a profound change in those social institutions that play a pre-eminent and decisive role in the development and entire formation of each individual. The history of educational models, as well as the studies on their transfer has its roots in the archaic era, testifying to the fact that, when we talk about education and even more about dominant pedagogical models, we cannot avoid the analysis of the social-cultural context in which they are born and develop. The transition from the philosophical concept of 'paideia' to the more recent concept of pedagogy brings with it a new vision of the world and of relationships based on the change of socializing mechanisms. The conception of an educational model built on the simple linearity of the relationship between teacher and learner could work for centuries, in the era in which access to education was certainly not a legally recognized and protected right, but rather an expression of high rank of a society devoted to power, asset management and the incorporation of its status acquired by virtue of consolidated hereditary mechanisms. Education, therefore, was an expression of power in a social system not open to change and 'active citizenship'. The subsequent contributions of Socrates and Plato changed the direction: first with the birth of 'maieutics' and, subsequently, with the introduction of the concept of 'humanization' of knowledge. In fact, the new philosophical current embodies a vision of knowledge in which reason is an instrument of awareness and, therefore, of disintegration and distancing from the apparent world.

The evolution of educational models, starting from ancient Greece to the present day, makes us understand the importance of the socio-cultural context in which social institutions, forming and (re)forming themselves, have managed the various questions concerning education, education and training, first of the 'individual' understood as a physical-material entity and subsequently, of the person in his bio-psycho-physical dimension and within a legal framework of values and rights. The first place dedicated to the hereditary transmission of values must be sought in the context of the family: a sort of cellular mitosis in which the parent (natural or legitimate) synthesizes and devolves his own vision of the world, his own values and that awareness that, over time, has accumulated due to experience. It is true that the 'social immobility' of previous eras allowed the family to carry out greater control over the new generations; the internal protection network was so strong and focused on respecting the parental figure that it could allow a rigid control of the same behavioral feedback.

Over time, the evolution of social dynamics and the affirmation of new consumption models have radically changed the way in which social relations are understood within groups. The logic of 'disposable', which is imposed on the mind of the 'hypermodern' consumer every day, leads to a review of the social model transmitted by families and to reflect on what culture represents today: an object can be said to be cultural to the extent that it resists the time; its durability is in inverse proportion to functionality (Bauman, 2012). It is not easy,

therefore, to prepare educational models, both family and school, that are universally recognized and that can respond to the changing needs of what is called «hurried culture» (Bertman, 1998).

## 1. The new conception of the teacher

The analysis and study of each school community require a deep understanding of the historical-cultural context in which the various social actors move. The school, in fact, represents not only the meeting place between the demand and the training offer but a context of socialization in which, in addition to relationships and synergies, conflicts and expectations arise. It is precisely within this framework, which is as dynamic as it is distortive in many aspects, that the teacher is called to achieve and guarantee an unstable and changeable balance between the various stakeholders, who respond to the appeal of the territorial community. To such point, it is important to understand that the teacher, despite being aware of continuous change of his/her own functions, still remains the pivot on which the construction of the educational model is founded within the scholastic community.

The educational figure of the teacher, at present, is so complex and articulated as to push to perform a multidimensional analysis that takes into account every peculiarity of the school role. Every historical epoch, in fact, has imposed to measure the qualities of every teacher, rather than others, in relation to the dominant socio-pedagogical theories or to the relations of power and clash between the different institutions. One of the variables that affect the configuration of the contemporary teacher is, above all, the culture understood as the transmission of knowledge. In this sense, the teacher should not be considered as a sort of 'minister of the cult' who embodies the discipline and knowledge, but rather as a person open to cultural exchange and able to form and training a lifelong learning, longwise learning and life deep learning perspective. Therefore, learning should not be understood as a baggage jealously constructed by the teacher and statically pre-packaged for the student.

The advent of what is called 'scientific humanism' has forced to eradicate a conservative practice towards a goal, much more worthy of protection, oriented towards openness and inclusion. Today it can be said that, with a view to greater pedagogical activism, the teacher is called to re-explore the fields of knowledge through the search for an intersubjective collaboration with the learner.

The analysis of the historical-temporal dimension makes it possible to trace a line of discontinuity with respect to the dimension, both synchronous and asynchronous, of the dominant school model. The search for quality indicators, as well as the need to respect the quantitative aspects of scholastic results, requires a careful analysis of the entire growth path; compliance with the canons of management, within the processes and results of public administration, cannot be separated from the activation of control mechanisms, both 'in itinere' and in retrospective and prospective direction.

The elaboration of an education model that is able to respond to a continuously changing socio-cultural context requires a further analysis within the bureaucratic-institutional practice, of the legal relationship established between the teacher and his colleagues. In this regard, the configuration of collegial bodies, for the assumption of all those decisions that the sources of law preclude the autonomy of the individual, is the emblem of a 'community management' of the scholastic institution. The partnership must be understood as a modality of intervention at every level and in every sector in which the educational and instructive model unfolds its roots. Therefore, what once could be considered a

sort of specialized 'invasion' in the decision-making sphere of the teacher, today is a relevant aspect for the transition towards an educational model more marked by collaboration and co-responsibility.

## **2. The relationship between school and family**

The new educational models propose a figure of the teacher professionally deputed not only to the construction and transmission of knowledge but also to the care of a dense network of relationships which, on the human level, represents the creative humus on which to found the new relationship between the school and the pupil's family.

The evolution of the normative dimension within the scholastic institution has certainly also changed the key points of the relationship, at first authoritarian and subsequently democratic, between the teacher and the family communities. It is true that in the pre-modern age the presence of a supreme state, remarked even more with the advent of absolute ideology, has led to the development of a certainly authoritarian and hierarchical social configuration in which the central power reserved for itself the prerogative of every social system and subsystem, including school education. In such a dimension, in which the exercise of state supremacy unfolded through the control of the various social institutions, the role of the teacher was well defined on the basis of an educational model that prevailed over that of learning. In other words, the legislator imposed the construction of the identity of each student by means of the teacher and precluded any possible interaction between the school community and local ones.

The teacher, as a faithful official at the service of the state, lived a condition of prestige and social respect as if he/she were a minister of the knowledge and values embodied in an authoritarian state. The only possibility of openness of the school towards the outside world could be realized when the teacher was sent in 'mission' in the local suburbs to instruct small communities; but the transmission of culture, however, responded to the need to literate the people rather than to the desire to stimulate an awareness of the personal and social dimension of a formative growth. The family, grateful for the teacher's work, lived in a condition of passivity and gratitude towards the only institution, together with the Church, able to prepare their children to face the world of tomorrow.

The advent of modern times has shown the inadequacy of a school system outdated and inadequate to respond to the new evolutionary tendencies of society. Indeed, the implementation of the republican constitutional principles, through a series of normative interventions, has imposed a new way of understanding the school no longer as a place of expression of the power of the State, but as an indispensable and necessary link between the dense meshes of a system that currently involves many social actors. Although in reductive terms, the search for 'active citizenship' indicators must be carried out precisely within the capacity of an institution to create a sense of participation and community in a highly democratic dimension, in addition to the unquestionable objective of transmitting 'transversal skills' for which each student is trained and informed.

On the other hand, the true sense of community cannot be separated from the involvement of the family. Speaking of social cohesion means facing the real participation of all the interest groups in the school education process. The family, which has always been a fundamental institution for personal education, if it is true that it intervenes in a more incisive manner in the way of 'making school', it is also true that for decades has been faced with a crisis of values that pushes more to phenomena of alienation, of 'detachment' from the school system and of delegating responsibilities.

Although the school has lost that sense of impermeability with respect to the local context, its vision of reality, as well as the interpretation of the present and the search for future perspectives, struggles to respond to the new cultural dangers which, as a symptom of a 'hypermodern' civilization, they deconstruct that painstakingly built sense of community. The involvement of actors, once unrelated to the scholastic world but now bearers of personal interests and expectations, is still to be considered as the feeling of a society that changes, day after day, and that reflects an excess of fragmentation in family and non-family.

Over time, the gradual pressure of work rhythms, as well as deadlines linked to the care of all aspects of daily life, has generated a sort of transfer of parental responsibility towards the scholastic institution, where entry into the world of education seems to have more the connotations of a blank proxy towards teachers rather than a joint project of growth. Today, the exercise of parental authority seems to emerge, rather urgently, in the only occasions of measurement and certification of individual results achieved. If at one time the moments of contact between school and family were precious opportunities to understand the didactic and behavioral progress of the pupil, today we are witnessing a trend reversal; social logic and scholastic logic often do not coincide (Millet and Thin, 2005) and every meeting between the two actors, school and family, becomes an opportunity to bring out the unfinished personal from the parental front, and to blame a teaching body that claims have disciplinary, extra-disciplinary and ultra-scholastic skills. Some studies show that communication is not always positive (Claes, Comeau, 1996).

The barriers to school-family collaboration come from many sources, including lack of clarity in communication (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001), mutual misunderstandings (Dubet, 1997), but also from a lack of common references or agreements on established norms (Périer, 2005). In the context of psychopedagogical literature, it is well known that conflicts represent a moment of reflection in which the parties tend to express their disappointment with respect to what they cannot control; but it is also true that, if the conflict becomes systematic and habitual, then the opportunities for confrontation are transformed into moments of greater closure rather than opening (Fortin, Fotinos, 2001). In this regard, the change in social expectations cannot be defined unequivocally in terms of claims towards the teacher, today more than ever considered responsible for every aspect of a pupil's life, the teacher-parent relationship cannot be fed by the imperative search for satisfactory results without considering that, as a 'mission' of high risk, teaching requires the respect of a gratifying dimension. The entry of parents into the school world has considerably reduced the space for decision-making autonomy of the teacher.

The new democratic and multivariate configuration of the school governing bodies, whose legitimate constitution requires the intervention of parents' representatives, does nothing but exacerbate the conflictual aspect of actors who, due to training and experience, hardly yield to reciprocal requests.

### **3. The scholastic sizing and demographic decrease and consequences in the school-family relationship**

The results obtained by ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) project the current demographic trends for 2030, which show the South of Italy depopulated of young but abundant of elderly. It is clear that in the absence of significant interventions the South will continue to lose attractiveness and will have to permanently change the current standard of living towards a clear deterioration. The impact on schools is immediate. The student is becoming increasingly the

object of contention between schools and a weapon on the part of families in search of favoritism: the threat of withdrawal puts the risk-prone schools in even greater difficulty. For its part, the plan to size the school network as a tool through which local authorities propose, on an annual basis, the establishment, aggregation, merger and suppression of schools in order to have educational institutions with a defined population from the legislator as optimal, will have to make constant accounts with this phenomenon.

The damage to the professional community is evident both in terms of the forced mobility of teachers and the limited possibilities for cultural exchanges. However, the damage is also to the local population that will see education institutions gradually disappear from their territorial realities. The sizing, among other things, generates the risk of bringing together schools that are too diversified with equipment and laboratories, 'fragmented' in many institutes. The slow decline of the education system is inevitable if the mission to be given to the school is not taken into account.

#### **4. Communication strategies**

The frequent divergence of opinions and expectations, in the family dimension compared to the scholastic one, leads us to reflect on how communication can be a delicate instrument for dealing with issues that are difficult to resolve through the perspective of a canonized and repetitive didactic language. In fact, the unidirectionality of the pressing family demands towards a scholastic world which is now the victim of an excess of responsibility requires the implementation of communication strategies that guarantee the real participation of the entire community at the institutional confrontation table. If the school really continues to suffer the consequences of a highly uncertain and uncertain bureaucratic system, then the respect of the traditional mechanisms, in the school-family comparison, can only appear completely bankrupt. The creation of an educating community as advocated by recent legislative interventions, must always take place through the implementation of a series of activities, both at school and at home, able to give a broad scope to that need, on the one hand, of participation and, on the other hand, of a recovery of conscience in dealing with the issue of a parental responsibility now faded by the excess of lax parental authority.

**TABLE. 1. Indicators of parental participation**

<i>Parenting participation</i>	<i>Involvement indicators</i>
School	Involvement in school activities Support for class activities Revision of assigned tasks Verification of home activities
Learning	Regular discussion with teachers Analysis of the results achieved Discussion of school topics with the student Participation in school meetings
Community	Exercise of the right to vote by election Presentation of didactic-experiential proposals Involvement in training projects

source: elaboration by the author

The creation of an innovative and effective communication model requires, as prerequisite, the choice of a framework capable of balancing the innovative spirit with respect for a series of educational standards from which the school system can certainly not depart; where greater openness and dynamism is

required, we cannot avoid mentioning that the fundamental function of the scholastic institution is based on the trinomial education-education-training.

The awareness that human development passes through the numerous influences of the ecological system is a starting point for understanding the methods of building an open and proactive dialogue capable of guaranteeing the material and spiritual self-realization of the student. However, if the goal is to create a community that is truly capable of operating and protecting the personal identity of each student, then it is appropriate to devote more attention on the one hand, to the analysis of the different systems in which each person is inserted (Verba, 2006) and on the other hand, to the ways in which the exogenous variables interact with each other; studies on the ecology of human development, which move in this direction, analyze the role played by the different social and biological systems in the global development of the person (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

**TABLE. 2.** *Representation of the ecological model*

<i>Social dimension</i>	<i>Subsystems</i>
Microsystem	Family
	Religious community
Mesosystem	Peer group
	Interaction between systems
Esosystem	Mass-media
	Education policies
Macrosystem	Training centers
	Values, traditions, cultures and ideologies
Chronosystem	Time dimension of all environmental systems

source: elaboration by the author

## Conclusions

Given that each system has its own value in individual growth, it is appropriate to dwell on the 'middle' dimension (mesosystem) that represents the most important place of interaction between the different social subsystems, and of building partnerships between the actors who make it part; therefore, the implementation of communication strategies between school and family starts from the awareness that all the variables involved, including the historical and cultural reference moment, must be elaborated and shared in a dynamic and more personalized way; in fact, the adoption of a standardized communicative approach has been able to function in the previous epochs, characterized by a strong orientation towards massification and personal cancellation, until the psycho-pedagogical theories have turned the spotlight on the new cultural needs and on the need to adopt a 'personalized approach' to solving problems.

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## The Challenge of Training about the ‘Second Level’ of Education: Developing and Implementing an Experimental University Traineeship

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**KEYWORDS:** *Experimental traineeship programme, Master degree in pedagogical sciences, ‘Second level’ educational professionals, University traineeship*

### Introduction

The paper aims to propose a specific reflection about the ‘second level’ education professionals’ training. For ‘second-level’ education professional we mean a professional who is trained to act as a supervisor, trainer, evaluator, coordinator, or counsellor in the field of education, and who has therefore acquired a ‘second-level’ perspective on educational work. In Italy, a very important passage for the definition of the adult educators professional profile and training happened at the end of 2017: a new Law (29<sup>th</sup> December 2017) (Iori, 2018) has clearly outlined the profession of adult educators at a legislative level, specifying the Master courses that are specifically designed to train these professionals: LM 50, Projecting and Managing Educational Service; LM 57, Educational Sciences for Adult and Lifelong Learning; LM 85, Advanced Educational Sciences; LM 93, Theories and Methodologies for E-learning and Media Education. These professionals are involved in activities such as designing, managing, and evaluating educational services in different contexts. Developing such skills represents a challenge for university didactic because it entails strong connections between thinking and acting (Schön, 1984), instrumental dimension and meaning making, theoretical and practical knowledge (Palmieri et al., 2009; Riva, 2011). In relation to this, the university apprenticeship programme could represent a fundamental place for synthesis and composition (Galimberti, Gambacorti-Passerini, Palmieri, 2016). The Master degree course in pedagogical sciences of Milano Bicocca University elaborated an experimental programme meant to enhance the learning potential for students, firstly carried out in A.Y. 2015-2016 and labelled *Tirocinio Formativo e di Orientamento (TFO)* or *Traineeship and Guidance Programme* (Galimberti et al., 2015). The University traineeship programme will be presented in this article, with a specific focus on the pedagogical assumptions that driven the design process.

### 1. Academic traineeship program for adult educator: reflections around their potential to promote learning for university students and professional contexts

Academic traineeship programs have a fundamental role in developing adult educators’ professional competences and their future professional identity.



More in general, these programs represent a potential space for improving the dialogue between universities and professional contexts. International educational policies are increasingly interested in connecting higher education institutes with extra-academic contexts, in order to promote an economic and social value of learning outcomes and employability (Collini, 2009). At the same time this dialogue opens a lot of questions, dilemmas and problems related to the different assumptions and expectations at stake.

The TFO academic traineeship represents an ongoing 'laboratory' that allow us to interrogate the difficult art of composing and challenging students learning attitudes, professional contexts and institutional expectations.

We will focus mainly on the possibility to create a space able to enrich all the different stakeholders involved in the program. On one hand the fundamental goal is to help students in approaching a future professional identity. On the other hand, at the same time, we believe in the potential to develop also the professional contexts that offer their contribute in this effort. These contexts, in fact, are always at risk of reducing the complexity of their practices in linear organizational thinking. We believe that the experience of hosting students can represent a fundamental opportunity to consider a variety of taken for granted factors from another point of view, less experienced but, at the same time, potentially able to generate reflections. We can also identify a learning opportunity for those institutional members (scientific supervisor, coordinator, tutors) that are involved in the difficult role of constructing and managing the dialogue between students and professional contexts.

All this learning potential is not granted, sometimes it represents an ideal and need to be continuously monitored and interrogated through the feedbacks that emerge during the process different stages.

## **2. Training adult educators: the proposal of a University traineeship**

The training proposal we are going to present is based on specific theoretical assumptions related to professional transitions conceived as multidimensional events shaped by a plurality of factors (Stokes and Wynn, 2007). This point of view avoids the illusion of an academic curriculum directly operational to enter in the professional world. Moreover, it moves away from a mere individualistic way of intending lifelong learning (Dozza, 2012).

The principal aim of the traineeship is the education of adult educator, a profession that nowadays is often confused among other professionals working in educational contexts. In this sense, the proposal tries to share a strong and theoretically grounded professional identity. In fact, educational work is not only based on direct relationship with the users of services: projecting, coordinating, supervising, evaluating and training other educators are fundamental activities in every educational context. In Italy, these actions characterize the role of a professional that has gained a «second level» (Mancaniello, 2011: 119) educational competence, defining he/she as «adult educato». This professional is able to an educational thinking oriented to project, coordinate, supervise all the educational practice.

All the Italian University curricula aim to develop both theoretical educational competencies both the capability to think and project educational practices, referring to theory. In this sense, adult educators must be able to create a strong link between theoretical knowledge and practical action (Schön, 2006).

