

## What steps toward school learning?

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### ABSTRACT

*The Italian school has been in crisis for some time. The reforms put into practice do not seem able to solve the main problems (dispersion, effectiveness in terms of learning, perceived significance, differences). The disciplinary and recurrence settings of infinite modes have already been shown not to be able to produce results in this area (Trincherò, 2013; Batini, ed., 2015), on the contrary they actively contribute to the production of indexed issues. The paper examines the motivations and processes that contribute to keep alive - despite plural regulations productions - the primacy of the subject content within the education system and suggests some steps that could be taken in the direction of the school of learning. That is a school whose objective is the centrality of the students and the learning process.*

**Keywords:** School Dropout - Learning - Teaching to Learning Objectives - Skills (Competencies) - Crisis Systems Education

### *Quali passi verso la scuola dell'apprendimento?*

*La scuola italiana è in crisi da tempo. Le riforme messe in campo non sembrano in grado di risolvere i problemi principali (dispersione, efficacia in termini apprenditivi, significatività percepita, differenze). L'impostazione disciplinare e la reiterazione infinita di modalità hanno già mostrato di non essere in grado di produrre risultati in tal senso (Trincherò, 2013; Batini, ed., 2015) ed anzi di contribuire attivamente alla produzione dei problemi rubricati. Il contributo esamina motivazioni e processi che contribuiscono a mantenere in vita, nonostante produzioni normative plurali, il primato dei contenuti disciplinari all'interno del sistema di istruzione e ipotizza alcuni passi che si potrebbero compiere in direzione della scuola dell'apprendimento, una scuola cioè ove la centralità degli allievi e degli apprendimenti costituisca processo e obiettivo perseguito.*

**Parole chiave:** Dispersione scolastica – Apprendimento - Didattica per Obiettivi di Apprendimento – Competenze - Crisi Sistemi di Istruzione

*Training should enable teachers and trainers to motivate their learners not only to acquire the theoretical knowledge and skills they need, but also to take responsibility for their own learning in order to have the necessary skills for society and work nowadays*

(Report by the Council (Education) to the European Council (EU Council, 2001, p.8)

### **Introduction: a separation and a misunderstanding**

In a recent conversation with two very close people, both teachers of different grades, I've been told, *mutatis mutandis*, practically the same episode: the context is the class council, the time the poll pre or post test, the theme is the evaluation, the admission and promotion. Students not admitted and students rejected after examination. What the two episodes are about: teachers who feel normal, even though it is not pleasant, assigning the failure to the whole class, except for a few brilliant students; teachers who do not feel themselves put into play by the disastrous results of the entire group class in their discipline (having also collaborated in the writing of tests), they believe that repeat a grade is even "healthy". So far nothing new. Who deeply knows the education system knows also that the professional attendance are various and not all in a positive way. The interesting question, however, is the one asked me by the two people mentioned in the opening. According to them, the colleagues in question are serious professionals and they were really sorry, but considered it an incurable situation and saw no other improving possibilities. So, where is situated the misunderstanding? I realized that what we are in presence of a double misunderstanding: a separation and a misunderstanding. The separation we know between teaching and learning. The teacher would be teaching, learning it is a students' matter. I teach and if they understand and then they study, they will learn. The disagreement concerns the method of construction of an assessment test and its effectiveness. Many teachers think that both reliability and validity of the assessment tests are guaranteed by the teacher's disciplinary preparation itself. In both cases are, at least, *naive*.

It often happens that the teaching action is conceived, designed (or not designed) as disconnected from learning. In many contexts of training and reflection on professional practices with teachers, in fact, happen that your teaching is presented as "natural", as if that way (often corresponding to the prevalence of lectures and didactics transmissive) was the only possible. A way of teaching, however, always carries an anthropology (the concept that we have female and male students we work with) and an idea of learning (a "naive theory" or explicit as to learn our students). It must be assumed, in fact, that each teacher performs teaching actions as it seems appropriate to facilitate their students' learning.

What is the idea of learning and anthropology proposes by those who believe and center their action on the proposal for information and educational content to be conveyed through the "explanation"?

