REFORMS IN ITALIAN EDUCATION

(1962-1978)

by

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ABSTRACT

The school system in Italy is undergoing fast and radical changes which affect structure, administration and pedagogical methods. Many reforms are still in the phase of experimentation, but others, such as the parents' participation in the educational councils,have been already implemented. Modernization of school is a long and difficult process, because the values and attitudes of people cannot be switched within a few years simply by implementing reform laws. Besides, real implementation of reforms can only be accomplished by the teachers, whose preparation should thus have first priority. In Italy, compromise solutions have been adopted. The negative effects of reforms implemented without adequate advance planning may, however, be balanced by the great enthusiasm and spirit of initiative and adaptation on the side of both the teachers and the parents.

RESUME

Le système scolaire de l'Italie est en train de subir des changements rapides et radicaux qui affectent tant sa structure et son administration que ses méthodes pédagogiques. Un grand nombre de réformes sont encore à la phase de l'expérimentation tandis que d'autres, telle que la participation des parents aux conseils de l'éducation, ont déjà été mises en vigueur. La modernisation de l'école est un processus long et difficile, parce que les valeurs et les attitudes des gens ne peuvent être modifiées dans quelques années par la simple adoption de lois de réforme. De toutes façons, la véritable mise en vigueur de réformes ne peut se faire que par les professeurs, dont la formation professionnelle devrait recevoir la première priorité. En Italie, des solutions de compromis ont été adoptées. Les effets négatifs des réformes adoptées sans une planification préalable appropriée peuvent cependant être compensés par un grand enthousiasme et un esprit d'initiative et d'adaptation de la part et des professeurs et des parents.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PREFACE

During the economic boom of the fifties and sixties Italy experienced a profound liberalization from traditional values and stereotyped attitudes, as evidenced by increased political awareness, higher expectations from Government and widespread questioning of the hierarchical structures of family, school and society. This developed into open conflict of contradictory demands between totally opposed social groups when prosperity ended abruptly, and inflation, strikes and mass unemployment brought all social tensions to the foreground again.

In the sixties, under the pressure of changing political and social values, the traditionally conservative and class-oriented Italian system of education opened itself to a new educational philosophy. The new trend moved towards acceptance of the reality of modernization and recognition of the needs of all classes of the nation. Parental involvement in education was now considered important. Outright equalitarian models were sought as reaction against the existing discriminatory structures. Inevitably, along with the same sug-

gestions for basic change some radical, untenable and even ridiculous proposals were advanced. In such a climate, more under the impetus of enthusiasm and political pressure than of objective planning and research, the major reforms of the Italian school system were launched.

Scope and Purpose

The aim of this thesis is to explore and illustrate the major Italian school reforms of the last two decades, in their historical and social context. Though it is primarily concerned with the clarification of the general framework of the reform phenomena in progress, some critical observations on pedagogical, political and sociological implications are given, and questions are raised about the foreseeable and unforeseeable future developments. One of the central themes of the thesis is that neither progress in educational patterns nor any other form of social development can be understood without an appreciation of their crucial historical background.

Notwithstanding its concern with description of

the contemporary reforms, the thesis may also be regarded as an analysis of the major problems Italy is facing in its whole educational structure due to long neglect of the modern needs of the youth in a continually changing cultural, industrial and economic environment.

The ramifications of education extend into every facet of the life of a nation. Careful planning of reforms is therefore of the essence. In Italy this has not been always recognized or accepted by the political power at the stage of parliamentary debates on new laws. The result is that most of the reforms are poorly coordinated within the general educational context. This conflict between the legislative and the scientific approaches is fundamental to the problems of contemporary Italian education and is thus of particular significance to this study.

The conclusions indicate the major aspects on which a comprehensive reform should focus and tentative suggestions are made as to the way in which Italian society of the future could be best served.

Justification for the Study

There are two major reasons for this study. First, despite the significance of the Italian reforms of the 1960's and 1970's, very little attention has been given to them in the English speaking world; secondly, the author's longtime experience as a teacher in Italian public schools provides her with the knowledge and expertise to deal effectively with the issue.