Notwithstanding the recent changings in the University training for adult educators, this profession is still not precisely defined: there isn't a uniform

identification for the training, the competencies, the working environments of adult educators.

As we wrote before, an enduring uncertainty actually characterizes the transition from University to the world of work: this uncertainty is obviously more serious with regard to a profession not well defined, as adult educator. So, the University curriculum for adult educators fulfills a fundamental role, in order to project and implement training focused on educating professionals with a strong and defined theoretical and practical background.

Referring to this framework, the program is intended as an educational and orientating chance focused on developing professional profile for future adult educators. It combines two main educational directions: the first looks to construct students' professional profile and their practical skills, while the second is focused on conducting research, proposed as an opportunity to experience a fruitful exchange between theory and practice, generating reflection.

After some year of experimental experiences (A.Y. 2013-2014 and A.Y. 2014-2015), this traineeship has been firstly implemented in the A.Y. 2015-2016 and actually it's starting the fifth edition in October 2019.

The training is subdivided into various phases, to be carried out at university, in external educational contexts or via a virtual blended-learning platform (Graham, 2010).

The first phase is dedicated to *welcome/orientation*: students will be divided into different groups, with a tutor for each group. Students will meet their group and their tutor. This will be the ideal occasion to present the planning of the training and the virtual platform.

Subsequently, the second phase is the *introduction to research*: students are trained in designing a research project aimed at exploring and understanding specific characteristics, role and functions of adult educators, inside an educational service. This research has to be described and documented in a written report that will be delivered to their tutor. This phase runs in parallel with a module designed to accompany students towards the world of work, focused on gathering information about the profile, role and characteristics of adult educators.

Later, the training is focused on helping the students to develop a professional identity. With this aim, adult educators are invited to hold seminars for the students, focused on discussing the skills and competences required for educational work.

The last phase helps students to construct a competence mapping process on themselves; each student has the opportunity to think and discuss with the group and the tutor in order to identify his/her professional skills acquired in the course of his/her particular educational path.

The role of reflection throughout the entire training period is reinforced by the preparation of a final moment in the last meeting of each group: every student is asked to prepare a report about the entire learning process experienced. This report is not only intended as a written document, but students are free to choose every communication and expressive language they prefer, in order to involve the group in the meaning of the experience they are presenting.

### **3. Conclusion: educational reflections about the traineeship program**

During the traineeship students are part of a small group coordinated by a tutor: every group meets both in university both on the virtual platform (using forum, repository of material...). These different modalities are chances to

enhance orientation, cooperation, sharing of ideas and questions, transforming tricks and dreads into opportunities. The virtual platform constitutes a valid support to share the reflections of the initial phase; it is an 'intermediate' zone to ask and offer suggestions or thinking, nurtured by the tutor's support and, most of all, by other students' advices.

It is possible to consider these activities (both in presence both with e-learning modalities) as occasions to create a frame for shared pedagogical reflection, a fundamental attitude for second level education professionals.

During the initial meeting, a 'creative exploration' of the future professional profile is proposed to students, in order to collect multiple representations of future professional profiles. This is an important starting point as it shapes the following steps on students' assumptions and expectations in relation to the professional identity they would like to assume.

A crucial point of the whole path is represented by the moment in which students have to choose or find an educational service where it is possible for them to conduct an individual research project aimed at exploring adult educators' role and functions.

Promoting a research experience in educational contexts represents a chance to create a dialogue between theoretical knowledge and professional practices. In this sense, the traineeship model would go beyond a mere apprenticeship in which students are expected to learn observing an expert. Projecting and conducting a research call into questions another level of learning processes: these activities, in fact, entail developing abilities of critical analysis, synthesis, reflection on action (Schön, 2006) and communication.

Entering in a real service represents a possibility to use theoretical lenses in order to analyse a multiplicity of elements concurring, on a first and on a second level, to realize the 'educational unicity' of a specific context. Students in this phase face different critical problems, often triggering new learning processes: they have to share with the professional interlocutors their research, they have to focus interesting elements for their enquiry as well as to produce a report both for the academic tutor and the professionals. All these activities underpin epistemological issues unfolding movements between theory and practice and a dialogue between general notions and particular cases.

After the research experience, the traineeship offers to students another opportunity to meet educational professionals in order to further investigate their competencies and functions. The traineeship program, in fact, asks professionals to conduct workshops proposing examples, critical problems, case studies connected to their daily work. This experience allows students to interact with the second-level activities carried out in specific contexts and to explore the way in which a professional perform his/her competences, comparing this practical *savoir faire* with their own frame of reference. On the other side adult educators involved in designing and managing workshop have the chance to explicit and formalize what they do, giving value to all the tacit knowledge that they develop often without being aware of its value (Le Boterf, 1994).

In addition to the participation at the workshop, students are requested to create a report concerning the discussed themes. This essay is created in a collaborative way by the entire group of students, supported by the professional. Likewise the research experience, the workshop allows students to reflect on the importance of linking theory and practice in educational work (Riva, 2011).

The proposal, thought as a path composed by different steps and activities, aims at developing critical and analytical thinking in future adult educators rooted in a strong theoretical background and the awareness of the unicity and peculiarity of whatever educational context.

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## **A University Traineeship Experience for Educators. The case of the Bachelor Degree in Educational Sciences, University of Milano-Bicocca**

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**Keywords:** *Socio-pedagogical educators; Educator professional development; Traineeship program; Pedagogical supervision; Reflective professionalism.*

### **Introduction**

The dynamic transformations underway in contemporaneity impact on educational work: new needs emerge, modifying the boundaries of educational intervention and educators' professional skills (Fook, Gardner, 2013; Tramma, 2017). Given the complex, unpredictable, and precarious situations facing them, educators are required to become «reflective professionals» (Schön, 1993) with the ability to identify the multiple factors influencing their work settings and develop an in-depth understanding of them. Their professionalism is rooted in balancing skills learned through experience with theoretical knowledge (Oggionni, 2016). This in turn will help them to design the most suitable intervention possible for each case they are involved in.

Against this backdrop, current bachelor's degree courses in Educational Sciences are designed to provide students with both interdisciplinary knowledge (pedagogical, psychological, sociological, anthropological, philosophical disciplines) and practical experience, including laboratories and a traineeship. This paper presents an analysis of the structure, features, future prospects and critical aspects of the traineeship of the Bachelor's degree in Educational sciences offered by the University of Milano-Bicocca.

### **1. The structure of the traineeship programme**

The traineeship of the Bachelor's degree in Educational sciences at the University of Milano-Bicocca (Palmieri et al., 2009) runs over two academic years and is divided into two phases: it begins in Year 2 with the so-called 'preparatory activities', and is completed in Year 3 with the 'Internship at a host socio-educational organization'.

Throughout the entire traineeship program students work in small groups that are conceived as situated learning contexts. Each group comprises about twenty students, led by a pedagogical supervisor, who encounters the generative potential of dialogue and exchange among peers, by sharing their ideas, doubts, questions and experiences; over the two years group composition remains unvaried.

In this way, the students experience the 'pedagogical supervision', an effective training method that creates learning situations based on exchange and debate, with the aims of: stimulating a collective reading of educational contexts, cultures, values, prejudices, in relation to both informal and formal experience; enhancing the group learning, and of sharing strategies of intervention.

During preparatory activities, students are offered 36 hours of group pedagogical supervision, as well as encounters with experienced practitioners in the course of two symposiums and two field trips to educational services; in addition, each student has the opportunity to make an individual field trip.

The aim of this structure is to stimulate the students' ability to observe and ask questions about educational work, the role of materiality, how to organize an educational setting, and the transformation of ideas into actions in keeping with recipients' specific needs. The general objectives of this phase of the traineeship program are: to develop students' critical thinking abilities, grounded in the continuous practice of self-reflexivity; to facilitate them in moving towards taking up a professional role.

Therefore, in this transition, it is crucial to help students develop their self-knowledge and, at the same time, to familiarize with the territory and its services. This implies, on the one hand, guiding students to explore their own motivation and expectations, needs, desires and professional representations: uncovering their own personal ideas of education starting by identifying the 'traces of education' in their own life contexts (family, relationships, work), comparing and deconstructing these ideas, acquiring tools for recognizing the implicit models, cultures, values and rules at work in professional contexts, and constructing their own way of being educators. On the other hand, it means helping students to map out the territorial educational services and resources, recognizing the local effects of education and social policies.

These aspects are key to facilitating individual students in choosing the service where they will carry out their internship.

Indeed, the second year of their traineeship (Year 3 of the degree course), entitled *Internship at a host socio-educational organization*, is focused on entering in a specific educational service as an 'intern': students spend almost 200 hours in the field and in parallel have 30 hours of pedagogical supervision at university. This requires close cooperation between the academic staff and the host educational and social organizations.

The main aim of this phase of the program is to allow the students to put themselves individually to the test, experience a specific 'quasi-professional' role in an educational context, and improve their ability to critically reflect on their practice, while linking it with the theories learned at university. Students can detach themselves from their involvement with the host organization, and think about what they are observing and experience, with the contribution of the group and the supervisor. Thus, pedagogical reflection on action supports the development of both specific and transversal professional skills, tools and methodologies.

## **2. The features of the traineeship: groups and pedagogical supervision**

The distinctive features of the traineeship of the Bachelor's degree in Educational sciences offered by the University of Milano-Bicocca are: the small group learning setting and pedagogical supervision as a reflection-on-action practice.

### *2.1. The group: a reflective work team*

Involving students in a group experience is a pedagogical choice: it implies offering a different learning setting in comparison with the other courses that students attend at university. This didactic and reflective context allows them to share their thoughts, construct new meanings and design interventions in an

intersubjective way, considering their reciprocal differences and the possibility of conflict. Therefore, for multiple reasons, groups are potentially an effective means of enhancing both individual and shared learning, and of fostering outlooks and attitudes that are key to educational work.

First, the group pedagogical supervision process promotes the integration of partial, specific and transversal knowledge, acquired via internship experience at different host services. Adopting an inquiry stance leads students to observe educational phenomena and question practices; the group discussions stimulate them to go beyond the technicalities and to acquire deeper and more critical levels of understanding.

Indeed, the group offers the opportunity to experience a sort of 'work team'. It may initially be seen as a useful container for doubts and concerns, that may be resized in the light of others' narratives; progressively it is recognized as a formal space of discussion in which it is possible to define shared criteria for interpreting social problems and educational issues. A process of observation, reflection, documentation and discussion enables critical analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the different educational design and operational methods. Multiple approaches, in their similarities or differences, are compared within the group, whose heterogeneity reflects the variety of the education settings hosting the interns. This stimulates the adoption of a multidimensional approach to educational phenomena, and the quest to integrate the knowledge and skills, methodologies and tools that are used within different educational services. Thus, the group addresses multiple topics: analysis of educational events, experiences and services; analysis of educational settings themselves (from their organizational to their cultural features); professional tools and methods, including educational and professional relationships, teamwork, project design, professional writing and documentation, evaluation etc.; the concrete aspects of social work, taking into account the educational value of the organization of spaces and materials; the specific dimensions of educators' professional role and identity. In conclusion, the didactic and reflective experience in these training groups allows students to develop collaborative attitudes, narrative skills, and a professional language, enhancing their ability to analyse and critically understand educational events, by adopting an inquiry stance from which they can think about new hypotheses and in-depth questions. In addition, being involved in a group offers the possibility to observe and experience group dynamics, which are complex, and challenging to recognize and manage in the role of educator.

## *2.2. Pedagogical supervision: a meta-reflective tool*

The training groups are first and foremost 'pedagogical supervision groups'. In social and educational work, supervision consists of a process of reflection, learning, evaluation and scrutiny, that is built up via the relationship between an expert practitioner and a worker or group of workers seeking professional support (Oggioni, 2013). Therefore, supervision is a reflective setting that offers the possibility to revisit knowledge acquired on the job, by focusing on the effectiveness of professional behaviours, methods and instruments, so as to constantly review and guarantee the quality of interventions and identify new ways of conceptualizing and planning them. The supervision setting enables the temporary suspension of action, seeking to integrate different theories and praxes, motivations and choices, doubts and feelings, objectives and methodologies, in light of multiple perspectives. Thus, a 'partial, local, shared and temporary knowledge' emerges, reducing the distance between representations, planned objectives (sometimes not achievable), and the scope for active engagement in re-designing sustainable alternatives.

In the academic traineeship groups, the supervision conserves these same characteristics. First, it allows students to analyse educational models and practices from different points of view, and to highlight explicit and latent aspects of educational professionalism and work. Second, supervision supports the development of a knowledge that intertwines different and ambivalent aspects of the educational role: personal and professional, emotional and rational, theoretical and practical, specific and transversal, cognitive and operative ones (Sorzio, 2016). Third, supervision requires and reinforces an inquiry-driven perspective and practice: students take notes on their experience in order to narrate and discuss it with the group, thereby discovering the representations, meanings, and pedagogical, anthropological and epistemological models implicit in what they observe and do. Hence, pedagogical supervision is essential to promoting reflexivity as a complex professional skill: via reflection, educators can «gain a deep understanding of the underlying intentionalities in their educational agency, [...] identify the generative elements of their practices and therefore modify and revise them» (Striano, 2017, p.181). Supervision makes students aware of ethical, contextual, cultural and social implications in educational agency: it can therefore play a strategic role in constructing professional identity and educational competences, which become visible and communicable during the process. Within this framework, the figure of the supervisor is crucial: his/her assumptions influence the way in which the educational processes will be identified and understood, and his/her methods of constructing the setting and managing group dynamics determine the very effectiveness of the supervision itself. More specifically, supervisor is required to exercise a particular expertise, that begins with the analysis of a particular case, situation or contest, draws on multiple conceptual and experiential perspectives, and leads to a theorization about educational phenomena. The introduction of new models of observation and analysis can open up new possibilities for interpretation and operational strategies.

### 3. Future prospects and critical issues

This overview of the structure and features of the traineeship programme enables us to analyse both its potential and critical aspects, which may be read as two sides of the same coin. On one side, there are the didactic aims and the pedagogical choices. On the other side, there are organizational conditions that require a balance between the students' needs and the sustainability of the training programme, which requires a large number of professional staff (three coordinators and about forty-fifty pedagogical supervisors). The high cost of the training programme for the Department of Human Sciences and Education reflects its firm commitment to offering a didactic setting that supports reflective experience and contributes to the development of a solid professional identity and an in-depth understanding of educational phenomena. This goal is achievable thanks to planned, complex coordination within the degree course itself, between the subject modules and the traineeship, as well as between the university and the local host educational organizations. The university is strongly committed to maintaining high levels of coordination, but the intentions have to face with the complexity of both the academic system and the educational services.

The training programme is based on consolidated procedures, which do not always strike the optimum balance between the requirement to manage large numbers (of students, supervisors, services, documents...) and the opportunity of preserving pedagogical spaces of thought, planning and inquiry into the



educational and training process itself. The dialogue among supervisors, as well as between the university and the host socio-educational organizations, is mainly focused on the training process, but more time is required to build a collective project in which all subjects can actively contribute to the development of a professional culture, and adopt an inquiry and professional-development oriented stance towards both pre-service and in-service educators. This could be a possible further implementation of the training programme, from the pedagogical perspective of attributing value to long-term relationships, professional expertise, and innovation in didactics and practices.

Students recognize the training experience as fundamental and value the group pedagogical supervision. They often request an increase of the duration of the internship: 200 hours are enough to gain an overview and initial taste of their future professional role and job, but not enough to try out alternative settings or acquire solid professional competences. This brings to light a 'sore point': What professional competences should the traineeship aim to develop? How does the evaluation process work? Do the university and territorial organizations use common or different criteria?

During their internship, students personally experience a specific service with its own peculiar educational mission and set of theoretical approaches, methods and praxes; the heterogeneous composition of the traineeship groups enables them to indirectly learn from the experiences of their peers, allowing them to progress from knowledge of one specific local context to a more complex view of educational intervention, seeking out transversal competences and meanings. This transition is not automatic and must be stimulated and supported by the supervisor; frequently, the supervision activities are not sufficient to bring all the students to the same level of awareness and knowledge, especially when they display personal fragilities or difficulties that would require dedicated spaces and times to be processed. Indeed, students' own life stories often reflect the complexity of contemporary society: taking this into account may actually be the most important critical aspect of the relationship between the university and society.

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## Narratives against Narratives. A Grounded and Narrative-Based Analysis of Discriminations

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**Keywords:** *Discrimination, Counter narratives, Grounded theory, Gender, School*

### Introduction

*ControNarrazioni* ([www.contronarrazioni.com](http://www.contronarrazioni.com)) is a research project born in September 2018 and still ongoing. It has three main goals:

- to collect definitions of the concept of 'discrimination' with the aid of an anonymous online survey in order to analyse what people think about this phenomenon. The reason behind it is the fact that opinions on this issue are several, discordant and sometimes mystified by the political debate. The present analysis is still ongoing;
- to collect stories of discrimination that will be analysed by means of the grounded theory to understand the roots of the phenomenon and any potential common factor among different types of discrimination. At the moment, the stories collected are 62 and get published in accordance with the current regulations on privacy (see Regulation 2016/679/EU);
- to create an online safe space (the website and its Facebook and Instagram pages) in which potential processes of empowerment can be activated in those who tell the stories and those who read them. For the reasons stated above, it was decided to present not only the results of the research, but also the stories analysed. In this way, a community was created to allow people to interact with the experiences of the narrators. Moreover, the possibility of sharing stories led some of these counter narratives (De Latour *et al.*, 2017, hereafter CN) to become viral – especially on Instagram – thus becoming significant tools to raise awareness on the experiences of discrimination. Finally, we intend to encourage debate by posting content through the use of social networks (e.g. quizzes and surveys on Instagram stories): in this way we pursue one of the key objectives of the EU, namely the active involvement of citizens in issues corresponding to those European values such as human rights (see Decision 2004/100/EC). In addition, starting from August 2019, Dr. Ilaria Nassa and Dr. Sara Silvera Darnich will collaborate with the creation of contents.

### 1. Methodology

The method of investigation used is that of the grounded theory (hereafter GT). Its creators define it as «a general method of comparative analysis [...] and a set of procedures capable of generating {systematically} a theory based on data» (Glaser, Strauss, 1967: VIII). It was chosen because it appears to be more in line with the objective of the research: to extrapolate an interpretative theory from the data, affecting them as little as possible, without using fixed aprioristic categories that would risk distorting the real meanings communicated by people. In fact, all the results shown, as well as the categories, are based on the words

used by the participants themselves and not on the scientific lexicon of the subject. Moreover, this method appears to be the most suitable one for the future development of the project (see Conclusions).