### A system of education in crisis: the framework of the problems

Our education systems are in crisis, it is sufficient to explore the complete file relating to the Skills Outlook 2013 (Batini, ed., 2015)<sup>1</sup> to realize how along with the considerable problems of "tightness" of our education systems (dispersion and abandonment reached percentages instead of bringing Italy to the objectives of the Europe 2020, they push it far away<sup>2</sup>) there are many other problems. We can then analyze problems that arise through four "core areas":

- levels of drop outs;
- a learning effectiveness (and efficiency);
- the significance perceived by the protagonists about their own path of education;
- environments and contexts in which education takes place.

The synthesis of some of the negative performance of our secondary students in international surveys designed to check the levels of competence, despite the complexity of the results (Trincherò, 2013) provide a concise statement of the first two problems. Here are some macro-data useful to this discussion:

- Italy has the lowest number of graduates in Europe; Italy follows, in Outlook Skills (October 2013), the worst performance in language skills and the second last in math skills;
- Italy has also a high level of socio-economics background influence on the results in terms of education;

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<sup>1</sup> The complete file consists of 466 pages and is now available in Italian (in the other languages there are only summaries). The complete file is available for download (pdf) by inserting this "search key": oecd-skills-outlook-2013 in English. The Italian version, edited by the writer, is in free download at the following link: [http://www.laricerca.loescher.it/quaderno\\_20/](http://www.laricerca.loescher.it/quaderno_20/).

<sup>2</sup> It is advisable, in this regard, to see the focus on the dispersion of the Ministry of Education in June 2013, available on the website of the Ministry. The lines of the program Education and Training 2020 (ET2020, 2009) identifies five benchmarks (reference levels of European average performance) to which the EU countries should reach by 2020: 95% of children between 4 years and starting age of primary education should participate in pre-primary education; the share of early school leavers from education and training should be less than 10% (levels of abandonment); the share of people between 30 and 34 years with a title at tertiary level should be at least 40% of the population; at least 15% of adults should participate in permanent training.

- Italy has the highest dropout rate and dispersion (over 18.5%)<sup>3</sup>;
- As a matter of depth on the abandonment is related to early school leavers (ESL), literally those who leave school early. The ESL is one of the indicators used in Europe. These are young people between 18-24 years who have not yet earned a high school degree (and are out of the education and training), then they are in possession of the only secondary school diploma of the first degree. From the data provided by Eurostat, as emerges that Italy ranks at the top for this particular category of dropouts: the phenomenon affects even 17% of boys; Italy is preceded only by Spain (23.5%), Malta (20.9%) and Portugal (19.2%).
- Italy has more than two million NEET (young people between 15 and 29 who are not included in the system of education, nor in that of the formation and even in the world of work. The Neet are often characterized by inactivity or by not take meaningful action to change your situation).
- According to Education at glance 2013 are the 34th country (out of 37) OECD for tertiary education, only 21% of the population from 25 to 34, almost half of the OECD average (39%)<sup>4</sup>.

Summarily analyzing this data we must therefore pay attention to the effectiveness: the education system fails to deliver a significant number of people the basic skills necessary to live their existence in an active and aware way and exercise the role of citizen. The education system, however, can not even be efficient in order to own theme of abandonment: because it loses at least one fifth of its students (most probably a portion of between a third and a quarter, a portion of which are in very early age and without fulfillment of the right and duty) and "dispersed" cognitive resources and energies of many others that they should not take advantage of the learning within the education system.

The overall figure is therefore very difficult to estimate

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<sup>3</sup> The figure, in itself terrifying, is probably underestimated because of the calculation mode that is used. The dropouts are counted by the data reported by schools to employment centers. Anyone with experience of the education system knows that dropouts do not constitute formalized at the totality of dropouts and in the absence of specific communication boys who do not attend are entered automatically to the next class (thus contributing to the number of members and the composition of the classes).