Survey of Literature

As the author is Italian she has direct access to Italian literature, which offers an abundant and interesting selection of recently published works, a few of which are mentioned here. A basic historical background is provided by Dina Bertoni Jovine in La scuola italiana dal 1870 ai giorni nostri (1975) and some specific problems are dealt with in Ernesto Codignola's La nostra scuola (1970). Important for basic research is Filosofia e pedagogia nel loro sviluppo storico by E. Paolo Lamanna (3 vols., 1969). Some primary sources

dealing with the present school legislation and structure are found in the Government report La scuola in Italia (1976) and Saverio De Simone and Michele Salazar's book La nuova scuola italiana (1975) provides a section by section commentary of the "Decreti Delegati", while A.Laura Fadiga Zanatta in Il sistema scolastico italiano (1976) offers a good comprehensive introduction to all problems of the school of today. General information and abundant statistical data are offered by Luciano Benadusi and Aldo Gandiglio in La scuola in Italia: valutazioni e statistiche (1978), and by monthly and bimonthly periodicals of the Istituto Italiano di Statistica (ISTAT). Giovanni M.Bertin, who is the director of the Istituto di Scienze dell'Educazione, University of Bologna, has written Educazione al "cambiamento" (1976) and Educazione e alienazione (1973), dealing with the problems related to the educational changes. Interesting because of the diverse and sometimes opposite approaches to the problems of evaluation is Dalla scuola dei voti alla scuola della valutazione (1978) edited by Cesarina Checcacci with the contribution of the most influential Italian educators. A good account of the public school curriculum is Giuseppe Catalfamo's I programmi della scuola primaria (1972), while Bruna Bianchi Valentini discusses the present problems

and needs of the primary education in Problemi della scuola primaria (1978). Maria Amata Garitto in La riforma della scuola secondaria (1974), Guiducci and Miccoli in La scuola superiore in Italia (1976) and Redi Sante Di Pol in Una scuola da riformare (1977) examine some problems of secondary education. A considerable number of educational periodicals, first of which is Annali della pubblica istruzione, published by the Italian Ministry of Education, are available. Non government periodicals dealing with education include Scuola e città, La civiltà cattolica, Giornale italiano di psicologia, I diritti della scuola. Monthly bulletins and bimonthly reports of the Istituto Italiano di Statistica (ISTAT) provide all the necessary statistical data. Many of the written sources are in the author's private collection or are available at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Montreal.

Not many theses have been written in the English language on twentieth century Italian education. So far as can be determined only three are on record and available at the McGill University Library. They are: Thomas James Taylor, "Higher Education and National Goals in Italy", Indiana University (1965); George L. Williams, " A Study of Educational Policies in Selected Subject Areas in Italian Secondary Academic Schools during the Fascist Regime (1922-1943)", New York University (1966); Anthony

Scarangello, "Church and State in Italian Education", Columbia University (1966). All three theses analyze particular problems of traditional education and its related social implications. In Post Compulsory Education: A New Analysis in Western Europe (1974) Edmund J.King, Christine H.Moor and Jennifer A.Mundy deal with some problems of higher education in Italy. Finally, a number of articles on recent developments in Italian education may be found in such journals as the Comparative Education Review, Comparative Education, Western European Education and The Times Educational Supplement.

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CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF THE REFORMS

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In Italy, as everywhere in the "Old World", education was long considered an issue to be left to the clergy or to private initiative: Governments saw no need to get involved since it appeared that no real advantage could be gained from general educational progress. Things changed radically in the eighteenth and particularly in the nineteenth century when it became manifest, under the pressure of the economic liberalism, that the schooling of every member of the community had become a condition precedent for a more rational and thus economic exploitation of manpower. Suddenly compulsory public school became the much discussed issue and within a relatively short period, the Governments of Europe found themselves engaged in implementing important educational reforms, reorganizing the preexisting institutions, driving out the Jesuits and making education the State's responsibility. It became clear at that time that the problem of education was a national problem.