Since we used the constructivist version of the grounded theory (Tarozzi, 2008), we will list below a few significant aspects to better understand the results:

- paradigm of reference: with this term we refer to «symbolic interactionism» which states that human beings, through symbolic apparatuses, interpret their own history and produce their own culture (Mead, 1972);
- the position of the researcher: since the paradigm is not positivist, there is no total separation between the researcher and the investigated reality. Although we rely as much as possible exclusively on data, the position of the researcher will always be influenced to a minimal extent by expectations, attitudes and previous knowledge of those who observe it. In this case, the research is conducted by a pedagogue who shares the inclusive vision of human rights of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- theoretical sampling: the data available are not sufficient to be able to draw a first exhaustive picture of the phenomenon of discrimination. Nevertheless, at the moment it is possible to trace trends and break them into specific subcategories.

Let us now turn to the results of the analysis.

## 2. Results

We will provide a summary of the analysis carried out for the first 50 stories collected (see Table 1). The trends found were related to discriminations based on the school environment, sexual orientation and gender. Obviously, they cannot be considered exhaustive data, however the research will carry on with the collection of stories to produce more structured results.

For this reason, the data are not reported in percentage. In addition, we would like to point out that the numbers reported are based on single episodes of discrimination which can be more than one for each story.

From a first general look at the three categories, it can be noticed that the common aspects are as follows:

- the place of discrimination is primarily the social context;
- discrimination is mainly carried out by unknown people;
- those who discriminate act mainly in groups.

By reporting some excerpts of the stories collected, we may observe more in detail the individual types of discrimination starting from those taking place at school.

**TABLE. 1 - Results of the analysis**

	<i>School-based discrimination</i>	<i>Sexual orientation discrimination</i>	<i>Gender discrimination</i>
Gender	13 women 7 men	8 men 2 women	9 women 2 man (1 transgender FtM)
Age	≅ 27 years old (26,5) 0 Elementary school 0 Middle school	≅ 25 years old 0 Elementary school 0 Middle school	≅ 32 years old 0 Elementary school 0 Middle school
Qualification	3 High school 8 Bachelor's Degree 9 Master's/Four-year/Single cycle Degree	1 High school 5 Bachelor's Degree 4 Master's/Four-year/Single cycle Degree	2 High school 3 Bachelor's Degree 6 Master's/Four-year/Single cycle Degree

Narrator's point of view	19 victims	8 victims	11 victims
	1 witness	2 witnesses	0 witnesses
	0 discriminators	0 discriminators	0 discriminators
	22 in Northern Italy	7 in Northern Italy	10 in Northern Italy
Geographical location	1 in central Italy	1 in central Italy	1 in central Italy
	1 in Southern Italy	1 in Southern Italy	0 in Southern Italy
	0 abroad	1 abroad	1 abroad
	14 in Middle school	6 in the social environment	7 in the social environment
Physical location	7 in Elementary school	3 in State institutions	5 in the workplace
	5 in High school	3 in private organisations	2 at home
	0 at University	2 at home	2 in private organisations
		2 in the workplace	
Duration of the discrimination	19 are continuous	10 are continuous	7 are continuous
	5 are episodic	5 are episodic	7 are episodic
	10 personality	7 male homosexuality	
	10 body: robust (7), not masculine enough (2), ugly (1)	2 bisexuality	
Cause	4 competence (2 high, 2 low)	1 female homosexuality	
	3 sexual orientation (gay, among which 2 are allegedly gay)		//
	2 way of dressing		
	1 religion (atheist)		
The Discriminator	1 economic status (poor)		
	1 family situation (without the father)		
	19 schoolmates	5 strangers	9 strangers
	10 teachers	4 schoolmates	5 colleagues
Does the discriminator operate alone or in group?	2 friends	4 colleagues	2 family members
		3 family members	1 acquaintance
		3 friend	1 in the social environment
		1 institutional profession	
Discriminator's actions		1 partner	
	24 in group	11 in group	10 alone
	6 alone	6 alone	7 in group
	19 verbal	9 verbal	7 harassment
Support received by the victim	10 marginalisations	6 marginalisations	7 verbal
	3 physical	3 physical	1 marginalisation
	2 harassment	1 harassment	0 physical
	10 nobody	6 friends	7 nobody
Reactions of the victim toward the discriminator	7 family members	3 family members	3 partners
	5 friends	1 schoolmate	1 friend
	1 schoolmate	1 healthcare profession	
	1 partner	3 nobody	
Request for anonymity	1 teacher		
	20 no	12 no	7 no
	4 yes	3 yes	6 yes
	28 yes: for themselves (17), to protect the discriminator (2) or the victim (3)	6 yes (40% for themselves, 20% to protect the victim)	8 publish their name
	22 publish their name	4 publish their name	3 yes

### 2.1. School-based discrimination

The analysis of the data obtained from the school world brings to light some reflections:

- data show that discrimination within this context significantly characterizes also the female population, mainly through verbal actions («more and more girls made fun of me»). Nevertheless, it must be

taken into account that mostly women participated in this research (36), whereas the male sample is not yet saturated (14);

- the reason for discriminating is especially due to the view that one has of visible characteristics such as those of the body or of some attitudes («I was somewhat considered the 'chubby' of the class»), while strictly personal aspects such as one's economic and family status appear less frequently;
- there is no gender discrimination. This trend cannot be found in literature (IPSOS, 2018), where it is shown that stereotypes about men and women are still present in the new generations;
- classmates are the main discriminators and almost never play a supportive role («Once he even beat me in the school toilets with other people watching and not doing much»). This makes it clear that there is an urgent need to set up and strengthen peer education projects as friends are recognised as one of the main means to overcome discrimination;
- the almost total lack of reaction towards one's own discriminator can be linked to the lack of support to fight discrimination («I would have liked at least one of my friends to defend me, even if only for once, instead of doing nothing out of fear»);
- these phenomena show the highest rate of continuous discrimination. This imposes a reflection on the potential damage that such a situation can exert on a minor for a long period of time, often the entire school curriculum («All this has led me to close myself in, to restrain myself in my books, in my video games, and to lose the desire to live»). The situation described is a clear sign of the lack of attention that the school staff has towards these phenomena («The teachers were non-existent because they were only interested in carrying on with the school program»);
- it is rather alarming that teachers are often the discriminators, almost in one out of three stories set at school («I was always targeted not only by my classmates but also by the teachers...»). This is a significant number if one thinks that they have an educational role in the lives of their students. Moreover, this would explain the fact that only in one episode the victim received help from one of the teachers;
- harassment is rarer, but still worrying and clearly shows the need for the introduction of sex education projects in school curricula («One of my heterosexual companions closed me up with him and asked me if I wanted to do anything»). Such interventions would also have a potential positive effect on discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation;
- the growing cuts in education made by governments of all political colours are also a matter of great concern, while it is clear how much schools need resources to launch educational projects to fight and prevent discrimination, bullying and all sorts of negative events that may harm the child

## *2.2. Sexual orientation discrimination*

As regard discriminations based on sexual orientation, most stories are about a gay man or presumed gay man, while there are fewer stories of bisexual people or lesbian women.

Significant data also emerge in this case:

- LGBTI+ people perceive the social context more discriminatory («They would kill me, there would be no future for me, in any field»).

In fact, as found in literature (Meyer, 2007), this phenomenon can be defined as «minority stress», which leads to a greater probability of potential mental and behavioural disorders due to a stigmatizing environment. The effect is stronger if one belongs to more than one minority (e.g. homosexuals with disabilities or bisexual foreigners);

- the discriminator is mainly an unknown person acting in a group («I was kicked out of my hotel room by my high school friends because I was homosexual»);
- also, physical actions are more frequent in this kind of discrimination and often take place at the expense of homosexual males («He hurled at us and hit me with a kick to the chest»);
- in some stories, the subject is a heterosexual man who is pointed out as homosexual because of his attitudes or personality, thus being subject to discrimination («Being very friendly with females meant being a 'pussy'»). This makes us understand how the lack of inclusion of the LGBTI+ population does not only harm those who are part of it, but also those who do not respect the normative canons of masculinity typical of our culture;
- the people of this sample are those who receive the most support, especially from their friendly network («I have the support of all my friends and relatives»). In fact, only a small part has to rely only on itself to overcome the discrimination. Nonetheless, the reaction rate to the discriminator is the lowest.

### 2.3. Gender discrimination

Finally, let us now clarify what emerged from the analyses of gender discrimination:

- the majority of the sample is represented by women. Among the men, there is only one testimony of a transgender guy FtM;
- as regards men dealing with early childhood, discrimination occurs because of the view of care work as traditionally 'female' («When I was with children of kindergarten age, there was a suspicion that I could be a paedophile»). At the moment, this attitude is not present in situations of discrimination against women;
- even in this category the discriminator is often a stranger («In front of me and behind my boyfriend, a man started to stare at me insistently») and there are no cases of female discriminators;
- there is an equal number of episodic and continuous discrimination;
- the place where discrimination occurs the most is in the social context («One evening I stayed in the restaurant until late. When I left, this man started to follow me»);
- the working environment is more mentioned in this category («They told me that I could have made a career in a flash, if I only gave myself to the person in charge of my workplace»);
- there are more frequent cases in which those who discriminate act alone rather than in groups, thus recording a shift in the trend compared to the previous categories;
- the number of harassments is very high and victims are mostly women («Since I was not giving in, he pulled down his pants and underwear showing his skills as 'lover'»);
- discrimination based on gender is also the category with the lowest support rate. However, there is a strong reaction towards the discriminator, carried out only by women («I get angry. I scream at him: 'what the f\*\* are you doing?!'»);

- this is the only category that identifies in the male partner a significant support, a factor shown only in the stories of women («I felt persecuted and disturbed by this person to the point that I no longer wanted to go to the bank, until my husband intervened»);
- a small part of the sample required anonymity. This category is the most exposed on *ControNarrazioni*.

## **Conclusions: towards a theory of discrimination**

The ultimate goal of the grounded theory is to outline a theory that interprets the phenomenon under examination. At the moment, an interpretation is not possible yet because of the lack of significant data on the point of view of discriminators and spectators. In fact, everything that has been shown so far is to be considered only as a trend. In addition, the relationships among the various categories are not yet conceivable as solid and structured.

Moreover, for a broader view of the phenomenon it is necessary to collect more data on the subcategories analysed and on those that still have few testimonies (e.g. discrimination based on disability and on the workplace).

Nevertheless, we intend to continue with the project *ControNarrazioni*. The aim is to carry on the analysis of the concept of 'discrimination' by expanding the panorama outlined by the first fifty stories. This is also the reason why we chose a methodology such as the GT, which allows us to add new data to the theory by enriching it in a potentially infinite way.

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## School Change and Innovation: Strategic Planning as a Lever for School

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**Keywords:** *Innovation, School Improvement, Strategic Planning*

### Introduction

A «school as learning organisation» (Kools, Stolls, 2015) focuses on developing and sharing a vision centred on all students' learning. Other important factors are: the creation and the support of continuous learning opportunities for all the staff; the promotion of team learning and collaboration to establish a culture of inquiry, innovation and exploration and the construction of a systems to collect and exchange knowledge and learning; the improvement of external environment and the development of a learning leadership. In this process the capability of organization to innovate takes on central role: «A range of teaching practices that allow students to think, evaluate, collaborate and build a variety of skills across the curriculum can be considered innovative» (OECD, 2019: 2). This work aims to illustrate how the tools available to the Italian school can promote improvement and innovation.

The paper intends to illustrate and analyze the connections among the main documents of the schools (RAV, PTOF and PDM) highlighting the elements which refer to the development of innovation: the organization of learning environments; the attention to the digital competences and to the soft skills; the teaching methodology and the collaboration strategy used in order to promote a coherent change in the school.

The improvement is implemented through careful design of the actions and planning of the activities to be carried out, requiring constant monitoring of processes activated in order to achieve the set objectives. Innovation has different development, linked to factors that depend on a multiplicity of variables.

Panagiotis and Kamplins (2015) identify some elements that support innovation: multiple paths, the possibility of working on different contexts to facilitate the transferability of innovations, leadership and collaboration at every level. These two processes are both important in a modern school, as they allow to support the whole school community, through a proactive push, towards a common and shared vision (Stoll et al., 2006, Sergiovanni, 2002)

### 1. The INDIRE work on the strategic planning

The results of INDIRE's research on the use of the Improvement Plan model proposed by the Institute since 2015 to 2018, highlighted the importance for schools of using tools that allow the promotion of strategic planning, in order to explain a mission and a shared vision. These evidences have led to the development of a new format of Strategic Plan which is currently contained within the online PTOF: the dimensions of this new model refer to the DigCompOrg framework (2016) and to INDIRE's projects relating the organization change and the teaching practices.



This framework is an important theoretic reference because it allows us to consider all the dimensions of the school with an innovation view. Nowadays the whole design today must respond to the needs which arise in a constant society change. Students need to acquire skills, and soft skills (Gordon et al. 2009, Lavilles et al., 2017, Schleicher, 2015), which allow them to enter in the world of future work. This is possible if the school can open to the outside and so it will be available to transformations and changes. The design must be constantly in evolution, accepting innovative pedagogical practices. A lot of studies on organizations (Argyris, 1957; Stoll et al., 2006, Hopkins et al., 1997, Worrel, 1995) show that working organizations need a double effort: the individual work and that one in the group. Here below there are the dimensions described in the framework which have guided the design of the Improvement Plan:

- Leadership and Governance Practices
- Teaching and Learning Practices
- Professional Development
- Assessment practices
- Content and Curricula
- Collaboration and Networking
- Infrastructure

These dimensions have an overall view of the school with the aim of orienting the vision towards the innovation. The leadership's role makes it possible to strengthen school values through a shared vision. For this reason, it is necessary to promote and support the professional teachers' training, through special projects oriented towards the same objectives (Paletta, 2018).

The collected data through self-assessment are valuable because it's important to know the real school situation and to whom we are directing our assistance to understand the school potential. In an innovative vision the curricula are the result of a common work. In this way, technology can be helpful (Kampylis et al., 2015): The classes become experimental laboratories, the educational activities are carried out in small groups while students interact.

## **2. A new tool for the Italian schools**

The authors propose a model of a useful reflection to guide the analysis of the school organization in order to promote the sharing among teachers to assume the level of their institute innovation. This tool will be able to support the schools strategic planning process.

In Italy there aren't tools able to highlight the relationship among self-evaluation (RAV, Italian acronym for the self-evaluation report), the planning of training offer (PTOF, Italian acronym for three-year educational offer plan) and school improvement (PdM, Improvement plan) in order to promote a consistent path for the innovation. Schools implement the RAV and the PTOF separately to guide schools through the documents.

Starting from what has been written in the RAV we ask teachers to reflect on some key aspect which concern the innovation in their school. Specifically, if we analyze the headings of the report, we ask to highlight which aspects can hinder or support innovation, trying to sort in order to promote the process which guides the importance of a specific aspects (Table 2).

**TABLE 1. Innovation and RAV**

RAV AREAS	Aspects which hinder the innovation	Aspects which support the innovation	Strengths of innovation (increasing order)
1- Context			
1.3. Economic and material resources (school structures (building structure, location accessibility, quality of the tools used in the school)			
3- Outcomes			
2.3 Key competences and citizenship (assesses students' citizenship skills (eg respect for the rules, development of a sense of legality and an ethics of responsibility, collaboration and team spirit)			
3A- Processes - Educational and didactic practices			
3.1 Curriculum, planning and evaluation ( how the school curriculum responds to students' training needs; how the activities of expanding the educational offer are designed in conjunction with the school curriculum )			
3.2.1 Organization of Learning Environments (how the school organizes the spaces, how it uses the technological supports in the classrooms, how the time is articulated)			
3.3.2 The teaching methods (how the school promotes the use of innovative teaching methods)			
3.3.3. The relational dimension (Attention to relationships, well-being and social skills)			
3.3 Inclusion and differentiation (inclusion and orientation activities for students)			
3.3.2 The teaching methods (how the school promotes the use of innovative teaching methods)			
3.3.3. The relational dimension (Attention to relationships, well-being and social skills)			
3.3 Inclusion and differentiation (inclusion and orientation activities for students)			
3.5. Strategic orientation and organization of the school (how the mission and vision of the school are communicated and shared)			
3B- Processes - Management and organizational practices			
3.6 Development and enhancement of human resources (what are the actions promoted for teacher training and what they focus on; peer training or forms of exchange between teachers are provided)			
3.7 Integration with the territory and families (if networks are active with other realities or schools; how parents are involved in school life)			

We ask to do the same thing for the PTOF areas that are more closely related to innovation (Table 3).

**TABLE 2. Innovation and PTOF**

PTOF AREAS	Aspects which hinder the innovation	Aspects which support the innovation
Expected goals on exit		
Teachings and time frames		
Institute curriculum		
Work School Alternation		
Curricular extension initiatives		
Activities foreseen in relation to the PNSD		

As a second step, we ask to highlight the importance of innovation-related factors within the strategic choices as indicated in the DigCompOrg framework (2015) (Table 4).

**TABLE 3. Innovation and PDM**

PDM AREAS	Paths which support the innovation	Strengths of innovation (increasing order)
Leadership and Governance Practices		
Teaching and Learning Practices		
Professional Development		
Assessment practices		
Content and Curricula		
Collaboration and Networking		
Infrastructure		

After this re-examination of RAV, PTOF and PdM, schools can orientate its PTOF objectives towards the innovation. It could be possible through the re-definition of two key concepts which link these documents: mission and vision. The 'mission' represents the schools declaration of intent, and describes how the goals should be pursued. The main objective of the mission is to understand the priorities in the definition of school planning activities to understand whom our efforts are addressed to: students, parents, stakeholders, which are their expectations and the services which can be offered by the school in the future. In this way, what are the actions the school intends to develop in order to innovate the organization and the teacher's practices?

'Vision' identifies the idea, the dream and what the school wants to become in the future. The vision objective is to represent a future scenario, projecting the desires and expectations of the whole school. So, which actions would teachers like to see done in the future to innovate the school?

**TABLE 4. Mission and vision for improvement and innovation**

Mission of the school:
Vision of the school:
Relationship with the improvement of the school:
Relationship with the innovation of the school:

Describing concretely, this type of action, which is guided by the reflection made previously, can allow the school to start a real process of change and innovation.

## Conclusions

The promotion of innovation is not a simple objective, but a cultural approach which takes deep transformations: new methodological and didactic approaches, a holistic review of learning environments, such as spaces which should be more adapted to the needs of the students and interactive educational activities. The school manager plays a very important role, he must understand the context of the school and understand how to motivate his collaborators. The class level is a microcosm to be developed in synergy with the school but putting attention to students' personality. Design tools must become a resource and an opportunity for the growth of the school and of each teacher working in its own class. The reflection and the tool proposed by the authors in this article support the awareness of the school in promoting an innovation process. We hope that this proposal will meet the interest of school leaders and teachers for the daily work in their school. Thus, the authors are available for further study searches and experimentation of the tool in Italian schools.