<sup>4</sup> Some data indicates that: Italy is the only country in the OECD not to have increased spending per student in primary and secondary school from 1995 to 2010 (0.5% in real terms over the same period the OECD countries increased on average by 62% spending per student). See "Country Profile" on the website [www.oecd.org/edu/italy\\_EAG2013](http://www.oecd.org/edu/italy_EAG2013). There has been a decline in average enrollment in a university career (between 2003 and 2009 the proportion of 15 year olds who hopes to complete higher education decreased by 11%, as shown by the survey on the aspirations of the students, OECD, 2012). The unemployment rate is favored by low levels of education: the picture is dramatic for the future. The total expenditure on education relative to GDP ranks Italy in 31st place out of 33 (4.7% of GDP compared with the OECD average of 6.3% constituting 8.9% of total public expenditure compared to 13% OECD average ). In Italy we have 1,700 researchers per million inhabitants, the average of industrialized countries is 3000 (the data prior to the block in turnover university the current situation is so worse).

Early school leaving must be seen not only as an escape from the obligation or dropping out of school by the students before the end of the cycle of studies undertaken, but as a reality that includes the repetition, the delays than school age, changes of school, irregular frequencies, even the numerous cases of poor performance compared to the possibilities. The concept of school leaving (school or dropping out) is to be understood in relation to the idea of education existing in a given society; in Western countries a regular is provided a regular training up to 18 years. There is loss of talent every time you are confronted with a feeling of severe discomfort that prevents the student to live a full training school. It is a problem individual and social, due to a multiplicity of factors. (Bombardelli, 2001 p. 75)

The amount of discomfort experienced in the experience of education is difficult to estimate, but some research relating to Italy (Batini, Manna & Mottana, 2013; Isfol, 2012) make it possible to shed light on the gravity of the phenomenon: 89% are students that, for example, believe they have received abuse in terms of assessments (Batini, Manna & Mottana, 2013) and for over 46% of them assessments have been used as a punishment or in order to intimidate them. Research conducted by ISFOL on a sample of 1,500 young people who had dropped out of school reveals how for over 69% abandonment occurred "by choice". It becomes interesting to investigate and see how the children themselves realize the loss of significance of the experience of education. 53%, in fact, attributed to interest different from proposed at school as motivation of its abandonment (ISFOL, 2012)<sup>5</sup>.

The experience within the education system, especially secondary school is perceived insignificant to a large part of the system's users (for the difficulties of the system to deal with changes in the outside world and the way young people live there), resulting in the loss of subjects (abandonment) and potential energies and cognitive-emotional (dispersion), the low level of effectiveness and efficiency in terms of learning outcomes (learning output, output skills), inadequate from dedicated environments and imperviousness to the contexts in which the same systems they insist, have now marked the need to redesign the role, functions and modes of the education system (ISFOL, 2012; Batini, Cini & Paolini 2012; Batini, 2013; Trincherro, 2013).

Compared to the literature on the subject that has often identified in determining its origin (family environment, economic and cultural family level), the main reasons for leakage, discomfort and perhaps abandonment must make some points regarding the participation of students to own learning process.

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<sup>5</sup> "The subjects did not interest me; I found it hard to study"; "I was demoralized by the failure"; "I could not find satisfaction in the study"; "At school I was bored "are, in this order, the top five reasons for its abandonment identified by respondents to the survey Isfol (ISFOL, 2012).

Territorial unpublished survey<sup>6</sup> shows that for the participating students, secondary school students of first and second grade, only 46% of cases it is true that at least half of their teachers have the objective of the achievement of learning and skills for all students, while for 47% only someone. Only 20% of the sample at least half of the teachers show their students to appreciate and to regard them and are just under 25% of those who believe that at least half of their teachers you trust them and believe in what they say. One of the most striking data is related to the involvement decision: only 9% of those who consider themselves to be involved in some decisions or to be consulted before taking decisions by the half of teachers, while 42% announce that none of their teachers "asks your opinion before make decisions."

The 60% of students in the sample believe that none of their teachers "give attention, time and energy to make sure that everyone in the class feel as comfortable as possible."