Education in Nineteenth Century Italy

One of the most serious problems Italy had to face when it became an independent nation in 1861 was to rescue its population from a state of great educational poverty. The feudal structure survived in Italy, especially in the South, longer than elsewhere. The Catholic Church had in Italy the seat of its temporal power and Italy was obviously the focal point of its religious influence. The policy of the Church and of the feudal Seigneurs combined on the issue that the common people had to be trained to religious and political subjugation. This aim was obtained by teaching catechism and discouraging any other form of education.

Education was available only to the members of two classes: the clergy and the aristocrats. The clergy had kept, through the "darkness" of the Middle Ages, a tradition of reading and writing, which developed into the great humanistic achievements of critical text-reading and restoration of the original scriptures. It became part of a priest's curriculum to be able to read and write, and this he could learn in the clergy's own educational institutions. This explains why most schools in

Italy, at the beginning of modern history, were denominational (Roman Catholic).

When the revolutionary equalitarian doctrines appeared on the European scene in the eighteenth century, they found a fertile ground in Italy. The new ideas shook the apathetic resignation of those whose fundamental rights and freedoms had been violated, over the millennia, by an authoritarian and cruel minority. They claimed that the Catholic Church was the great enemy of freedom, that the absolute rulers were the foes of economic welfare and social justice. It was thus easy for Italian aristocrats and bourgeois, turned into patriots and liberals, to scapegoat Church and foreign rulers[1] as the originators of all the evils and mischiefs.

Industrial growth asked for skilled workmen, making it a necessity for the governments to become engaged on

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[1] Italy had been for many centuries divided in independent States all of them ruled by a King or Duke of some foreign Dynasty. The Southern Regions developed into particularly close-minded territories and their cultural life and history took a course of its own. The Borbons ruled the South with old feudal laws in order to keep their subjects far from any contact with the European liberalism. For a detailed discussion of this matter see: Denis Mack Smith, Italy. A Modern History (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1959).

the issue of "public" education: the policy of keeping the peasant illiterate and ignorant was working now against the interests and needs of those who had so strongly asserted it in the past. Several, sometimes opposing forces and interests were deeply changing the ideas on the human, social, economic and political significance and necessity of general education. The clergy maintained the view that education should be under its control because of the obvious dangers of "free" education for the orthodox doctrines. This position was opposed by distinguished philosophers and educators of the time, such as Cuoco, Gioberti and Romagnosi. Thinkers of that calibre strongly supported public, universal, mandatory and uniform education. Vincenzo Cuoco (1770-1823) was the first to indicate that the national problem was an educational problem, the problem of the formation of a national confidence. His project for the structure of the public education of the Kingdom of Naples[2] was submitted in 1809 to the King Joachim Murat. The fall of Napoleon and the restauration of the Borbons in the Kingdom of Naples precluded any further discussion of the project, but it

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[2] "Progetto di decreto per l'ordinamento della pubblica istruzione nel Regno di Napoli", 1809.

survived as a model for future developments. In this project Cuoco had asserted that education ought to have been: (1) universal; (2) public, i.e., offered to all citizens by the State; (3) free so far as elementary education was concerned whereas secondary school and university might require payment; (4) uniform as far as curricula, textbooks, teaching methods and quality were concerned; and that (5) the criteria for teaching had to be fixed by the State. Vincenzo Gioberti (1801-1852) said that education at home might form the private man, but that public education was the only kind of education which forms the citizen, and this education could not be left to the denominational institutions. Gian Domenico Romagnosi (1761-1835), a patriot and jurist who actively participated to the movement for a new social and political identity of Italy, maintained that education was a right and a duty and that the Government had to develop the rules which were designed to give a national character to the educational policies.

The populace had not much time to think about education. Centuries of oppression had trained them to resigned acceptance of injustice as the natural companion of poverty. They knew that it was not right to ask for

the privileges reserved for the wealthy and powerful. They were under the impression that writing and reading would not help to make a living. Compulsory schooling was regarded as a useless oppression, good only to keep the youngsters away from work.