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## Between Similarities and Cultural Diversities: Intangible Cultural Heritage Meets Intercultural Education. The Example of Traditional Sports and Games

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### Introduction

Intercultural education is a field of education that addresses the needs schools have to meet in increasingly large and complex multicultural societies. It aims at providing a quality education for all children, overcoming language gaps of children with a migration background and fostering their integration and school achievement (see Nigris, 2015, among others). One of its benchmarks, often quoted from academic papers to national curricula and school projects, is the *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education* (2006) (see Portera, 2013). The Guidelines, in particular, underline the need to foster cultural knowledge, in order to give equal respect to both cultures of the majority and of the minorities. The main goal is to convey the idea of the plural, dynamic, relative and complementary nature of cultures and foster dialogue (UNESCO, 2006), and it overlaps with that of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003), namely, to support communities, groups and individual (CGI) in maintaining their own living heritage. The ICH Convention, in fact, stresses the role of living heritage «as an instrument of integration and intercultural dialogue and promoting multilingual education» (UNESCO, 2003: 50).

The translation of intercultural education in the practice, however, is problematic, since its attempt to balance universalism and cultural pluralism – showing the unity of human beings and the variety of their cultures - often takes the risks of a culturalist narrative that overemphasises cultural diversity, and, paradoxically, create an even more significant divergence among cultures, especially between that of the majority and those of the minorities, when it is supposed to moderate it (Portera 2018).

To avoid this risk, the present article suggests that it is worth to put the attention not just to cultural diversity, but also to the elements of similarity present in cultures. An approach that look for similarities implies an attitude for the search of «connecting relationships» (Bateson, 1979), and contributes to highlight cultural diversity by valorising both variety and resemblance. Furthermore, this article suggests that two subjects with different cultural backgrounds *meet* when they recognise each other in a shared cultural element, and that this moment of encounter is prior to, and essential for, facilitating intercultural dialogue.

Examples of shared elements among cultures may be found in various forms of traditional cultural expressions and social practices, such as folk music, knowledge of nature and the universe, food heritages and bread baking, oral traditions and fairy tales, and traditional games. The introduction of TSG, primarily in school physical education programmes, as proposed in some relevant contexts of is a tool to practice activities that contribute, in a holistic way, to the personal and relational growth of children, involving: the immersion in both

cognitive and motoric activities, the possibility of experiencing multiple relations among players, changing and negotiating rules, the use of various play materials, the experience of a sensitive and culturally-oriented experience of body and the all-important imagination (Parlebas, 2016; Jaouen et al., 2010, among others). Practicing TSG in school can raise awareness of other ICH related elements: oral traditions, ritual and handcraft associated to the games can be appreciated in the frame of a reflexive, interdisciplinary and ICH-oriented approach.

## 1. Traditional games and traditional play

Games and toys existing before the industrial revolution (circa mid-18th century) are, usually, indicated as 'traditional games'. Many games - played by children, adults or both - exist still today in innumerable varieties throughout all the regions of the world: games of skittles, balls, spinning tops, bowls, card and board games, etc. At times, they have travelled with their players across regions, or traversed seas, and are still widely played, at other they remain particular to local traditions. In 1959, the French sociologist Pierre Parlebas published his first article concerning the need to research and promote knowledge of traditional games. These playing practices, while adapting to the changing economic and social context, are threatened by various factors that can interrupt their intergenerational transmission. From the 1980s, it was understood that the pressure of industrial development was contributing to their disappearance or standardisation, and something needed to be done to ensure their survival (Parlebas, 2018). According to Parlebas, the relation with the local culture and the respect for the related «sense of identity and continuity» of CGI (UNESCO, 2003, art. 2) practising these games, allows a clear distinction to be made between traditional games (TG), traditional sports (TS) and Sports:

- A TG is organised by a community of players or a local institution, and the rules are set locally;
- A TS is organised by a regional institution that sets the same rules for all communities of players;
- In Sports, rules are wholly standardised and applied internationally, as in the case of Olympic disciplines.

In the passage from traditional game to sport, aspects of the local culture are gradually sacrificed (Parlebas, 2016). Under this perspective, a TGS reflects but also reinforces aspects of that culture. The link with the community is essential and often rules reveal something about its culture, i.e. whether a game is played by adults and/or children, women and/or men, during a festivity or within the context of a ritual, whether it recalls a form of work, etc. (Lavega Burgués, 2004). In the Nineties, several academics, Parlebas *in primis*, played a central role in UNESCO's acknowledgement of TSG as part of the ICH of Humanity (UNESCO, 2017). UNESCO refers to physical games played by adults, expression of the cultural belonging of CGI. Such games, part of social practices, ritual and festive events, in reference to the domains of ICH, are transmitted only when they are still played. Two varieties of knucklebone games, for example, have been included in the Representative List of ICH: the Mongolian Knucklebone shooting and the Kazakh Assyk (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?text=traditional%20game>)

## 2. The TSG Network

Nowadays, TSG are at the core of an ongoing dialogue amongst civil society, local, national and international institutions, NGOs networks, and the scientific

community, all engaged in the support of communities of players, practitioners and custodian of such practices. This movement around TSG involves the practitioners in participatory research and inventorying processes, representing thus a relevant example of implementation of the UNESCO Convention. Since 2002, Verona (Italy) has hosted a community-based event, the *Tocati – International Festival of Games in the Street*, dedicated to traditional games and sports. In 2016, the Tocati network started a process for inclusion in the ICH *Register of Good Safeguarding Practices*. This multinational nomination of Tocati as a shared Programme and Model for the safeguarding of TSG, is a strong example in the history of the uses of ICH Register.

In compliance with the ICH Convention, in the Tocati model, national and regional dimensions are very present, but the programme of activities and the Festival are the results of a grassroots process, strongly supported by CGI: it represents the expression of citizens initiatives and engagement – local, regional and national associations, often members of international networks - constantly relating to each other, networking and overcoming national boundaries. Finally, in the frame of the 2015 edition of the Tocati Festival, a network of actors coordinated by the President of ETSGA have written a Verona Declaration concerning the introduction of TSG, as ICH elements, into schools (See: <https://tocati.it/dichiarazione-verona/>).

### 3. Didactics with traditional games

The introduction of traditional games in schools has an exceptional tool in motor praxeology theorized by Parlebas. Motor praxeology demonstrates that traditional games – especially motor games but also cognitive games, the so-called ‘games of society’, which represent a minor part of traditional games - set in motion bodily, emotional, social and cognitive dynamics that contribute in a holistic way to the personal and relational growth of children (Parlebas, 1998). This is in line with the basic idea of ‘game-based learning’, namely, that the introduction of games and game-design elements in no-gaming settings is a useful tool for enhancing children’s motivation and learning. As part of a broader reflection about play as a tool for didactics, nowadays the use of traditional games shifts the attention from invented games to traditional ones and from digital devices to material objects of play. To foster traditional games in didactics means to recognise and appreciate the variety of ludic cultures and play forms. Furthermore, the identification of families of traditional games – skittles, balls, spinning tops games, etc. – allows tracing the common thread that links the experience of the games of adults and children in different cultures throughout the world. In general, the use of traditional games, both motoric and cognitive ones, in didactics may be implemented in two ways: *i)* within single subjects – i.e. learning mathematics by playing *mancala* games, learning ancient history through board games, or again introducing teachers of physical education in the praxeology of games; *ii)* in interdisciplinary projects – i.e. practicing and exploring local ludic traditions, exploring families of games across epochs and cultures, organising workshop for handcrafting toys and games, with natural and recycled materials. In this second case, the narrative is revealed through history, geography, art, science etc. The involvement of adults, as bearers of memories of local cultures, is essential and opens the school experience to the living communities and their territories.

When we use TGS in didactics, we put into practice the pedagogue, John Dewey’s recommendations of ‘learning by doing’, translating it into the precious possibility of ‘learning by playing’. In these games, motoric and perception



interact and 'playing' goes hand-in-hand with 'doing' and with an embodied concept of knowledge and competence. From an educational point of view, practicing TGS and unravelling children's narratives on traditional games as shared by cultures - thus overcoming borders - allows teachers to capture curiosity and attention in a 'field of experience' familiar to children. According to Dewey, in fact, the ability to learn is directly related to experiences that have already been encountered (Dewey, 1933). By exploring the variety of TGS, the reflection process is about «the near and the far»: children reflect on something they know, that is close to them (their experience of the game), and on something unknown, new and remote (the story of a game, of a region and its traditions, but also of past eras and different cultures), which will therefore remain impressed upon them (*ibidem*).

Moreover, as pointed out by the Spanish professor of Physical Education Pere Lavega Burgués, the introduction of traditional games at school would allow children to experience and practice various skills of movement, perception and relationship: with other children, with the space, with playing objects and with time (Lavega, 2004). The teacher, thus, can choose between games in which there is no motor communication with the other players, for example in throwing a ball to hit the pins, or between games that provide for different relationships among the players: cooperation, individual duels, team duels, one against all, or all against all. This implies that, compared to sports, traditional games not only provide for an 'ambivalent communication network' – when the player is partner and/or opponent - but also provide for an «exclusive motor communication network» – when the player is both partner and opponent at the same time. Furthermore, such schemes can vary during the game (i.e. an opponent can become a partner and vice versa) or remain stable. Besides, children must also relate to the other protagonists of the game: the space (i.e. the playground is not fixed as in sports, is adapted in size, surface and the presence of obstacles); the objects (i.e. involving oculo-motor coordination and manipulation); the time (i.e. foreseeing long or short sessions, sudden role changes, etc) (*ibidem*).

#### **4. Suggestions for didactics with traditional games combining cultural heritage and intercultural education goals**

Projects conceived around the topic of traditional games should first bring attention to the village, town, region where the school is, searching for local traditional games, in order to support each community of players in the transmission of the practice. This would fulfil the ICH goal of increasing awareness of living heritage in the younger generations. We suggest, in particular:

- The involvement of teachers and pupils/students may be active in the inventory of local traditional games, in mapping them through their identification, observation and description, documentation and collection of stories by practitioners and local inhabitants. Here children interview the latter regarding their play experience and the social functions of such activities. This kind of fieldwork should also be focused on the related elements of ICH (as ritual contexts, handcrafts, food heritages, oral traditions often associated to TSG) present in the various cultural contexts, fostering the process of awareness-raising of ICH in general, as a source of knowledge, wellbeing and mutual respect;
- The involvement of communities of traditional games' players in teaching the games to pupils/students, both visiting the communities of the school or vice versa.

These actions, in turn, also fulfil intercultural education goals when they are accompanied by:

- The collection of stories by parents and grandparents, regarding their own children play experience. Such narratives allow the family biography of migration to emerge, from another region within the same state, as well from far away regions, other states or continents. Here the similarities among traditional games across countries appear clearly. These stories sometimes recall forgotten games and play practices typical of the region/country of origin and, furthermore, may highlight that resemblances, varieties or correlations are often the expression of cultural contacts;
- The mapping of inclusive local maps of traditional games which comprehend alongside the historical play practices also the ones imported by migrants, exploring thus the whole of traditional games played locally by children and adults (Zoletto 2010);
- The draw of cross-cutting maps, with the focus on a particular region, overcoming states borders; i.e. in the observation of games played in the Mediterranean area, studies of children's games made by the Belgian ethnologist Jean Paul Rossie on the traditional games played by children in the Maghreb may be compared with the ones of Spanish, Italian, Greek, Turkish regions (<http://www.sanatoyplay.org/english/en-publications.htm>).
- Also, in this case, the similarities among traditional games help to draw the thread that weaves together the human play experience.

All such actions imply the implementation of teacher training focused on game-based learning and on traditional games as ICH.

## Conclusions

The possibility of sharing with children, and especially with teachers and educators in training, the richness of TSG supports the transmission to new generations, encouraging intergenerational exchange and the diffusion and practice of TSG as a living heritage in schools. These goals fit the ICH Framework. Furthermore, in the multicultural classroom, the emergence of similarities among TSG contributes to the visualisation – through narrative and storytelling that involve parents and grandparents – of the thread that holds together the human experience of play, thus also fulfilling the goals of intercultural education. In TSG rules are constantly recreated and modified by the practitioners. In the classroom, teachers, too, can adapt such games to their class, balancing, for example, male/female composition or adapting the game to the need of children with disabilities.

Since they are an expression of a universal heritage, present in all cultures in a surprising wealth of forms, TSG represent a meeting place where adults and children from different cultures can experience a shared space in which to identify with each other. TSG may be seen as a 'shared heritage' that contributes to strengthening the sense of identity of the entire community, facilitating intercultural encounters and integration processes.

Finally, while the focus of this article is merely upon the introduction of TSG in the school setting, their implementation goes beyond formal education, opening up possibilities for application in various contexts of informal education as well. The article, thus, intends lay down a basis for further empirical research, the objectives and methodology of which still need to be identified.

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## DiCultHer Network and Its Implications in Developing Cultural Heritage Learning

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**Keywords:** *Cultural heritage; Digitalization; Participatory processes; Educational agency; Cultural ownership.*

### 1. Worlds of life and digital forms

There is today an ambivalent relationship between a centralized discourse on digital cultural heritage in education and a peripheral, often alternative interpretation of digital technologies and media in the educative process. School communities, in fact, are producing interesting projects on digital cultural heritage dissemination as well as digital knowledge transfer and inclusion. This paper tries to give account of some of these experiences involving students, teachers, local stakeholders in the Italian School context.

At the beginning of the new Millennium a strong focus was put on cultural heritage, identities and landscapes, particularly with the 2003 UNESCO Convention for Intangible Heritage as well as the 2003 Chart for the Protection of Digital Heritage. In these documents particular attention was deserved to digital technologies as ductile supports for the different needs of heritage processes. Online archives and virtual galleries increasingly become the digital spaces in which important heritizing processes are carried out, facilitating the identification, definition and management as well as the sharing of cultural assets. Many scholars consider these documents as well as Faro Convention on the Value of Heritage for the Communities of 2005, a way to reaffirm the property rights of communities upon their cultural heritage (Hennessy, 2012b; Bindi, 2013). This reaffirmation is considered, therefore, as an opportunity for empowerment and redefinition of the agencies in this heritage scenario. Digital archives encompass the shared knowledge and practices of local/trans-local communities, collecting memories of different and recognizable groups competing for reaffirming their own self-representations (Ballacchino, 2016; Broccolini, 2016) through narratives and virtual speeches or through the use of audio-visual co-produced documents (Bindi, 2005, 2008; Fiona-Kenderdine, 2007).

Some authors call them «participatory media projects» (Hennessy, 2009, 2012a) referring thereby to mixed productions, composed of videos, photographs, artistic images, sound records. All these files contribute to documenting, transmitting and revitalizing heritage, landscapes and significant places for certain groups and entire communities through storytelling, a way to put into form an individual narrative about local knowledge, practices, shared experiences, common places and landscapes crossed or inhabited in the public sphere (Underberg-Zorn, 2013; Gubrium-Harper, 2016; Valtolina, 2016).

This has also determined a radical change in the production of the ethnographic object that we could somehow define 'born digital', since the documentation collected by the various subjects engaged in digitalisation of cultures becomes itself part of a virtual media circulation. In the new media broadcasting cultural heritage is cut and regrouped, fragmented and reintegrated sometimes in an autonomous way from the original, according with tradition bearers or heritage keepers who use these documents differently and with other aims.

In this heritage framework different agencies are involved: national and local institutions, conservation professionals, ethnographers, curators of museum exhibits and eco-museums, cultural and tourist animators who concur to manipulate and transform the ethnographic material in objects 'good to digitize' and capable, for that reason, to enter the public sphere at a level of resolution that is no longer or only partially local.

## **2. The DiCultHer School Network**

In this complex scenario, the need for a new and more effective education to cultural heritage in its various forms seems to become compulsory as well as a reflection about the activities of a cooperation network between schools based on the themes of digital cultural heritage with which I cooperated in the last three years as a referent of my University and within the framework of a Regional pole subsequently established between the University, the Region Molise and the Regional School Office. The Regional Superintendence is soon expected to join the consortium as well.

In this paper, then, I'll try to briefly outline the activities, the institutional debates, the experiences of formal and/or informal training and education that I was able to document during this cooperation, ethnographically observing not only the preparatory phases, the aspects mostly linked to planning from above, but also the activities and the projects conceived, discussed, implemented and presented by the various schools during both national meetings at the Ministry or during specific events (for example: Matera 2019), but also in specific local meetings and projects, with specific reference to the lively activity of the DiCultHer Molise Centre. The 3-years research/action has been conducted observing decision-making and project planning/realization of different activities. Ethnographic methodologies have been: semi-structured Interviews, focus groups, participant observation, analysis of shared repositories, digital platforms co-production and management.

DiCultHer - Digital Cultural Heritage is an Italian network of schools that aims to increase dissemination, training experiences and methodologies, and a conscious use of ICT in the education to tangible and intangible heritage.

At a national scale the Memory of Understanding on DiCultHer Network is dated 16 February 2015 and was signed at the 'Don Luigi Sturzo' Institute in Rome. Although not directly emanating from the Ministry for Schools, Universities and Research, the strong affiliation is evident from the beginning, being its first promoter an important officer of the same Ministry, recently retired. With this initiative he wanted, in fact, to give continuity to a long-term planning carried out in ministerial work. The DiCultHer Regional Hub of Molise was officially established in December 2018.

According to the Official Declaration the main mission of the Networks is to:

- i)* build and consolidate a digital technological innovation culture on issues related to the conservation, enhancement and promotion of the Cultural Heritage through a broad planning of shared research, training and educational activities.
- ii)* establish a reticular model, characterized by a wide distribution on the national territory of Training Hubs sharing among them functions, tasks and competences.

This program was thought to ensure quality standards, innovation and educational flexibility, in response to the requests for digital skills for the preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage both in the public and private system.

At the end of 2015, from this very first moment of foundation - in reality, as can be easily evident, quite dropped from above - the Network receives an

important solicitation to activate its local offices and the regional schools consortiums in response to the publication, on December 21st of the same year, of the first Plan for Cultural Heritage Education organized by the General Direction on Education and Research of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, in line with the Ministry reform and according to the 107 law called *La Buona Scuola* (The Good School).

The Plan foresees important changes regarding the role of heritage in educational and cultural processes, involving all citizens through the definition of general and specific objectives and the identification of good practices. Among these good practices we must consider the preparation for key competences, fundamental for the citizen to develop flexibility with respect to rapid changes and increasing interconnections. Moreover, according with the Lisbon Strategy, digital skills become crucial as well as the knowledge of foreign languages.