It is important to clarify that it's not relevant to determine whether the students are right or not, from the report we have the perception of a substantial students impotence facing an experience that does not interest them, that does not involve them (in different meanings of the verb ), which do not provides them satisfaction and recognition.

The high rates of failure and dropout, the relevant perception of discomfort, the low levels of effectiveness in the development of expertise recall, first of all, not the origins of the student (which certainly constitute an important factor of advantage or disadvantage making current the well-known phrase of Don Milani: Italian school is a hospital that takes care of the healthy people and send away the sick), they recall the goals and practices that are structured in those contexts.

## Skills

In this circumstance the skills (especially basic, key and citizenship skills) have been identified as a "solution", as stated by the regulations of the Ministry in the years from 2006 to 2013 although with indecision and misunderstanding delays. Educational skills place learning objectives at the core of the whole teaching action. What obstacles does it meet? It is important to verify these problems, which are certainly multidimensional.

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<sup>6</sup> The survey (sponsored by the writer in collaboration with Aila Biagetti) covered a sample composed of 200 students, attending the third year of lower secondary schools of two institutes in the area of Foligno; 186 students, attending the fifth class of the secondary school of three instituts in the area of Foligno; in particular a scientific high school, a technical and industrial institute and a professional institute. Participants received a questionnaire consisting of 41 items, both qualitative and quantitative, including 3 on the Institute, nationality and gender, and the other 13 on the school career, the family (educational qualification and employment parents) and the relationship with the reading, both children of their parents and key actors, in order to have an overall view of the student and, even if partial, knowledge of the socio-cultural and economic condition of the family of origin. 25 items related to the comfort / discomfort felt at school and in the relationship with teachers.

Skills are an attractive concept for the world of education and training as they can represent an effective interconnection between the different types and various learning domains, and between the worlds of learning and the world of working. Skills allow a mutual readability between different systems, transparency (and mutual enhancement) of titles and certifications<sup>7</sup>, are centered on the person who owns them, and not on who facilitates or certify their acquisition, they have an exportable core and a specific context. The skills integrates knowledge and skills-abilities to individual resources (Batini, 2013; Trinchero, 2013)<sup>8</sup>.

The educational skills which have already shown the ability to re-motivate and to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes also with those who are at risk of neglect or have already dropped out (Batini, 2009; Trinchero, 2013).

However, the several resistances to regulatory pathway that involved the two systems of education and training should be classified (although still poorly integrated despite of the initiatives) that did not allow a parallel advancement of practices and regulations (indeed with feedback on the same regulations)<sup>9</sup>.

The main resistors are inside the teaching body but, in some way, not completely due to them. A research on 350 teachers (200 in initial formation, TFA and 150 in service, conducted between Umbria and Tuscany) highlighted the main categories of resistance to the emergence of skills by teachers (Batini, 2014, pp. 306-307):

**Tab. 1 - Categories of significant resistance divided by group and total participants.**

<sup>7</sup> The skills have an univocal interpretation (and a direct correspondence to reality) while behind titles and certifications with name similar or identical may insist very different paths (for a more exhaustive see. Trinchero, 2013; Batini, 2013). The definition of competence taken here is as it follows: *the ability to take decisions and to be able to act and react in a satisfactory way in situations contextualized and specific, predictable or not.*

<sup>8</sup> There are warnings of which take into account so the skills provide an opportunity and not an additional risk of inequity (cfr. Batini, Gadotti, Mayo, Reggio & Surian, 2008), a risk that it is worth to rush, remembering the effectiveness in shifting the center of the teaching from teaching to learning and therefore the recovery of the centrality of students and their learning in the education system.

<sup>9</sup> The resistors are not only individual, but they are organizations and groups of actors. The groups, however, just as political leaders, are likely to self-represent, asking to their base (the set of teachers Italians) what, in another context, it has been called "the highest level of minimal participation". The base is incited to collective mobilization, only in times that require legitimacy of ruling coalitions. There has, in fact, a document production, from the Ministry, after which the clarity and direction certain the years 2006/2007, led to relegation in recent years to less productive attempts (because conducted by juxtapositions) to mediate between content approaches and skills approaches.