The partisans of the nationalist movement thought that knowledge at all social levels was needed to fight the absolute rulers of Italy. They opposed the denominational school because of its bias against the innovative doctrines and its partisan alliances with the established power. They realized that free education offered in public schools under Government responsibility, with teachers possibly selected among militants of the new liberal creed, could become the most effective vehicle to convey the spirit of Risorgimento to the upcoming generation. The word Risorgimento means "rebirth" or "revival" of the nation, and it stands for the nineteenth century movement for Italian unification which freed the Italian States from foreign domination. It became a rallying cry that helped to arouse the national consciousness of the Italian people[3]. The spirit of national independence brought

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[3] The classic interpretation (expressed in the writings of the philosopher Benedetto Croce) sees the Risorgimento as the triumph of liberalism, but more recent views criticize it as an aristocratic and bourgeois revolution that failed to include the masses.

rich and poor together: the patriotic enthusiasm helped overcome the barriers of the social classes. The old rules were discarded and the temporal power of the Church destroyed.

The King of Savoy, ruler of Piedmont, became in 1848 the political leader of the movement for unity. When he became the King of the new independent nation in 1861 he promised a democratic Bill of Rights, economic welfare, industrial development, colonial expansion, cultural advancement and national splendor. His promises with respect to educational advancement were based on the experiences gathered when he was still the King of Savoy. In the years 1848-1859 his cabinet, sensitive to modern liberal ideas, had developed an important set of rules which were designed to give a national character to the educational policies. These rules were eventually consolidated in two important pieces of legislation, the Boncompagni Act (October 4, 1848) and the Casati Act (November 13, 1859). These were the first Italian laws on public education and later came to form the basis for a national system of education. Educators of the succeeding decades attacked those laws as authoritarian and conventional. They had indeed become such in the new rapidly changing educational conceptions and environments; but this is the fate of all legal frameworks.

The Casati Act, this cornerstone of Italian school legislation and the only organic and comprehensive school act ever enacted in Italy, was retained by the new Kingdom of Italy[4]. It grew out of the Boncompagni Act which had introduced to Piedmont the French educational system of centralization of authority and had abolished many of the educational privileges of the clergy. The Casati Act continued the process of centralization and secularization of the school. Private educational institutions were permitted to continue their activity so long as they complied with the requirements of the new law. The Act includes 374 articles covering elementary, secondary and higher education, but it makes no provision for kindergarten, since at the time of the law's passage the notion of preschool education was not yet developed.

After the enactment of the Casati Act, the basic features of Italian education were thus as follows:

- The school became secular. All children had to be

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[4] The Casati Act, named after the then Minister of Public Education of the Kingdom of Piedmont, Count Gabrio Casati, is still the "common law" in the absence of amending statutory instruments. For a detailed discussion on this matter see: Nicola Daniele, Novissimo Digesto Italiano, v. "Scuola" (Torino: U.T.E.T., 1957).

admitted to public schools without regard to their parents' religious belief, and instruction in religion was no longer mandatory (Casati Act, sec. 315)[5].

- Elementary education had to be provided free by the town administrations (Casati Act, sec. 317).
- Elementary education became compulsory (Casati Act, sec. 326). A fine was imposed for those who disobeyed the law[6].
- Secondary education[7] was organized into three main channels, an eight-year Latin (or classical) high school (a five-year ginnasio and a three-year liceo), a six-year technical or vocational course and a six-year teacher training college (Casati

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[5] See also, General Regulations Oct.9, 1895 N. 623, sec. 3, and General Regulations Feb.6, 1908 N. 150, sec. 3).

[6] Coppino Law, July 15, 1877 N. 3968. This law, however, was continuously evaded.

[7] While the part of the Casati Act dealing with elementary education was extended to all Italian regions at the time of unification, the part dealing with secondary education was fully adopted in the country not earlier than 1906.

Act, sec. 188 and foll.). Only classical secondary education opened the doors to all faculties of university[8]. Some technical schools' diplomas permitted access to a few limited faculties.