The challenge to which the Plan refers for the education to the future is to be able to educate citizens about cultural heritage, especially enhancing the access to information and knowledge and the capacity to actively participate in the animation of cultural contents in the territory. At the same time the aim was providing ideas and tools for research and training in this area, in line with the main strategic axis of Law 107/15 established precisely in the interaction between school, innovation and access to culture.

The idea that the representatives of the DiCulther Network use to assess in public occasions at a national scale is that the school represents the very foundation of a full citizenship: a centre and civic space, forging a sense of belonging through programs and teaching methods focused on digital skills.

At the same time, a strong accent is posed on criticalities and potentialities of the Web to improve its own training offer and to guide young people to a conscious and critical use of ICT. The concept is to use ICT for strengthening the sense of the value of cultural heritage for communities, in line with the almost homonymous Council of Europe Convention signed in 2005 in Faro, Portugal.

The DiCultHer Network works to take charge of the tangible and intangible heritage of a given community using ICT as a useful way to support and enhance this effort. This sense of responsibility is summarized in the notion of cultural ownership: a training project which includes a large part of the DiCultHer activities, using ICT as an innovative, participatory and conscious educational tool, but also as a context for analysis and interpretation of shared cultural heritage.

Among the actions implemented by the Network in its four years of life there are some that are repeated every year as for example the so-called *Challenges* - #SCUD2016-2017-2018-2019 'ANTONIO RUBERTI'. They consist in a week of events dedicated to the value of digital cultures in all their forms, organized in the first and/or second decade of April. Through conferences, seminars, orientation initiatives, open laboratories, performances, an attempt is made to disseminate and settle a digital culture reflecting how digital processes can contribute to the construction of a cultural memory in the contemporary world, promoting a responsible use of the network to form citizens experts in digital media and culturally sensitive. In the #SCUD19, for example, the call was specifically to present digital projects aimed at facilitating accessibility and usability of cultural heritage above all for disadvantaged audiences. Analogously the invitation was to communicating the values of digital co-creativity as well as other forms of exploration and communication of our cultural identity in Europe and in the world, as especially in the «coopetitive» exercise on digital monument, a shared elaboration among different classes and schools of digital narrative units on a given space or a specific cultural asset (<http://www.piazzaeuropa.it/>).

In order to develop the sense of cultural ownership of the students, the classes and institutions are invited to develop digital projects to foster in young people the knowledge and taking charge of tangible, intangible and digital cultural heritage, in a logic of exercising citizenship and participatory planning.

This was realized, for example, through challenges that ranged from the re-use of open digital content (*#imparaconEuropeana*), to *Creative Laboratories of Solidary Humanism*, to the *Digital Museum of Italian Schools*. More local forms of engagement towards cultural heritage by students were added as challenges as, for example, *From an object tells your school* or *Discover the heritage of your school*.

Among the great media events to which the DiCultHer Network has also contributed: Matera 2019 European Capital of Culture, during which students and classes were awarded for their best works, as well as celebrations for Leonardo Da Vinci and others moments and events in which schools were asked to provide their contribution through research and digital dissemination products.

In the DiCultHer Molise Hub as in others (Basilicata, Puglia for example, but also in some schools of Lombardy associated to the DiCultHer Network) creative Laboratories of Solidary Humanism are activated to implement the culture of encounter, to spread a culture of peace and inclusion through the development of educational experiences mediated by technology.

Interactive classes have given rise to interesting products by young students, such as, for example, paths between monuments and emblematic places. These works were entirely managed by the students.

The Hackaton concept refers to an inclusive pedagogy, which aims to implement a process of inclusion enhancing the value of diversity, using methods of cultural mediation, communication strategies and interpersonal relationships. Through formal, non-formal and expressive activities, cooperation can be fostered, communication skills improved, self-esteem strengthened, and empathy can be encouraged. More recently, given the success of these various activities scattered throughout the national territory, it was decided to start the experience of a WebTV News CultHer, a program created by the coordination of the various school offices in the territories. The WebTV News will be called *FARO WebTV News* in homage to the Convention not yet ratified by the Italian Parliament regarding the value of cultural heritage for communities.

Referring to the National Digital School Plan, defining the role and the functions of the Digital School Facilitator, DiCultHer Network has implemented projects aimed at the internal teachers' training in order to improve the everyday use of ICT in teaching methods as solicited by several institutions. The aim is to enrich the student's portfolio, supporting and recovering learning, providing insights and solicitations, facilitating reception, inclusion and fluidity in educational spaces.

In Molise, a specific Association (Stati Generali dell'Innovazione) was founded and collaborates with DiCultHer Network in the so-called *Crowddreaming Hackademy*, an online living lab, open to all those interested in exploring the new digital frontier of cultural heritage transmission. Working especially on the potential offered by augmented reality, it seeks to integrate the enjoyment of cultural assets for people with disabilities or more generally to facilitate the involvement of users in an all-encompassing heritage experience.

All these experiences testify to an effervescence that at least in the teacher component and in the network coordinators is evident, showing a convinced adherence to the opportunity offered by the use of ICT in teaching and the value of digital management of cultural heritage by young people.

In this network the weight of a central direction in the planning of training actions is still very strong. Although the continuously reassessed importance of

participation, it is still strong the intervention of teachers and the influence of inclusive, dialogic, intercultural contents indicated in the premises of the Network educational program.

It is nonetheless interesting to notice how the use of ICTs is so close to the expressive forms of students that I follow during their various activities of realisation and presentation of their works. This provides them with opportunities and space for greater autonomy and subjectivity in the training path. In this sense it actually takes the form of a more shared and really co-produced knowledge. Even not easily, they nonetheless elaborated the idea that tangible and intangible cultural heritage is part of one's educational background, integrating it definitively among their competences and interests. I think that continuing in this somehow implicit ethnography of the DiCultHer Network, we can understand better different elements of strength and criticality, real or narrated levels of knowledge sharing and participation.

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## **Defining Models to Observe the Main Phenomena Characterizing the Italian Education System**

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**Keywords:** *School Improvement, Educational Data Mining, Big Data, Semantic Web*

### **Introduction**

In its daily activities, a school produces a large amount of data, information and documents concerning planning, communications, reports and educational material, to list the main ones. This vast and varied information heritage can be profitably analysed to study any ongoing phenomenon in the field of education, widening the perspective of investigation and observation to include those socio-economic and cultural data that chiefly condition and influence educational processes. This possibility and necessity of educational research finds operational confirmation in the process of valorizing and integrating public information assets already in progress in institutional contexts to elaborate multidimensional survey models within traditional quali-quantitative monitoring methods (Cantini et al., 2016).

Much of the information produced or collected by other public administrations for their institutional purposes may represent interesting relevant resources to help reconstruct a more complete cross-section of the investigative domain. Using technological solutions to pool various pieces of information produced by the system also helps to overcome the sectoral approach with which this asset is commonly analysed and interpreted and to formulate proposals for appropriate interventions to support and promote local educational alliances that are more responsive and innovative. Furthermore, the publication of information in open data formats plays a strategic role in providing unusual areas for investigation. The latest technological achievements allow aggregation of multiple information sources, regardless of format and provenance, in order to reconstruct the reticular structure of a particular phenomenon in all its many aspects.

The monitoring model elaborated is based on the combined use of methods and technologies that expand the range of information from the investigations (Big Data Analysis of the education sector and W3C Semantic Interoperability), enriching it with unstructured information from a large number of documents produced by the system (Educational Data Mining). The implementation of the model requires, as a technical prerequisite, the ability to manage multiple sources of mostly unstructured information to obtain, through their combination, added value information to analyse and interpret the phenomena observed.

The goal of the research is to complement traditional quali-quantitative investigation methods with the use of additional sources of information hitherto poorly explored, analysing them on different scales with different levels of granularity. The aim is to inspire reflection on the importance of using big data to support systemic decisions, and to strengthen decision-making processes that are based on data and evidence and are also consistent with and pertinent to the specific frames of reference.

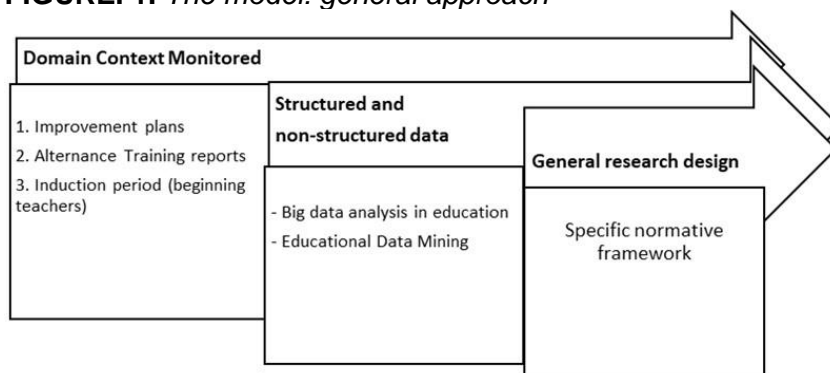
## 1. The use of big data for multidimensional monitoring of the school system.

INDIRE's institutional mission includes that of supporting processes to improve and innovate the educational system. To this end, it has already collected a huge amount of heterogeneous data and information and continues to do so year after year. The partnerships fostered by the Institute from 2015 to 2019 involved around 6,918 schools equally distributed on a national scale (excluding the regions with a special statute), for a total of 14,600 projects including research and institutional services.

The investigative model developed by INDIRE is based on the combined use of methods and technologies offered by the Linked Data technological paradigm, which broadens the range of information available to an investigation.

Through the reuse of the information stored in the project databases, the model created provides a linked data network (data integration) which constitutes the starting point of the investigation. According to the guidelines proposed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), by semantically enriching available data, it is possible to make the implicit meanings and connections of data sets *explicit*, in order to create a layer of content (metadata) that is accessible to automated processes. Subsequently, the initial investigation results are combined with further data sets from outside the world of education, above all public data in interoperable formats (i.e. open data), within a context of more extensive relationships. The integrated analysis model provides a further phase to study and interpret the data retrieved and integrated with regard to the investigative domain, modelled on the basis of directions given in regulatory framework or institutional guidelines (*domain-specific ontologies*) (see Figure 1).

**FIGURE. 1.** *The model: general approach*



This integrated model should lead to the development of a workflow system, ideally a process management system, that can automatically integrate all the relevant domain information and elaborate investigations to support the reading and monitoring of the phenomena over time while relating them to school level

and territorial context. In other words, the aim is to develop rational usage of the domain information to create new knowledge, in order to help educational institutions to take decisions based on evidence from multiple sources on numerous educational and organizational facets of the school system.

In this general framework, a key role is played by Natural Language Processing (hereafter NLP) methods and tools to automatically identify, extract and organize relevant information contained in large collections of documents. Being characterized by a plethora of different types of documents, either stored in the ministerial repositories or freely available, the educational domain represents a challenging application scenario.

### *1.1. The semantic approach: development of vocabulary for semantic interoperability*

The automatic process of analysing the documents elaborated by schools is particularly complex because of the ambiguity inherent to natural language, along with its inconsistencies and constant evolution. The educational domain is also marked by a poor sharing of meanings. The multitude of linguistic registers used by a school (formal, informal and bureaucratic/administrative) in relation to various areas and contexts, determines the spread of confused terminology, hindering the development of information that could be easily shared within the school community, especially when classifying documents, and the semantic interoperability of heterogeneous and multilingual content. The study of language represents a first methodological step to promote an alternative viewpoint for the main phenomena investigated by the research and educational and pedagogical innovation experiences promoted by INDIRE.

Semantics represents a new frontier to develop experimentation with big data integration, to share, enhance and represent the knowledge underlying the information stored but also to develop solutions to promote semantic interoperability among different databases.

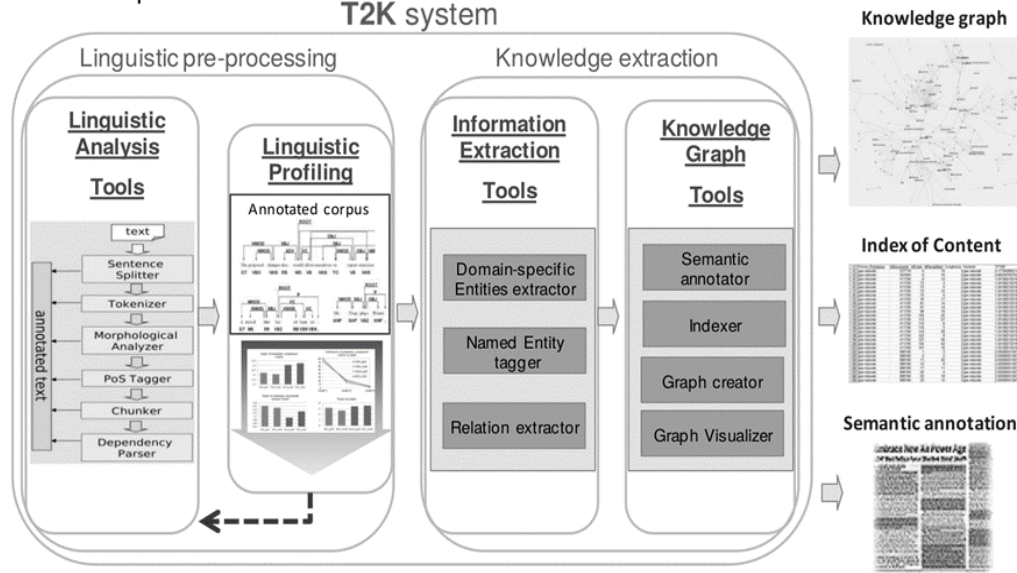
The joint collaboration with the Institute for Computational Linguistics 'A. Zampolli' (ILC) of the National Research Council of Pisa represented a step towards this objective. This goal was pursued by using and specializing *Text-To-Knowledge* (T2K) (Dell'Orletta et al., 2014), a NLP-based platform developed to extract domain-specific information from texts and provide a structured organization of extracted knowledge and index document collections with respect to the automatically acquired and structured information.

In T2K a preliminary phase of linguistic pre-processing is performed in order to identify and make explicit the linguistic structures conveying the content of texts. In particular, texts are linguistically annotated at increasingly complex levels of analysis, i.e. sentence splitting, tokenization, Part-Of-Speech tagging and dependency parsing. Automatically POS-tagged texts are searched for candidate domain-specific terms, expressed by either single nominal terms (e.g. *competenza* 'competence', *didattica* 'teaching') or multi-word terms (e.g. *progettazione didattica* 'teaching design', *competenze di cittadinanza* 'citizenship competences', *valutazione delle competenze di cittadinanza* 'assessment of citizenship competences') and their domain relevance is weighted on the basis of statistical filters fully described in Bonin et al. (2010) (see also Figure 2).

For the specific purpose of this study, the term extraction process was customized in order to handle linguistic peculiarities specific to the educational texts, which are characterized by an elliptical writing style represented by nominal sentences with verb ellipsis or by sentences containing verbs in finite forms. A further customization concerned the identification of multi-word terms: besides nominal complex structures, sequences of verbs and nouns were considered in order to extract relevant events (e.g. *promuovere le competenze di cittadinanza*

'promote citizenship competences'). As illustrated in Table 1, the extracted domain-relevant terms were revised by domain experts who further organized them in thematic areas, e.g. *assessment of citizenship competences* and *promote citizenship competences* are both related to the issue of Citizenship Competences.

**FIGURE. 2.** Description of T2K System  
T2K system



## 2. Some data from the INDIRE Research

The joint research by INDIRE and the ILC-CNR focused on three different investigative domains: *i*) analysis of around 2,299 Three-Year Improvement Plans presented by schools following the model proposed by INDIRE (Morini, Rossi, 2016), to identify the main improvement themes and objectives; *ii*) analysis of around 5,100 Alternance Training reports (for a total of 1,425 institutes), aimed at monitoring implementation of the learning pathways and contents; *iii*) analysis of around 265,000 documents compiled by beginning teachers during their induction year aimed at profiling and characterizing their reflectivity and the effectiveness of the scaffolding tools offered by the online teacher training platform.

The use of NLP tools allowed analysis of a large amount of textual documents and a comparison and assimilation of the information extracted by type of school and/or geographical scope of reference, while integrating this with the quantitative data (see Table 1). The use of specific techniques and software to analyse the reports issued by the schools contributed significantly to the monitoring results, allowing an automatic reading of the texts along with extraction of useful information to describe the work of each school in detail and improve the quality of whatever emerged from the quantitative results. At the same time, these tools allowed us to develop controlled vocabularies to semantically enrich the data and promote a higher level of integration and data sharing between administrations from the perspective of Linked Open Data and the Semantic Web.

**TABLE. 1.** *Example of structuring the semantic data obtained in relation to the domain variables.*

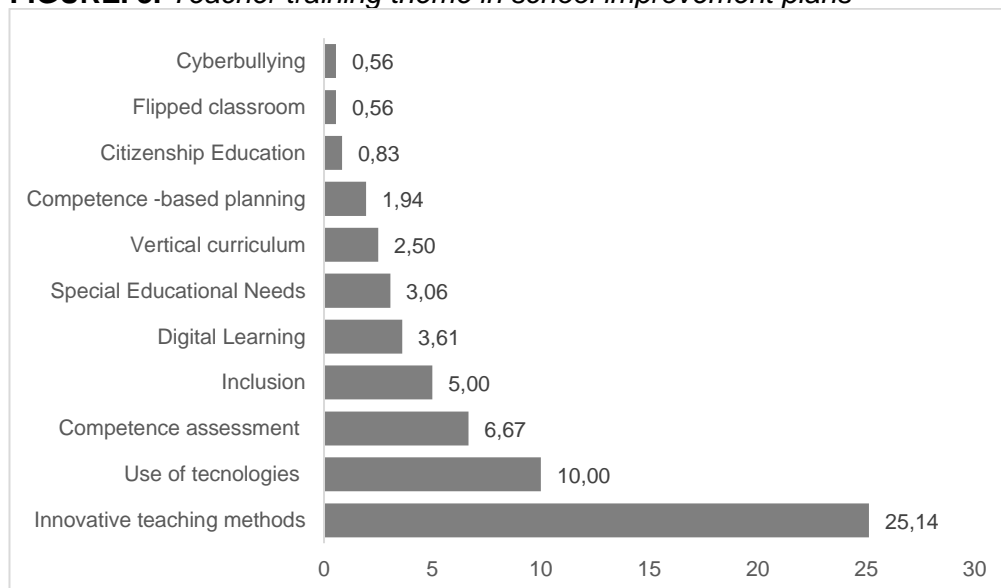
Data processing	Type of school	Macro territorial area	Region	Document	Metadata
1	Upper Secondary School	South	Sicily	Free-text exam	Competences in the field of workplace safety
2	Vocational Institute	North	Lombardy	Free-text exam	Communication in foreign languages
3	Technical Institute	South	Sicily	Free-text exam	Communication in foreign languages
4	Technical Institute	Centre	Tuscany	Free-text exam	Key Citizenship Competences

### 3. Some examples

Below are a few examples of the results achieved in the experiments.