Another discussion deserve the skills in the university system: it heading a considerable distance between declarations of principles and didactic practices (Zaggia, 2008).

Resistance areas:

*attachment to the contents (affection / difficulty to become detached from disciplinary contents);*

*assumption that skill is "doing" as opposed to "knowing";*

*membership / unconditional affection to the "content" of their discipline;*

*perception of itself and its role of teachers as "intellectuals".*

Compared to the perception of lack of preparation / inadequacy compared to the changes demanded it detects a difference concerning: 57% of teachers in service, less than 30% of TFA teachers.

Teachers' specific resistances in TFA initial training:

*excessive will to prove their preparation through the contents;*

*disorientation to the idea of teaching formed on the basis of their own student's experience;*

*feeling inadequate to the role (no desire to express it);*

*defensive repetition of formulaic phrases learned.*

It reports a lower level of resistance expressed by the scientific area. This trend was confirmed in group interviews and in the debate following the carrying out of the training.

Specific resistances in Tuscan role teachers (project USR Tuscany):

*feeling of inadequacy with regard to the ongoing transitions;*

*trouble in changing habitual practices even in cases of adhesion;*

*high school teachers conceptual rejection linked to the idea of "scholastic program"*

The difficulties are both methodological and relative to content's attachment, and they refer to a decisive issue: that of the initial training of teachers themselves and it has recently been subject of many debates.

Italy has the oldest teaching staff in OECD countries: in 2011 the 47.6% of primary school teachers, the 62% of secondary school teachers were over 50 years (data confirmed in 2013). The picture that emerged from the recent "The teaching profession in Europe: practices, perceptions and policies" (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2015), presented on June 25 at the European Commission in Brussels, shows that only 33.6% of teachers is under the age of 40 years. In Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, and in the UK, there are over 50% of teachers who are less than 40 years. Less than 25% of teachers in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Latvia and Austria they are less than 40 years. Italy, still, is the country with the older teachers in Europe, along with Austria which maintains though a higher percentage of teachers under 30 (8%) and a good percentage in the age group 30-39 (18%). In Italy are almost completely absent teachers of secondary schools of first degree under 30 (nearly zero percent) and in the 30-39 age group (<10%), while about 44% is between 50 and 59 years and those over 60 make up nearly 20%. Moreover, the vast majority of teachers are women,



and less than a third are men. Only in the Netherlands the proportions of female teachers and male teachers is more or less the same (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2015).

A very old class teacher does not facilitate change, but the overall desire for change can certainly point out through new devices, through initial training, in-service training and professional development.

Fifteen years ago in the European Union, we denounced the lack of "*extensive research on the effects and consequences of different systems and models of teacher education*" (Buchberger, Campos, Kallos & Stephenson, 2000, p. 10) and the issue involved more than five million of current and future teachers. Since then we notice small steps forward to a European policy on teacher training. Teacher education appears crucial to allow a real change in education systems.<sup>10</sup>

### A brief history of 20 years of training teachers

Everyone knows that for a very long time, up to 1999, in Italy teachers did not receive a specific training for their role. The entrance was mediated by a competition exam in which they were judged through written and oral tests. To become a primary school teacher was enough, until 1996, a secondary school license, and only from then became necessary a degree in Primary Education (degree single-cycle, enabling). As for secondary schools, however, the title of access to competitions was the degree (master's degrees, often with the determination of some core tests) until the SSIS (School of Specialization for Secondary School Teachers). The SSIS started in 1999 (although the law establishing the SSIS dated back to 1991) (Luzzatto, 2001). The events following date back to 2010: the minister Gelmini with DM 249/10 establishing the Internship Training On that should have been the enabling path, every year, he replaced the SSIS. Requirements and available places would be calculated on the regional requirement for each class of competition. The first selection tests took place in the summer of 2012, and between the end of the year and the summer of 2013 were held courses in many universities backdated 2011-12. The selective test consisted of a multiple choice test and then by a further test written and oral. At the first selection 11,000 candidates of 150,000 applicants passed and 22,000 position provided (half of the places available). The troubled life of TFA was short: even during the courses TFA, the minister Profumo dismissed the decree on special TFA, then PAS (Best enabling special): shorter courses, to obtain a