- The curricula were defined in detail by the Ministry of Education[9].
- Employment of teachers for elementary school became the responsibility of the townships, the treatment of high school teachers became in part responsibility of the State, in part of the local organizations[10].

The majority of the 374 sections of the Casati Act dealt with administration, universities and classical

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[8] With respect to the higher education, the Casati Act provided for the abolition of small inefficient universities. The act also attempted to restrict universities' autonomy but failed because of resistance within the universities themselves.

[9] The Act was silent on teaching methods. Perhaps this is why during the years following the Act there were bitter debates over the issue of teaching methodsin the class room.

[10] The unjustified different treatment of teachers of the different types of school with respect to career,salary and fringe benefits and guarantee of employment led to great dissatisfaction. This was one of the factors which led to the transfer of responsibility and complet control of schools to the (central) Ministry of Education.

education, whereas the part devoted to the elementary (common-people) school was dealt with inadequately in the last 57 sections. Thus many critics of the time said that the Casati Act was a step backwards from the Austrian school laws that had been introduced some years before in Lombardy and Veneto, two Provinces which were under Austrian domination until national unity.

The Casati Act was also opposed by the philosophers and educators of the time because of its too "aristocratic" and thus discriminatory conceptions[11]. The Act laid strong emphasis on classical secondary education, without paying the necessary attention to the education in technical skills, a thing which the new nation needed urgently in order to foster its economic development. This, said the critics,was harmful to the nation's progress. The Act was structured according to the philosophical and political conception that only classical arts deserved a complete school system. The result was a strong bias for the "liberal" professions (lawyers, doctors, military officers and politicians) and an equally strong neglect for tech-

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[11] For a detailed discussion of this matter see: Dina Bertoni Jovine, La scuola italiana dal 1870 ai giorni nostri, 3rd ed. (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1975) p. 14 and foll.

nical skills which, on the contrary, should have been, according to everyone interested in the political and economical implications of modern education, the most important and urgent matter to be considered by the school reformers. The politicians of the time were unable to understand the message of the educators and economists, to think ahead of their time and to concentrate on the encouragement of technical skills. The liberal ideas of Risorgimento had not changed the class-character of the nation's population. They had only extended some privileges to all social classes.

Difficult socio-pedagogical problems had to be dealt with in the years following the implementation of the Casati Act. Poverty, particularly in the Southern Provinces, infant labour, insufficient schools and a lack of cooperation by the municipalities were the main reasons why the law on compulsory education was often disobeyed. The minimum requirement of the law was that every elementary school had to provide for grades one and two[12]. But

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[12] The first two-year cycle of elementary education was brought to three in 1895, thus compulsory education became of five years in towns with population over 4,000.A law of 1904 provided new guidelines for compulsory education: elementary school was reduced to four years for those children who continued in secondary school, while there was the addition of a sixth year for those who had no plans or intention to continue studies after compulsory school.

in towns with a population exceeding 4,000, the schools had to provide for grades one to four. Frequently townships evaded the law arguing that it was too expensive to implement. Or they used schools for other purposes[13]. Besides, the young nation needed a variety of things at the same time; the alphabet alone could not work the miracle. Pasquale Villari, an historian of the time, reported the workers' attitude towards education as follows:

> What shall a man do with the alphabet if he lacks air and light?...If you give him education, if you break the bread of science for him, as we say nowadays, he will answer as he answered me: since you leave me in my misery, you may as well leave me in my ignorance. [14]
> (Author's translation)

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[13] This was another reason for the movement towards nationalization of schools, which ended in takeover of control over elementary school by the Ministry of Education to some extent in 1911 and completely in 1933. See also supra note 12.

[14] "La scuola e la questione sociale" in Nuova Antologia, November 1872, passim. Animated reactions followed this essay. The review Il progresso educativo, Dec.1872-Jan.1873, remarked that even if it was not possible to help people out of misery, it should not have been left in ignorance. "There is no need for books when we die for hunger" was the cry heard in Acerra, a little town near Naples, when the school library was destroyed by the starving population. Newspapers of the time commented: "If economic conditions are not dealt with first, education has no chance of success. At the first blow of protest the castle of cards built by educators will fall altogether". See further references in Bertoni Jovine, La scuola italiana, p. 17 et seq.