A first example concerns the issue of teacher training as it was addressed in the Improvement Plans. The theme of training as a key moment to promote and sustain processes of change and innovation was studied by trying to reconstruct the training procedures, the beneficiaries and the main themes of the training. Figure n.3 shows that, among the main contents, in the face of a fragmentation of the results, there has been strong investment in in-service training courses in the general meaning of the term; among the main concepts most recurrent (threshold between 10% and 25%) we find improving ‘teaching methods’, ‘use of technologies’, and ‘competence assessment’. Among the issues dealt with less frequently (2%-5%), some involved specific contents, such as Digital Learning, training in Special Educational Needs and Competence-Based Planning. Others, albeit with fewer occurrences, touched on the crucial needs of current teacher training, such as Citizenship Education, Flipped Classrooms, and Cyberbullying: in almost all the Improvement Plans, these latter data revealed a different degree of reflection and maturity in schools regarding teacher training (Dell’Orletta et al., 2019).

**FIGURE. 3.** *Teacher training theme in school improvement plans*



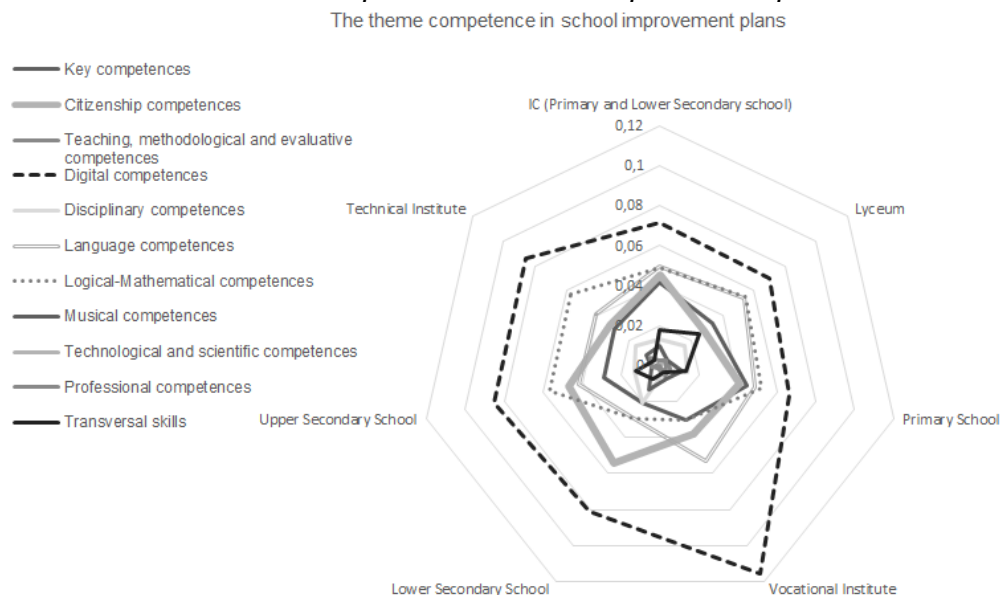
source: Dell’Orletta et al. (2019)

Similarly, further research was conducted on the concept of competence. By means of an exploratory and comparative study, the research focused on identifying informative elements to monitor the relevant strategic choices in an attempt to reconstruct:

- how the concept is interpreted by the school community;
- the main types of skills covered by the various improvement plans;
- whether it is possible to identify trends (see figure n.4);
- if the strategies identified are the result of an authentic autonomous interpretation born from the school's identity (also territorial) or are swayed by the complex well-defined regulatory framework proposed by Italian and European policies.

Frequently, schools use different terms to refer to the same subject and the same concept. Or else they may use more generic or more specific terms. Hence the challenge to disambiguate these results by integrating the data collected with information available in the documents themselves or other related papers.

**FIGURE. 4.** *The theme competence in school improvement plans*



## Conclusions

The research used a model featuring a progressive increase in available information assets to analyse a specific educational phenomenon. The quantitative data were integrated with information contained in the textual documents and data from several different internal INDIRE databases, and ultimately with data from external open access sources. It was possible to reconstruct how much the phenomena being studied were dependent on different types of school and territorial contexts and were variously categorized by detailing and describing the quantitative results that emerged from monitoring the system. The lexical analyses also represented a starting point to develop vocabulary to trial the first analyses of data integration. In an incremental perspective and in line with the technological paradigm used, a data and management information model needs to be developed for a systematic

collection of data, reproducible over time, for multidimensional analyses of the main school phenomena.

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## GPU 2014-2020 PON per la Scuola. System monitoring, from Reporting Function to Shared Innovation of School System

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**Keywords:** *Accountability, Collective Intelligence, Datafication, System Monitoring*

### Introduction

The system monitoring has been introduced in the European programs with the aim of checking and controlling the Programs and later on it has become a supporting action to contribute and to transform the Educational System as a whole or in some of its segments. It has also contributed to develop the data collection system in the Educational System strengthening the «governing through numbers» phenomenon (Grek, 2009). The system monitoring gave the political power a complete framework in order to understand emerging phenomena in the educational system with the aim to adjust *in itinere* activities or to schedule future activities guiding the schools in the educational role.

The process monitoring is conceived to evidence the entire cycle of an educational process from the planning to the fulfilment phase, to collect data which can be processed for school knowable ends and returned just in time. It can support *in itinere* and ex post decisions in relation to big data. It can represent, also, a school auto-consideration mean tailored on its capabilities and lacks, stimulating improvement process not closely connected to the measuring (Botani; 2016).

The GPU 2014-2020 online platform allows users to supervise, to monitor and to provide documentary evidence of activities related to *PON Per la Scuola 2014-2020*. The introduction of the data graphic summary panels allows the beneficiary schools to use the monitoring data in their social reporting (Paletta, 2011).

### 1. GPU for the management of *PON Per la Scuola 2014-2020* (NOP SCHOOL 2014-2020)

Since the reform of the structural funds<sup>3</sup> and, more recently, the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, education and training have been considered the main tools for addressing and solving the employment problem. The *White Book of Education* of Cresson, in 1995, indicated that «the society of the future will be a society that will know how to invest in intelligence, a society in which one

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<sup>3</sup> The first reform of the Structural Funds dates back to 1988, while the Lisbon Strategy, as the economic reforms program, was approved in Lisbon by the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the European Union in 2000. MIUR has been involved in fund management.



teaches and learns, in which each individual can build his own qualification» (Cresson, Flynn, 1995: 5).

In this context, the Italian school has had the chance to access some opportunities for improvement and has benefited, in particular, from the interventions of the National Operational Program NOP). The program, owned by the Ministry of Education MIUR<sup>4</sup> and lasting seven years, uses the European structural funds, the Social Fund ESF and the Regional Development Fund «ERDF», to promote a system of education and training of high education quality. In accordance with national policies and strategies, in recent years the NOP has focused on some specific themes to offer the school and its protagonists useful tools to face a constantly changing society. For example, the interventions on the professional skills of school staff and on key competences were very significant, relative to students of all levels. Furthermore, over time, investments in digital skills and technological equipment in schools have been strengthened.

### 1.1. NOP 2014-2020

This Program, unlike the previous programming cycles, is addressed to all the schools of the national territory, to the students of every order and grade and to the school staff. It aims to reach the targets indicated by the European strategic framework 2020: take the school dropout rate below 10%, bring at least 40% of people aged 30 to 34 to obtain a higher education diploma; reduce the number of people at risk or in conditions of poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million units. To facilitate the participation of schools, students and school staff (the NOP finances training projects with the European Social Fund - ESF and in-fractional interventions with the European Regional Development Fund - ERDF), and more generally to ensure better governance of the Program, the «MIUR» has equipped itself with a system for the management and monitoring, GPU (Management of Unitary Programming). Born from the re-search of INDIRE and inspired by the Deming Cycle as a four-step interactive management method (Plan – Do – Check – Act) for process control and improvement, GPU offers schools the opportunity to participate in the Notices issued by the Managing Authority MIUR, relating to specific objectives; the schools submit their application online and, if authorized, they manage and document the funded project online.

### 1.2. GPU

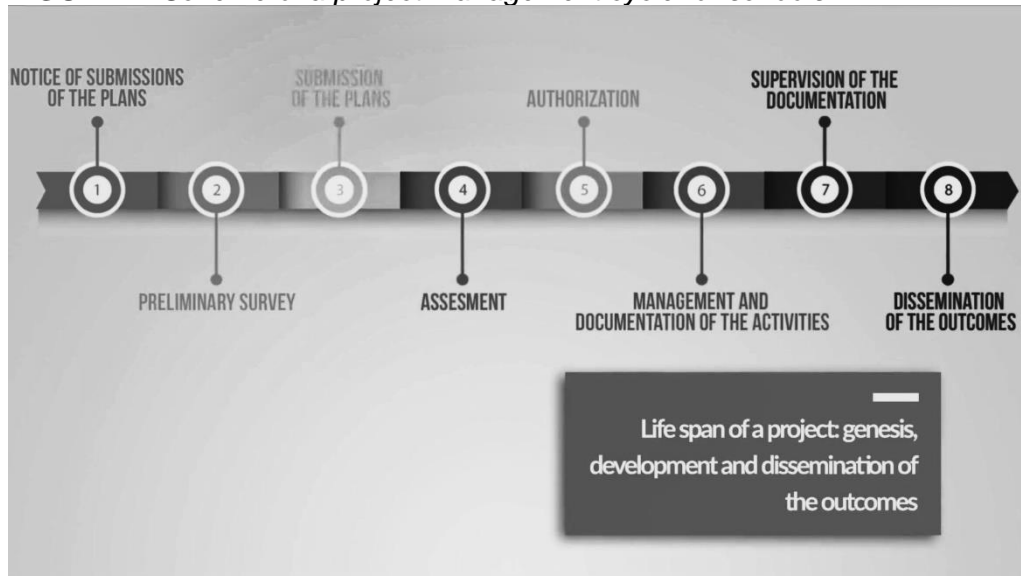
GPU is a governance system that can be described as a monitoring and tracking tool dedicated to the collection, management and return that guarantees interoperability with other databases. It allows the management of the project cycle, collecting the relative data to:

- the application form formats of the schools, which contain the training needs, the partners involved and the description of the project to be implemented;
- the master data sheets of the students and the school staff involved;
- the card that describes the activities carried out, in terms of teaching, tools used and skills achieved;
- statistical surveys, such as for example the improvement of the student's curricular performance or the satisfaction of the educational offer.

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<sup>4</sup> MIUR was involved in the management of the structural funds during the 1994-1999; 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 programming. The management of the Program is entrusted to the MIUR Managing Authority.

**FIGURE 1.** Scheme of a project management cycle for schools



source: INDIRE

Since the launch of the 2014-2020 Program, the GPU has collected data on the participation of 8,000 schools, of almost 2 million students, of over 20,000 adults in training and 230,000 teachers and school staff. For example, for Notices 10862/2016 *Social inclusion and fight against hardship*, aimed at promoting actions against school dispersion, and n.1953 / 2017 *Strengthening of basic skills in an innovative way, in support of the training offer*, 600,000 students, of about 4,400 schools throughout the national territory, and 700,000 students from around 5,200 schools were involved respectively.

## 2. Real time control panels

The data and information collected with the GPU are not only useful for the elaboration of annual and mid-term reports, which summarize the progress of programming or deepen some themes, but also form the heart of a dedicated online area to the main subjects involved in the programming: the Managing Authority and the schools. In a multi-level and multi-stakeholder perspective, monitoring panels have been built that allow a real-time observation of the progress of activities. The term monitoring is used here in a broad semantic horizon, as a cognitive tool, which does not only assume control purposes, but allows to improve decision-making capacity in assessing the sustainability and effectiveness of actions, the efficiency of investments, promoting transparency, participation and sharing of all Program actors. In this sense, the monitoring dashboards fulfill the function of supporting the governance of the «NOP» for the School 2014-2020, both at the overall level and at the level of the individual schools, providing tools to observe changes and intercept new needs (Rossi *et al.*, 2004).

### 2.1. Real time control panels for the Managing Authority

The system monitoring carried out with the «GPU» allows the Managing Authority, as a decision maker, to have at its disposal wide and detailed representations of emerging phenomena among the schools participating in the *PON per la scuola 2014-2020* with the aim to re-modulate the activities in progress or to

plan future activities, guiding the educational action of individual schools. These data that start from a national summary and they can be analyzed in detail to provide information on the progress of projects being implemented, such as the number and the type of participants, the type of activity realized, the educational materials proposed to the students.

It is also possible to monitor the results of the projects completed both from the scholastic performance of the students, as well as their satisfaction and the expert opinion of teachers and tutors point of view. The «GPU» monitoring dashboard thus appears as a «continuous observatory» (Masoni, 2008: 113) which, based on a constant and not occasional detection of the results, allows the decision maker an evaluation that accompanies the development of the activities thus feeding the virtuous circle of continuous improvement (Kusek, Rist, 2004; Mazzeo Rinaldi, 2012).

### *2.2. Real time control panels for schools*

Even at the individual school level, monitoring dashboards, which make information about processes and results visible just in time, are tools to support school decisions, both during the course of activities and after their conclusion. In fact, the school has available, viewable and downloadable for further processing, the data relating to its activities: the projects in which it participates, the number and type of students, their presence in training courses and their profit, the educational materials used by the experts, the activities of the tutors; but also the equipment purchased and the use made of it. Therefore, these dashboards, as well as those dedicated to the Managing Authority are an instrument of observation during the course of what is being carried out, with the relative possibility of intervening promptly in the event that corrections are necessary.

Moreover, the school has the possibility to read its own data, both *in itinere* and *ex post*, comparing them with what emerges at the national level and observing therefore how much and in what specificity its situation differs from the complex phenomena of the world of instruction.

The dashboards thus qualify as a tool to support the development of self-reflection and self-evaluation of the school, useful for guiding the planning and management of new activities within the *PON per la scuola 2014-2020*, but also, more generally, to plan future actions, stimulating improvement processes that, starting from measurement, involve the school in its complex (Bottani, 2016).

## **3. Real time control panels for schools: how to trigger the improvement**

Initially the GPU provided for an economic report of the projects carried out in the framework of the Structural Funds, where the educational institutions entered the data and only the management authority could have access to the analysis on the entire system. Schools were obliged to electronic documentation of the actions on the basis of the financial responsibility of managing of the financed projects. The development of a data warehouse that allows the immediate and partial consultation of data through proficient dashboards now enables more and more voluntary documentation, driven by the response of the system that produces reports also useful for the single school for the actions related to social responsibility in and of the school community (Paletta, 2011).

In the application phase and above all in the project management phase, GPU is a system for collecting data useful for documenting and monitoring actions. The various utilities of the system, also in the 2007-2013 programming, have allowed the full use of resources and the overcoming of the various

spending controls by the many schools not accustomed to the use of European planning and management. The implementation of profiled dashboards and therefore of the reporting system of social reporting from the micro level (single educational institution) to the macro level (management authority) has allowed to «reduce opportunity costs, transforming the monitoring systems' participants into partners which jointly own the ESF strategy, providing regular feedback to project providers» (Iannacci et al., 2009: 445).

On the Management Authority's side, the possibilities to realize specific focuses during the performance of the actions are facilitated, so as to be able to identify difficulties faster, enhance the assistance actions and model the implementation of the Project in progress. On the side of educational institutions, which participate in the Program through the implementation of projects integrated in the curricular activity and/or useful for structural improvement, educational and administrative innovation are facilitated.

In particular, the system facilities, combined with the monitoring of the progress of individual projects at the educational institution level, facilitates a bottom-up change that involves authentic participation. The system that accompanies individual educational institutions in the planning and especially in the management of the projects, is a nudging type guide (Thaler, Sunstein, 2008) for the choices necessary for the actions of the correct financial management and at the same time in the stimulation of the experimentation of different and innovative activities, but integrated into the PTOF, within the framework of which the monitoring system facilitates the evaluation and social reporting.

Moreover, if on the one hand the inter-action with the GPU allows the development of the smart school, providing the repository of the lessons that can facilitate the sharing of materials, in addition to the dissemination of good practices, it expands and diversifies the data through which to interact with the technology. In fact, the system dashboards refer to the presence of the students, to the impact on their curricular performances, to their liking, etc., so as to allow a management interaction for the sharing and communication of local monitoring that adds to the possible content sharing. Each information tool panel returns to each school *in itinere* data relating to its projects that can be useful both during the process and as an over-all self-assessment and for the improvement of subsequent designs. In this way, each individual school can benefit from the connection with a larger system, a «big mind» (Mulgan, 2017), which is the set of the implementation of the *PON per la scuola 2014-2020* via «GPU». It can also help the school system in its various local and national components to better exploit the human brain and digital technologies to solve the most crucial temporary social challenges - such as the fight against early school leaving and the pursuit of equity and the strengthening of basic skill - which are the aims of the Program.

## Conclusions

The spread of the use of informative instrument panels by schools involved will permit them to appropriate in a timely manner their monitoring data shifting the focus from the financial compulsory reporting to the voluntary monitoring for a just in time self-assessment. By doing this, each school will gain benefit from data sharing with the entire educational system (Mulgan, 2017).

It is important to define the basis of the smart school idea, because of technology is not neutral. Along with smart city, big enterprises also promote application of smart school, transmit subjects and report methods getting data for their own benefit. If technology can help the development and the activity of a

community by modernizing its instrument, why cannot the school lead the innovation by Re-thinking the smart city (Bria, Morozov, 2018).

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## Monitoring the School Innovation. The Data Construction and Management in the *Scuola Viva* Program

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**Keywords:** *Youth, POR, School, Monitoring, Early School Leaving*

### Introduction

The current educational systems are facing a challenge of innovation to respond to the changing context (OECD, 2018, Pitzalis, 2016, Walker, 2018). In recent years, the educational policies have promoted the innovation of the school system, overcoming the traditional concepts of space, time and education (OECD, 2016, Calzone et al., 2018, EU, 2018a). The EU social cohesion policies 2014-2020 recognize education and training as one of the five intervention areas to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of EU country (EU, 2015). According to these policy strategies the early leavers reduction<sup>5</sup> become an important target to and to achieve the objectives set and social development. The leading idea is that schools should take a leading role in Community policies.