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<sup>10</sup> To recruit, retain and grow professionally quality teachers are still necessary strategies supported by adequate resources, to achieve both initial teacher training and the professional development of his career. Member States should draw up a framework of skills or a professional profile of teachers, and trainers including initial and continuing. In this sense, it should be defined clearly the role of teacher's trainer using criteria based on skills. This, along with measures for quality assurance, should be the basis for the reform of recruitment in order to attract and retain quality candidates into the teaching profession. (European Commission, 2012).

license without door policy, reserved for those who had at least three years of seniority, later reduced by the next Minister Carrozza in a single year (played the most extensive as possible). After another round of TFA's new government, headed by Renzi who announced, as part of measures known as "The Good School" its intention to eradicate the historic insecurity that crowded rankings. Without going into the controversy that accompanied the whole process of the measures covered by the program of modification of the Italian education system, we notice how it was considered essential to provide the definition of a mode of initial training and a provision providing for continuing education. The different training models in Europe have in common general education aspects, mainly of contents (centered on teaching disciplines), and a professional-educational-methodological management (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2015). Most countries also provides a term of obligatory entry in which there are a series of support options (mandatory or not), coaching, mentoring, verification and evaluation.

The most natural, in the university system and practical difficulties of structuring paths completely autonomous seemed that of a bachelor's degree and a disciplinary degree that formed on "cross" areas (pedagogy, teaching methodology, psychology). The initial teacher training would be completed later with a trial. At the time of this article it is delivered there is uncertainty, because teacher training is one of the matters delegated to the Government itself.<sup>11</sup> Yet in the draft circulated last month there was the possibility of not amend the academic system.

If the system was that the primacy of the disciplines would be very difficult to break up and it would facilitate the continuation of inadequate teaching models.

### **Who knows, knows how to teach**

The major school of thought in Italy (and probably also in the minds of some legislators) still remains the pedagogical idealistic vision of Giovanni Gentile, author of the famous Italian school reform in 1923. According to Gentile knowledge of a discipline's subjects leads automatically the ability to teach it, and therefore any training on teaching and teaching is only a useless decoration.

The tradition of disciplinary record in the training of teachers, in fact, over time, the product of important misunderstandings. The power structure of the disciplines has its center and its start in the Academy. Teachers are trained on subjects receiving therefore, a type of specialized training, not different from ones that are going to play in other professions.

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<sup>11</sup> The fields of the delegation also affect teaching in secondary school. It involves the amalgamation of the initial training with the access to the profession; the school inclusion of students with disabilities and special educational needs; the paths of professional education; the (new) integrated system of education and instruction from birth to six years old; the definition of the essential levels of the right to education; Italian schools abroad; assessment methods and skill's certification for first cycle students and the methods of implementation of the state exams of first and second cycle; promotion of humanistic culture.

Specialized training and interest that led them to choose that graduation path leave indelible traces. The majority of teachers in fact behaves following the training received. They were trained as specialists disciplinary and expect equally by the children they work with. So they do not teach *through* disciplines, but teach disciplines.

This model replicates not only the subjects, simplified and lightened, but also the teaching methods they were conveyed with. The future teachers' lesson will therefore be modeled largely on lectures made.

Centering on the contents, especially theoretical, prevalent in almost all degree courses is reflected therefore in a central of contents in the education system. In fact even today to praise the quality of a teacher we use the form, "he/she is prepared", which is basically equivalent to postulate the preparation of the teacher to the subject content.

All international surveys, however, agree that teaching require in equal measure: knowledge and skills in the teaching; knowledge and pedagogical skills; knowledge and teaching skills and research-action; knowledge and skills of group management; knowledge and skills related to new technologies; knowledge and skills acquired through a guided practice (European Commission, 2012; European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2015).