In order to achieve that a profound renewal process is needed, which involves three actions (OECD, 2018): 1. to be a system open to the territory; 2. to develop new skills and to consolidate the basic ones in innovative ways; 3. to acquire greater planning autonomy basing on the context.

According to the EU 2020 benchmarks, Campania presents a difficult context, although with small improvements over recent years (EU, 2018b). In response to this situation, the *Scuola Viva* program was developed within the framework of the POR FSE 14-20, a four-year intervention for schools, with the aim of reducing educational failure and early school leaving.

This intervention provides forms of innovation in relation to:

- objectives: not only the prevention of early school leavers but also the return of the adult droppers, to help the most marginalized areas;
- learners: the program is not focused only on students but also on the extra-scholastic population;
- local context: the school plays a major role in the territory, both through new targets (non-students) and new School-Territory cohesion strategies, thanks to the development of strong partnership networks;
- implementation: the program promotes schools empowerment allowing them to plan independently, according to the needs of their context, the experimentation of contents, methods and spaces for the development of new skills (Heckman, Rubinstein, 2001).

Another point of innovation is the construction and management of data for monitoring interventions. Education systems often lack the ability to use and interpret the available data (Colombo et al. 2016, EU, 2018a). The innovation

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<sup>5</sup> EU adopted ESL indicator to refer to the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education or training. Experts also include in this expression the phenomena of educational failure, irregular attendance and all situations that slow the student's training and learning (Caputo, 2017, Pandolfi, 2017)

of a program depends also on its monitoring and evaluation system (Bezzi, 2007, Mazzeo Rinaldi, 2012, Mengoli, Russo, 2012, Pandolfi, 2016).

*Scuola Viva* aims also to implement efficient systems for data production and management, according to forms of non-traditional monitoring (Mazzeo Rinaldi 2012), like implementing actions not exclusively of control, but for the construction of a useful database about the context, the performance of the program and its participants. According these considerations this contribution aims to illustrate the evolution in the monitoring processes of the *Scuola Viva* program. The work has two paragraphs: the first describes the program and some statistics; the second presents the methodological steps for the construction of the data. Then, it presents a summary of the work with the monitoring plan developed from the second year of the program.

## 1. The *Scuola Viva* program. A brief presentation

*Scuola Viva*, now in its third year, has involved 451 educational institutions with about 2400 modules, activated during the extra-curricular timetable. This activity involved not only human resources within the School (students, professors, etc.) but also of other local actors. The program encouraged synergy with the community, through the construction of partnership networks with private, public and non-profit organizations, in line with the idea of the school as a community (Damiani, 2016). The program foresees actions proposed by the primary, lower and upper secondary located mainly in areas with social hardship and risk of marginalization, with the aim of contrasting early school leaving and favoring the evolution of educational, training and educational approaches of social inclusion. The program sought to promote the model of a permanent research and innovation 'school-laboratory'.

### 1.1. Some statistics

This analysis is about 414 schools that produced 2561 modules (about 6 per school). Most of the participating schools are in the metropolitan area of Naples (over 53%), with a considerable share in the province of Salerno (just over 20%).

This data is conditioned by the total number of institutes present in the provinces. Therefore, it is appropriate to observe the percentage related to the total of each province (Table1). The province with a higher rate of participating schools is Naples (almost 56%), followed by the province of Benevento (over 43%).

**TABLE. 1. Participant schools by provinces**

	<i>N participants</i>	<i>% on tot.</i>	<i>% on tot. school provinces</i>
Avellino	24	5,7	31,2
Benevento	23	5,6	43,4
Caserta	60	14,5	38,7
Napoli city	92	22,2	55,8
province of Napoli	129	31,2	36,5
Salerno	86	20,8	41,3
	414	100	

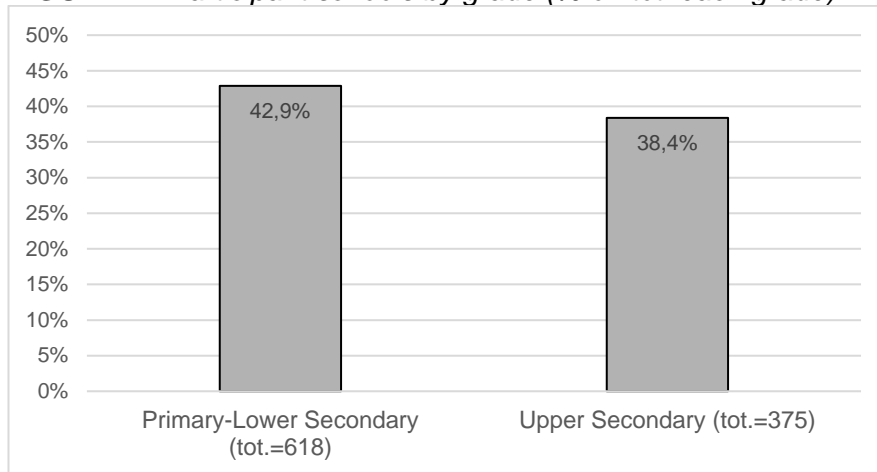
source: elaboration on Campania Region data

Regarding the degree of education (Figure 1), we considered the Primary and Lower secondary and the Upper secondary. The distribution of schools tends to reproduce the overall distribution: it is useful, then, to put in percentage by type of Institute. There is a small prevalence of primary, probably due to the

number of members. The interesting data comes from the group of schools for adults: the share of participants is noteworthy (5) compared to the total.

They have not been reported in the graph since these are marginal values (there are only seven schools for adults in Campania). Probably, this good participation is linked to the aims of the program that encourage actions for adults, according to the lifelong learning strategies

**FIGURE. 1.** Participant schools by grade (% on tot. each grade)



source: elaboration on Campania Region data

## 2. Methodology: method choices for data construction

To construct data on the activities of the first year, we considered the descriptive sections of the self-assessment forms, relating to the objectives and contents of the module. This information came from open questions, originating textual data: we had to define the ex-post categories. Given the variety of activities, each module was assigned up to a maximum of three objectives and three contents. In order to show the richness and heterogeneity of the program we decided to make a classification that was: *i)* Wide: try to include all the possible goals and disciplinary sectors. *ii)* Reliable: agreed between the members of the monitoring team to reduce the risk of highly subjective decisions. *iii)* Sensitive: not aggregating categories with marginal frequencies to show the richness of the program. We identified 17 objectives, and aggregated them into 6 macro-objectives, and 68 disciplinary contents, subdivided then into two macro-objectives: the curricular areas (i.e. Italian, English, Mathematics, etc.) and those extra-curricular (i.e. theater, cooking, coding, etc.). The macro-objectives have been declined according to the following areas:

- knowledge enhancement, when the module explicitly refers to the transmission of knowledge and skills to students;
- psychological and relational well-being, when the primary aim is to encourage correct lifestyles and pro-social behavior;
- territorial cohesion, which includes the objectives that place the school as a center of relations with other territorial actors (i.e. relationships with partners or to improve the relationship with parents);
- inclusion, the module explicitly refers to the need to promote integration among students;
- guidance, the student's educational or professional orientation is a priority;



- study skills, the module focuses on methods and skills to increase knowledge.

### 2.1. From goals to content: a typological index

In the tab. 2 we observe the curricular and extra-curricular fields involved in the modules and the relative frequencies in the total. The areas involved in most of the modules are those that can be associated with so-called *key competences* (EU, 2006, Giancola, Viteritti, 2019) English which occurs in more than 6% of the modules (skills in foreign languages), theater and music, (cultural awareness and expression) are in more than 11% and almost 10% of the total modules, respectively. The field of Coding and ICT (digital competence) are involved in 155 (6.1%) and 99 modules (3.9%) respectively. Finally, among the most numerous fields we also find the basic ones (OECD 2005) such as maths (3,4%) and science (1,3%) (Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology) and Italian (2,7%) (Communication in the mother tongue).

**TABLE. 2.** Curricular and extra-curricular fields involved in Scuola Viva projects, number and % of modules (modules=251)

	<i>n. modules</i>	<i>% total modules.</i>		<i>n. modules</i>	<i>% total modules.</i>
<i>Curricular fields</i>			<i>Extra-curricular fields</i>		
English	159	6,2	Theatre	283	11,1
ICT	99	3,9	Music	246	9,6
Civics	96	3,7	Sport	199	7,8
Maths	87	3,4	Environment	179	7,0
Italian	68	2,7	Coding	155	6,1
Science	34	1,3	Orientation	137	5,3
Tecnologies	21	0,8	Art	125	4,9
Study skills	20	0,8	Well-being	124	4,8
Reading	17	0,7	Legality	107	4,2
History and Philosophy	16	0,6	Creative writing	104	4,1
Logic	15	0,6	Health and nutrition	93	3,6
Literature	12	0,5	Web and old-media communication	92	3,6
Other basic competences	10	0,4	Parenting education	81	3,2
Classic languages	7	0,3	Professional training	74	2,9
Drawing	5	0,2	Dance	73	2,9
			Marketing and management	71	2,8
			Cinema	67	2,6
			Folklore	66	2,6
			Tourism	66	2,6
			Journalism	53	2,1
			Art history, cultural heritage	49	1,9
			Cooking	44	1,7
			Agronomy	39	1,5
			Graphic and design	39	1,5
			Other languages (spanish, french, etc.)	32	1,2
			Social research	22	0,9
			Fashion	22	0,9
			Photography	22	0,9
			Urban planning and architecture	15	0,6
			Voluntary	10	0,4
			Nautical	10	0,4
			Other fields	9	0,4

source: our elaboration

Regarding the objectives, the bar chart in fig.2 shows how the knowledge enhancement is the priority objective of about 75% of the modules. One module out of three, on the other hand, expresses the objective of providing psychological or relational support, while good attention is also given to the actors of the territory: almost 17% of the modules have as their main purpose to strengthen ties with the community of belonging. Finally, other objectives such as inclusion, professional and training guidance and the approach to the study method involve, respectively, 10.7%, 5.7% and 2.7% of the modules.

**FIGURE. 2.** Goals types (% of tot.modules=2561)



source: our elaboration

To summarize, we have recoded the two previous variables (contents and objectives): as regards the contents, the module has been declined according to three categories: only curricular fields; only extra-curricular fields, and mixed (if there are curricular and extra-curricular contents). The objective was defined based on the explicit or non-explicit reference to the objective of transferring knowledge and skills.

These two new variables have been combined to obtain a typological index (Amaturo, 2012, Marradi, 2007). The combination suggests which training orientation has been adopted the most. Therefore, it is possible to define six types of modules (tab.3), listed in order of frequency:

1. modules that have ordinary purposes, that is the transmission of knowledge and skills, developing extra-curricular content: it is no surprise that it is the modal category (54.7%), given the natural predisposition of the schools to transmit knowledge on contents mainly extra-curricular during extra-didactic activities;
2. modules with non-ordinary purposes, developing non-curricular content (21.3%);
3. modules with ordinary aims and curricular contents, that is very similar to the traditional school curricular activity (12.7%);
4. modules for ordinary purposes involving both curricular and extra-curricular disciplinary sectors and contents (7.7%);
5. modules for non-ordinary purposes that develop mixed content (2.1%);
6. modules with non-ordinary purposes that develop curricular content: it is the less frequent type (only 38 modules, or 1.5%), and it is also the most ambitious one because it tries to propose the classical school contents under a different key.

**TABLE. 3. Contents and goals of modules: a typology**

	<i>Only curricular</i>	<i>Only extra-curr.</i>	<i>Mixed</i>
<i>Knowledge enhancement</i>	Enhancing knowledge in the curricular area 325 (12,7%)	Enhancing knowledge in the extra-curr. area 1402 (54,7%)	Enhancing knowledge in the mixed area 198 (7,7%)
<i>Other goals</i>	Non-ordinary purpose in the curricular area 38 (1,5%)	Non-ordinary purpose in the extra-curricular area 545 (21,3%)	Non-ordinary purpose in the mixed area 53 (2,1%)

source: our elaboration

## 2.2. Monitoring plan

Basing on the results of the first year, we were able to plan the monitoring of the following years.

We identified three key points: *i)* Define the set of indicators based on the analysis of the first year. *ii)* Plan the ongoing survey by online platform to reduce bias, monitoring the gap between what is planned and realized and to increase the reliability of the empirical base. *iii)* 3. Improve future evaluation activities, measuring the impact of program by analysis strategies with the control group.

To make effective these steps, we decided five monitoring level:

- 'Schools' - in the first level, even non-participating schools are involved for the context analysis. It is useful to detect the members' characteristics through a pre-post design;
- 'Projects' - the second involves the participant schools through the collection of information about the projects.
- 'Modules' - the third level is the monitoring of each modules, therefore of the actions carried out.
- 'Participants' - this level concerns mainly socio-demographic information about the participants.
- 'Lessons' - the last level is the monitoring of the lessons. It consists in the elaboration of an electronic register, with all the information about the presences, the contents, the progress and the results achieved.

This monitoring system is implemented through an electronic platform that allows several advantages: first, it reduces the filling out times, allowing an easy and fast sharing of the progress with the participants. Besides, it decreases the risk of bias in performance indicators (project hours, number of participants, etc.), improving the fidelity of the data.

Finally, it provides excellent support for possible evaluation actions on the effectiveness and efficiency of the program.

## Conclusions and perspectives

This contribution had a double purpose: first, it presented a POR regional program against the early school leaving, highlighting the great richness in term of disciplinary contents and objectives. Secondly, it highlighted the monitoring methods we chose.

The experience of the first year suggests that *Scuola Viva* could become an innovational model according to some points.

Regarding the activities, in a difficult context such as the Campania, schools had the chance to plan some interventions to experiment new learning path and to strengthen partnerships with private and public actors. Schools can use new

educational spaces and times, through the open afternoon and the development of extra-curricular and innovative curricular fields.

*Scuola Viva* is also encouraging the participation of non-students population, such as parents, NEETs, young adults and training ones. Indeed, the analysis suggested us the strong involvement of adult schools in the program and many activities included training for parents, young and adult people

As mentioned at the beginning of this work, the monitoring plan was another innovation point because we tried to conceive it as an integral part of the program. There were several steps. The first highlighted some methodological weakness of the instruments already available for the first year. Therefore, we made a new classification of the contents and objectives. The typological index suggested that schools worked with different purpose but mainly on extra-curricular fields. The monitoring of the following years is based on two criteria: 'traditional' one to detect the gap between 'expected' and 'realized', that is to increase the reliability of the information.

The second step relates to purposes that are more atypical. In fact, the monitoring is developed for future program evaluation. This is related to the information about the context, schools performance, participants satisfaction, etc.

We aim to make monitoring a part of the program and evolving with it. The current experience of *Scuola Viva* is demonstrating the importance of the monitoring instruments to detect information on different levels: otherwise, the monitoring could not support the future evaluation of the program.

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## An Employability-Index Tested by a National Dynamic Administrative Database

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### Introduction

Since 1997, the European Employment Strategy (EES) recognizes *employability* as one of the four pillars of the European employment policies, together with entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities. In particular, following the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999), employability is intended to empower the ability to mobilize personal resources (cognitive, experiential and networking skills) to engage all different actions (i.e. training, job placement and career guidance) as part of national and European active policies, which have been implemented until now. Therefore, within EES, the concept of employability refers to the ability of people to be employed, to actively seek for a job position and to be able to maintain it, consciously, enhancing their own personal resources with respect to the referring contexts.

Based on this approach, a multidimensional 'employability' index (OKI) has been developed in order to identify and activate those personal dimensions (skills) which contribute to increase the likelihood of being employed and stand out from context factors which still strongly influence the results in terms of employment. This paper shows the results of the relation observed between 'individual employability' - detected by the INAPP OKI index - and 'reached employment' determined within a period of 12 months following the OKI testing on a target population. The reference population for the testing was about 18,000 young people aged between 18 and 28 years, who carried out a year of voluntary activity within the National Civil Service in Italy. Data regarding employment was collected by using a national administrative database on mandatory (for employers) communications to the competent bodies, of new recruited employees.

### 1. Research context

In 2005, after the abolition of the mandatory military service in Italy, the National Civil Service<sup>6</sup> was created. For young people of both sexes, between 18 and 28 years of age, it represents a year spent in voluntary activities and/or social, civic, cultural and professional training paths, where experience of human and social solidarity, national and international cooperation activities, safeguarding and protecting the national heritage, will be exploited (Law n. 230 of 1998). The competency of the NCS is under the Presidency of the Ministers' Council. The law acknowledges the NCS the role of a 'training through

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<sup>6</sup> Hereinafter used with the following acronym: NCS

experience activity', assigning this service a dimension which could be considered innovative in the national panorama. In fact, for the first time, with the National Civil Service, there is the intention to invest in not formal learning acquired outside the traditional training and educational pathways. Therefore, the National Civil Service can be defined as a 'learning program', addressing the youth population and aimed at developing experiences of active citizenship. Moreover, the choice of the Italian Government to include this practice among all the measures contained in the Youth Guarantee program (a unique experience in the European panorama), may be potentially useful to support youth employment. This initiative inspired INAPP's research design, focused on the dimensions of employability and active citizenship in the context of the National Civil Service. This survey was carried out as an innovative sample survey, the only one of this kind, with a dual objective: firstly offering a consistent database for the monitoring, evaluating and profiling volunteers involved in the program and, secondly, testing two innovative multidimensional indices: an Active Citizenship Index (ACCI) and an Employability Index (OKI).

A quantitative analysis, consisting of three sample surveys, addressing three different population groups of volunteers, was carried out (CATI methodology): one ex-ante and two ex-post. The database of the overall survey is, therefore, made up of the results of the three surveys carried out during the year 2016, for a total of about 3,500 interviews representative of a target population of more than 45,000 young people involved in National Civil Service projects.

### *1.1. Target population*

The results of the testing of the INAPP employability index (OKI) shown in this paper and the testing of its predictive effectiveness with respect to reached employment, refer to data collected in two of the three sample surveys carried out within the overall survey: *i*) the survey carried out 12/18 months after the end of the NCS, including volunteers who participated in the National Call for Application in 2013 and carried out the Civil Service during 2014 (13,375 young people); *ii*) the survey carried out 6 months after the end of the NCS, including volunteers who participated in the Youth Guarantee programme, as Neets (4,251 young people)<sup>7</sup>; in this case the Civil Service was an Active Policy Measure offered by the Employment Centers.