### **Are knowledge and understanding essential?**

We are historically accustomed to an education system based on contents. A system establishing which are - within a specific historical time and a particular geographic location - the concepts and knowledge needed for young people to fit into a given society, to govern their personal and social interactions and to internalize certain behaviours and values.

Briefly, an education system that works according to these dictates accept as true that there is a wealth of ideas and knowledge rather stable and also believes that this heritage can be transmitted through the mediation of a teacher who "explains" and through students who have to "study"; then this output must be controlled through the teacher "verification" and "evaluation" of the student "repetition". It is a system that establishes hierarchies: hierarchies of content (there are the most important, essential and less), hierarchies of relationships (the teacher sets, with a few "intrusion" of colleagues, who may or may not follow the path compared to their disciplines), hierarchies and boundaries of knowledge (the "rigid" organization in disciplines that promotes, for example, the notion with the content).

In a system with this type of education the teacher "knows" what the knowledge and basic concepts shall identify the areas in which dwell more as smoothly as possible (where the adjective "best" are assigned multiple meanings).

The notion or knowledge (singular or plural) should be understood, studied, repeated (written or oral). Student is supposed to: listen, understand, study, repeat. The teacher is

supposed to: select, explain, evaluate. The teacher is the protagonist of the process, the one that has actions involving responsibility and decision-making. The teacher's actions, however, tend to be repetitive from year to year, from one class to another (with the changes required by changing of classes). Obviously that is done best by some, worse by other, both as regards the teachers who regard the students. Students who get better results are often from contexts in which they are familiar with that kind of content, education and language.

### **Towards a system for skills**

In an education system that chooses to center on skills, objectives are defined in terms of basic learning: what does a student needs to know at the end of a year of education or training?

Not the classical opposition to *know / be able to do* or that between thought and action. In any competent action, the knowledge that permeate deep into the subject is contained, so that he/she could mobilize and use them to act (Batini, 2013; Batini, ed., 2015). We all experience some knowledge and notions that we can call to mind and others, instead, we use daily or less frequently, in professional and personal contexts, and how the latter are deeper and held in a more "deep" of first. Focusing on competences, in other words, put the learning of the students (and so students themselves) in the center of the whole process of education and training. Content and concepts are used in relation to the ability of the teacher to use them to develop skills in line with what it really is useful for the development of those skills.

An education system that is structured through the definition of learning goals is no longer obligated to question essential notions or contents, but on necessary learning.

In a stable and predictable knowledge of one generation they can be passed to the next generation, which will partially modify and customize them, keeping intact their use value and exchange (and the meanings that are attributed to these knowledge and through that knowledge, with those materials that convey knowledge); then such knowledge will determine not only values and meanings, but also behavior, habits, social roles.

In a society accelerated, so unstable and unpredictable this mode is not working. We don't change quickly enough the necessary knowledge to effectively manage everyday life, but it also change the total background of values in which the knowledge will be acquired (knowledge that constitute the "building blocks" through which those paintings of values can build ); behaviours and practices change at a faster rate than the knowledge that determine them.

The continuous evolution of knowledge requires in fact, today, the possession of essential skills, both basic and transversal, with the happy expression of WHO, life skills,

which are the lightweight luggage which each may, from time to time, hook the knowledge and skills that are useful for that stretch of road.

Developing an education system like that requires the presence of teachers who are able to represent themselves in a different way: not as holders of knowledge but rather as directors of learning situations. The teacher who works for skills and learning objectives must acquire the ability to build teaching situations that a neighborhood have with real situations, assuming a constructivist perspective.

According to the constructivist approach, in fact, the reality is not something given and objective, but simplify, it is a construction of the subject that lives (a co-construction of knowledge, skills, competencies, in the context of education). Therefore, knowledge is the result of an interaction between the subject who learns and reality; According to this approach, the teacher is a resource (one of the most important, of course) for the construction of occasions and situations in support of learning, but the subject never ceases to learn and to negotiate, through language, meanings.