The population tested is therefore represented by about 18,000 young people interviewed ex-post with respect to the NCS. The same questionnaire was sent out to both sub-populations, while the employment status was detected either during the interview (as a self-declaration) and in the 24 months following the experience, by using the national administrative database on mandatory communications. Socio-demographic characteristics of the overall target population showed a prevalence of female people which represent 65% of the total; the male component is slightly higher (40%) than the Neet population rate (YOG). It is important that 60% of the entire target population is resident in Southern regions and in the major Islands, against a 24% living in the North and a 17% in central regions. Women have a higher education level than men; in fact, 50% of women have a university degree against the 24% of men. Overall, only 40% obtained a degree higher than the diploma (upper secondary school) and there is a 5% whose education level was not higher than lower secondary school pathways.

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<sup>7</sup> Hereinafter used with the code *Surv. 2013 and Surv. YOG (YOUTH GUARANTEE)*. For both populations, two statistically representative multilayer samples were interviewed: a sample of 1,500 individuals for RIL. 2013 population; a sample of 1,000 individuals for the RIL. YOG population.

## 2. OKI: Employability index

In this paper, the individual employability is to be considered as a combination of a range of personal skills and resources, on one hand, a set of contextual factors (such as Local Labour Market characteristics) on the other. If it is true, in fact, that the likelihood of being employed increases for those people with higher personal competences and skills; it is equally true that the level of specialization and qualification required by the Labour Market (jobs demand), may reduce the employability of the so-called over-skilled profiles; increase the employability of low-medium profiles or make employability of medium-high profiles more likely.

The main objective of the OKI index is, therefore, to capture and measure the 'personal' component of employability in all its dimensions, in order to make it easier to better measure the weight context factors has on the likelihood of being employed. This approach places this paper in the probabilistic option of measuring employability, usually supported by customized profiling tools.

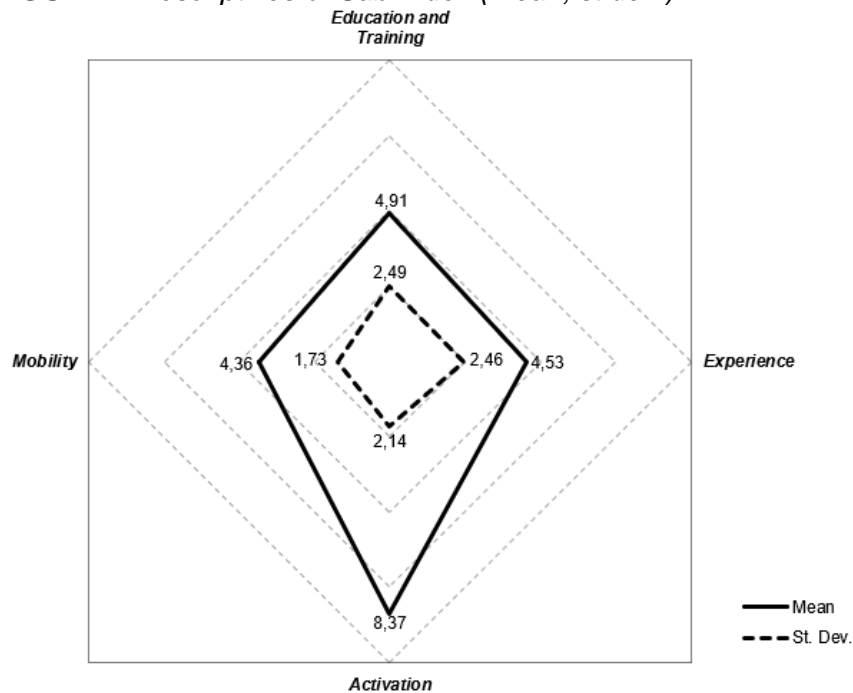
OKI is a complex index which identifies four fundamental dimensions of the 'personal' component of employability. It aims at measuring all components a person can develop to increase the likelihood of being employed, and it also has a 'chronological significance' of the measurement i.e. results may vary according to the situation at the given time. The four dimensions identified by OKI are related to Education and training, Experiences and Activation on the Labour Market, Mobility, both in terms of resources and practical experiences.

1. The Education and Training dimension summarizes the variables related to the 'educational qualifications'; the condition of being 'in training activities or not' at the time of the survey and to any competences certifications obtained.
2. The Labour Market Experiences dimension includes the variables related to the 'number' and 'type' of working experiences already acquired.
3. The Labour Market Activation dimension takes into consideration the variables related to active job search, CV review and update; career design planning, in terms of clearness of professional goals.
4. The Mobility dimension is the most complex as it includes variables related to both mobility resources and mobility 'experiences'. From this point of view, mobility 'resources' include foreign languages skills, experiences abroad and planning. While regarding mobility 'experiences', the index records experiences of mobility - from one city to another- already been made and if an individual has already left his/her household and the availability to move and live abroad.

The four dimensions described above correspond to four sub-indices of the employability index (on a 0-10 scale type), which equally contribute to the final index definition. The four dimensions are quite independent from each other (thus reducing the risk of information overlap in the configuration of the index) and their 'weight' on the overall index configuration is quite similar, because of the presence of a similar internal variable (Figure1).



FIGURE 1 Descriptives of Sub-Index (mean, st.dev.)



source: De Luca, Ferri (2016)

### 2.1.OKI Evidence

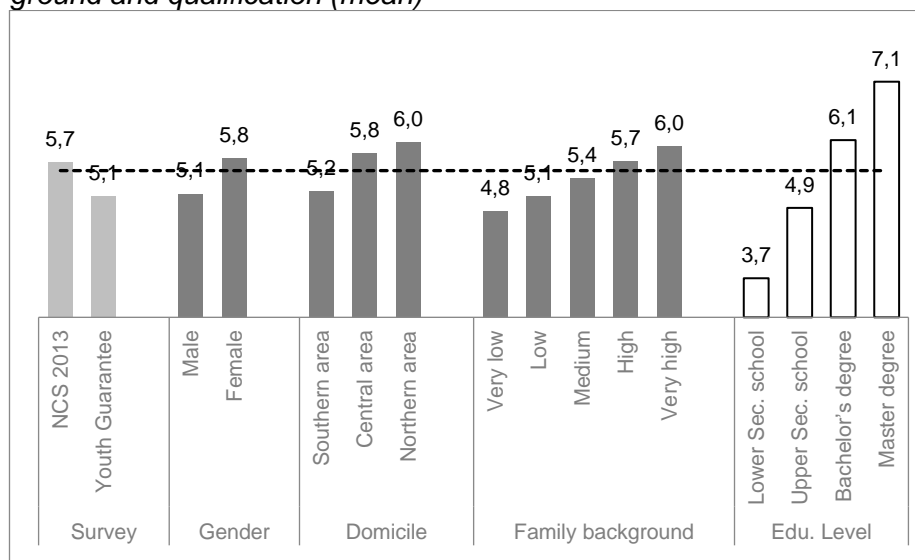
The mean value recorded by the employability index in relation to the target population is 5.5, based on a range that goes from zero to  $10^8$ . This value is the result of the average of the four sub-indices, three of which (education and training, experiences on labour market and mobility) assume average values between 4 and 5, while the extent of the activation index has an average value higher than 8. The high value of 'Activation' can be considered an effect of the Civil Service experience, combined with the medium-high profile of the target population. In general, OKI average of the 2013 survey population is higher (5.7) than the average of the ex-Neets population of YOG survey (5.1). Compared to basic variables such as gender, geographical area and family background, the employability index is distributed coherently with respect to the starting hypotheses. In fact, the statistically significant differences indicate that the degree of employability increases when the level of the family background is higher (calculated in terms of parents' employment and educational levels). It is higher among individuals living in the North (6,0) and among women (5,8), rather than among men (5.1- Figure 2).

Analysing the value assumed by the employability index with respect to the self-declared 'employment status', we note that the average value of OKI is higher for those who declare themselves 'employed' compared to those who declare themselves 'not employed' and it represents a statistically significant difference (Figure 3). Thus, the existence of a direct relations between employability and employment seems to be confirmed. Furthermore, from the analysis of the relation between the employability index and the 'nature' of employment, it emerges that those young people working as self-employed or as employees – these latter with a formal employment contract – record significantly higher employability rates, compared to those who are not employed or are employees

<sup>8</sup> The OKI index is calculated as the arithmetic average of the 4 sub-indices (on a 0-10 scale), therefore its representation is on a 0-10 scale.

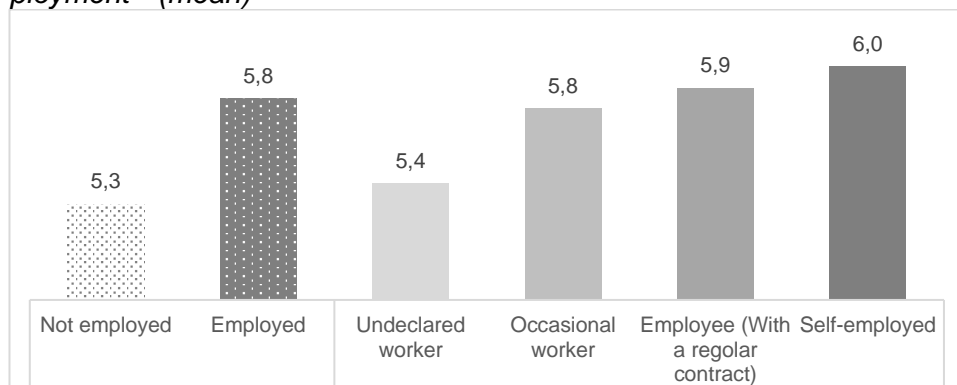
but without a formal employment contract. Therefore, the employability index would be able to meet the expected objectives, to test the likelihood of young people of being employed, and to show a certain suggestion to the 'nature' of the employment status. In order to be able to test more effectively the predictability of OKI, it was necessary to detect the employment condition later than the moment the survey took place, and also to use 'official' employment data to reduce the risk connected to the reliability of self-declared data. This is the reason why data regarding employment were also collected by using the administrative database, which gives also the possibility to monitor the number, type and duration of employment contracts. In this context, a logistic regression model was developed. It uses as 'regressor variables' individual factors (such as socio-demographic characteristics and employability) and context characteristics (such as job demand and local unemployment rate) and as 'dependent variable' individual employment status, detected by using the Administrative Database.

**FIGURE 2.** *Employability Index OKI by survey, gender, domicile, family background and qualification (mean)*



source: De Luca, Ferri (2016)

**FIGURE 3.** *Employability Index OKI by employment status<sup>9</sup> and nature of employment<sup>10</sup> (mean)*



<sup>9</sup> Declared during interview.

<sup>10</sup> Type of employment declared during interview.

### **3. Administrative database and regression model**

#### *3.1. The use of administrative archives*

It is relatively recent the availability of the *Comunicazioni obbligatorie* (CO), which give access to well-timed and reliable short-term statistical information, sent by enterprises and regarding recruitments, extensions, transformations and conclusions of employment contracts. Concretely it is only since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 that all (public and private) employers are obliged to send these communications to the competent bodies, Since March 1<sup>st</sup> 2008, digital communications have become the only official mandatory way to send these information (Anastasia *et al.*, 2009).

Data contained in the 'CO-database' give the possibility to detect incoming and outgoing flows of employment contracts. This dynamic database gives information on relevant events connected to the relation between workers and employers, the renewal of 'working contracts' and individual career pathways, which can be monitored almost in real time.

In this phase of the testing we intended to consider only the specific employment status (employed / not employed) without taking on board specific characteristics of the job (qualification required, profile, type of contract, etc.), even though the status was defined with a limited amount of details.

The following analyses define 'employed' an individual who has worked at least three months (even non-consecutive ones) during the following year of the interview. Other indicators and/or classifications can obviously be identified. This is the reason why a logistic regression model was developed.

#### *3.2. Employability and reached employment after one year*

As described above, the effectiveness of the employability index, with respect to employment results (i.e. its characteristic to show the likelihood of an individual to find a job), was tested by comparing the value assumed by the employability index at the time of the survey (end of 2016) and reached employment during 2017, recorded through the *Comunicazioni obbligatorie* database.

The fact that employability may have a direct impact on employment (reached jobs) has already been noted by analysing the employment status self-declared at the time of the interview (end of 2016). In this sense data from the CO confirm the link and strength of this relation after one year<sup>11</sup>.

Even in this case, the percentage of employed people grows almost linearly with the growth of the OKI index, varying from 30% of the lowest rate till over 65% of the highest one, recording - within the median rate - a value equal to the population average: slightly over 50% (Figure 4).

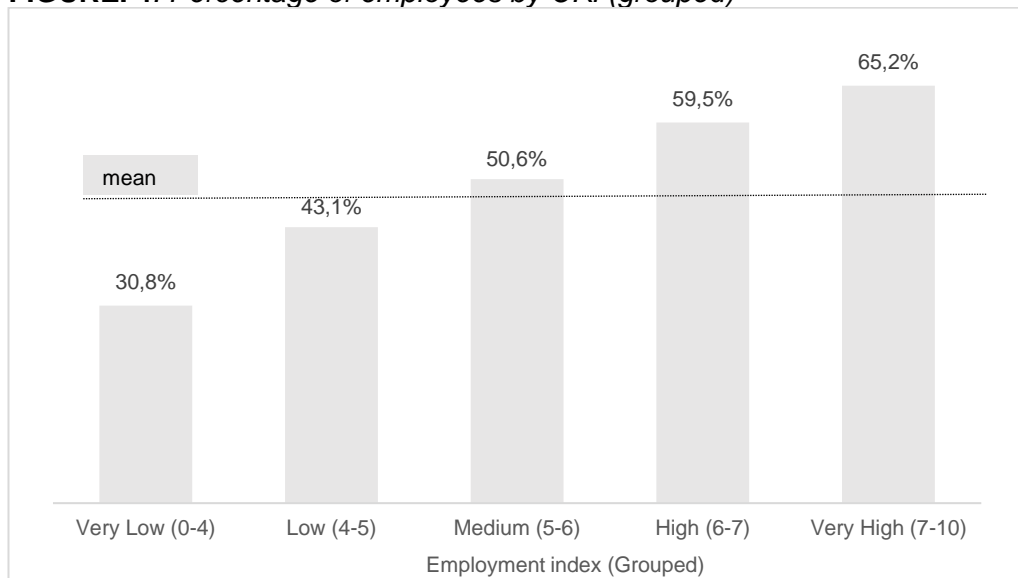
A positive link is also observed in the comparison between the educational level (employability proxy) and employment data, but it appears to be definitely lower; in fact, the rate of employed people distributed by educational level varies from the 36% of those who have a lower secondary education qualification, till the 53% of graduates (master's degree level). Besides, the correlation indices show a stronger link between employment and OKI, greater than the one with the educational level index, in terms of both the likelihood of being employed ( $\rho=0,227$  against  $\rho=0,147$ ) and in terms of worked days ( $\rho=0,232$  against  $\rho=0,138$ )<sup>12</sup>. Thus, the relation between the rate of employability through OKI and employment, defines a strong link between the two dimensions, suggesting the existence of a causal link.

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<sup>11</sup> The COs do not include self-employment which, from the analysis carried out on the self-declared employment status, was about 6% of those who declared themselves employed.

<sup>12</sup> Spearman's rank correlation coefficient.

FIGURE. 4. Percentage of employees by OKI (grouped)



### 3.3. The regression model: the likelihood of being employed

In order to measure the weight of OKI with respect to employment, a logistic regression model was developed. In this model the likelihood of being employed (dependent variable) becomes a value for individual employability.

Considering the theoretical reasons explained above, the model also includes some context variables (regional youth unemployment rate) and socio-demographic factors, such as gender.

The dependent variable Y is understood as the likelihood of having worked at least 90 days during 2017.

$$\Pr (Y=1|X_1, \dots, X_k) = \frac{e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \dots + \beta_k X_k}}{1 + e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \dots + \beta_k X_k}}$$

The regressor variables, i.e. the independent variables, which have been selected are:

- OKI index (collected in 5 groups) to summarize individual employability;
- regional unemployment rate of young people aged 18-29 distributed in three groups (high: > 40%, medium: 25-40%, low: <25%) to summarize the characteristics of the labour market (context factor);
- gender and project sector in which the civil service was carried out, as individual characteristics.

The model results are consistent with the starting hypothesis. With regards to 'employability' the coefficient trend is the one expected and its significance is robust. Thus, it is to be noted that the more the employability index increases, greater the likelihood of being employed will be. At the highest level of employability, the likelihood of finding a job is triple compared to those at the lowest level of OKI.

The regional unemployment rate (usually higher in Southern than in Central-Northern regions) also shows significant coefficients. In fact, comparing an area with a high unemployment rate (taken as a reference in the model), the odds ratio (OR) of the areas with an average unemployment rate, is just over 2. While for low unemployment rate areas the OR rises to almost 4. This means that a

young person living in regions with low unemployment rates, with equal employability likelihood, has four-times a chance of finding a job respect to those living in regions with high unemployment rates. Therefore, context factors and individual employability seem to have a very similar weight compared to the likelihood of finding a job. Besides, those coefficients relating to gender and to 'project sector' appear to be significant: women are more likely to be employed, as well as those who have carried out the Civil Service in the care sector. Data regarding women can be unexpected, but the result is determined by the characteristics of the sample.

**TABLE. 1.** Regression Model

<i>Regressors</i>	<i>Odds ratio</i>	<i>Sign.</i>	<i>95% C.I.per EXP(B)</i>	
			<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>
unemployment rate [rif. high (>40%)]		0		
medium unemployment rate (25%-40%)	2,051	0,000	1,659	2,536
low unemployment rate (<25%)	3,962	0,000	3,014	5,206
OKI [Rif. very low (0-4)]		0,000		
OKI low (4-5)	1,559	0,002	1,178	2,064
OKI medium (5-6)	2,072	0,000	1,580	2,718
OKI high (6-7)	2,875	0,000	2,156	3,834
OKI very high (7-10)	3,664	0,000	2,671	5,026
Gender female [Rif. male]	1,528	0,000	1,255	1,861
Sector Assistance [Rif. Other sectors]	1,544	0,000	1,306	1,825
Constant	0,141	0,000		

Therefore, it can be concluded that, if external/contextual conditions are equal, the individual employability factor can even make the likelihood of being employed three times more likely, although the initial disadvantage provided by the local labour market characteristics cannot be eliminated. This is confirmed by the fact that for many young people living in Southern regions, even those considered 'hyper-employable', the likelihood of being employed seems to increase only by moving to Central and Northern regions.

## Conclusions

Very briefly, both the correlation indices and the regression model results with respect to OKI's ability to grasp significant dimensions of individual employability, confirm that individual employability - estimated by OKI - is able to capture the likelihood of being employed. The model demonstrates the pivotal weight of 'context factors' on the likelihood of finding a job, regardless individual employability. Hitherto data have included selected variables, it is possible to add complexity to the model, by inserting many other indicators.

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