Bring in the school logic skills means putting disciplines - and teachers - at the service of person. It also means doing everything because people have the opportunity to learn about themselves, about what they effectively do, enabling them to act, or to gain experience and then to tell to themselves and to others. In this sense, a teaching approach centered on skills leads to an active involvement of all stakeholders in the education system, which are called to share the meaning of the phrases used to describe an expert behaviour and to express through the language its opinion on the same behaviour. (Brunello, Capone, Buggy, Giovannini, Giusti & Ferretti, 2011, p. 50)

### Conclusions

The school based on acquisition of knowledge and on (few) skills could be adapted in order to form citizens in a predictable and controllable world, in a static society in which the working roles were certain, defined and related to a training program. That reality does not exist anymore. So, it become necessary to accelerate the transition to a different training approach in education career, and the organizer principle has to be the competence to be acquired. Many of us have followed a path in which the motto could be “what today you’re learn in school is the knowledge that tomorrow - automatically - you will know how to apply in real life.”

Knowledge disconnected from the use, not to mention the basics are forgotten easily, quickly become obsolete or simply transform into knowledge "inert", in to something that people remember vaguely that he had learned in school, but they do not know how, when and why to use it. Education should be the autonomy of the parties (which is not produced in places where they can make choices), problem solving, reading and intelligent interpretation

of situations, design and enforcement strategies, to reflect on their own interpretations and actions in order to change them when required. Becomes crucial also developing of digital competence understood as ability to use new technologies in a "confident and critical way" for the different main purposes (work, learning, leisure, communication, creation/diffusion)<sup>12</sup>. It is not a question of simple mechanical skills necessary to make the user working with the software, but soft and necessary skills: the ability to search, retrieval and manage information, a critical use of information obtained (reliability of sources, ability to make distinctions, relevance of information, distinction between real and virtual). It is not, then, simply technical skills, complex skills that can vehiculate other skills. A complex task (and simple at the same time) is how to create a class blog, which functions as preparation and providing daily (or other periodization) responsibility, new topics, research to be performed, management reports, communication, actions etc... can be an example of how digital competence can establish a connection, because of its attractiveness, around which build a variety of paths and develop a variety of skills.

Thus, it is necessary that these are truly integrated into the teaching, just as, in small steps, is happening to the English language. In order to do this, the model of initial teacher training should be integrated to turn the technology into their teaching action. Research shows, in fact, that the actual use of ICT occurs especially when they are integrated into the initial training (European Commission, 2012; European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2015).

In more general terms it comes to pass, without delay, to a path of education and training focused on skills, understood as the ability to use all the personal and social resources of a subject in work or study situations and in professional and/or personnel acting independently and responsibly. Initial education should not bombard students "knowledge" which will then be quickly forgotten, but develop attitudes and strategies to learn how to learn and to develop the autonomy and accountability of decision-making entities. Becomes grotesque fill the papers, those ministerial up to local ones, words like "autonomy" and "responsibility" and focus on the path of education pre-defined tasks, closed executive. If the goal of "traditional" education was to train good "performers".

The change requires a new logic in teacher training, in which the subjects lose their centrality. They do not teach the disciplines are taught with discipline. There will, of course, resistance, but only a framework of this type may return enthusiastically to the possibility of causing learning and break the ditch was dug, in decades, between learning and teaching. Perceived effectiveness in their work is a powerful source of motivation and centering the action on learning produces significant results.

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<sup>12</sup> Just as it is defined, the fourth of the key competences, the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006

The proposed changes, in recent years, have not, at the time, allowed a decisive turn in this direction. Data on dispersion and abandonment, especially if analyzed longitudinally, should be a wake-up call because a school that runs their students can not say that.

Back to the beginning. You can no longer give a teacher who collapses the head and raise your hands in front of the inadequacy of most of its students in an exam. That outcome should produce a strong professional identity crisis. Policy-makers have the responsibility rating systems aimed at rewarding and punishing, but complex systems of training and evaluation in which teachers themselves participate. If you want to build a school that produces learning and motivation, you need participation. Teachers must, in turn be placed in the same conditions.

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