The position of the public school was further weakened and discredited by an impressive body of denominational private schools. Contrary to the intention of the fathers of the Casati Act, and thanks to the general climate of confusion which reigned in public schools, the private institutions increased rather than disappeared. They offered an excellent opportunity to divert the wealthy clientele, thus fostering again discrimination and class-consciousness.

Though some enlightened men of the time had asked for immediate action to keep school advancement apace with democratic progress, most educators and philosophers feared the danger of social disorders[15] which, as they foresaw, could not possibly be avoided if the masses were allowed to remove the obstacles to their participation in the making of the new social structures. This led to the development of a trend which aimed to confine education to its formal pedagogical domain, precluding all opportunities of interrelationship with the social context. This was obviously a regrettable movement which would limit the global educational and integrative functions

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[15]See for further information: Bertoni Jovine, La scuola in Italia, p. 94, 95.

of the school[16].

When national unity was proclaimed, just two years after the passage of the Casati Act, illiteracy was widespread. Overall, it ranged as high as 78%, with regional peaks up to 90% in the South. Furthermore, except for minor experiments in some large cities, nothing had been done in the field of adult education. On the contrary, at the end of the century the evening schools which had been established in the North of Italy were closed because they were said to induce workers' rebellions. Mandatory school attendance was reduced and internal rivalries, financial instability and inadequate facilities permitted the townships to neglect their obligations with respect to the educational mandate. In sum, towards the end of the century, about 50% of the whole population was left with no adequate schooling, compulsory education was restricted to four years, though even this regulation was frequently circumvented, kindergartens were almost nonexistent, curricula were confused, and teachers were insufficiently prepared[17].

The professional schools for teachers (scuola norma-

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[16] Bertoni Jovine, La scuola in Italia, p. 96.

[17] Ibid, p. 96 et seq.

le or istituto magistrale) had two branches: rural teachers' schools (scuola magistrale rurale) and general teachers' institutes (scuola magistrale normale). In both, the instruction and training of teachers were inadequate[18]. To cure this state of affairs special training courses were instituted in 1866 and re-introduced in 1876, and the cultural, professional and political preparation of the teachers was fostered by conferences and through pedagogical journals[19]. The majority of teachers, however, did not care about their further education and professional updating. Moreover, they were trained to obey authority and they did not, as a rule, use their intellect for independent judgment and action. Bribes and nepotism made things worse.

Against this depressing background a Congress of Educators held in Turin in 1898 cast a new light upon the future of Italian education[20]. The Congress recommended

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[18] Pietro Siciliani, Note in Archivio di Pedagogia, 1881, as quoted by Bertoni Jovine, La scuola in Italia, p. 80.

[19] Bertoni Jovine, La scuola in Italia, p. 91, 92.

[20] The doctor and educator Maria Montessori participated to that Congress.

that the schools be infused with a renovated spirit of democracy. Among the topics for discussion were: freedom of education and limits to State interference, new school structures, compulsory grammar school to be extended to five years,and the problem of poor educational progress in Italy. However, a few years later, when the 1904 Convention of Teachers adopted a resolution that the Federation of School Teachers and its local sections take active part in the political life and fight for democracy, there was a unanimous negative reaction on the part of the Conservatives. They said that the teacher had no right to participate in the political life of the nation. "If he does not understand and accept this he had better abandon the school. It would be indeed the bankruptcy of the educational system..."[21]. The Conservatives asked themselves how honest parents could entrust their children to such revolutionary teachers.

The positivist philosopher and educator Aristide Gabelli (1830-1891) tried to show a way out of the intricacies and confusion. Gabelli was a well known scholar, who studied at the University of Vienna and became a teacher and professor in Milan, Florence and Rome and eventually a member of the Italian Parliament. He

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[21] Bertoni Jovine, La scuola in Italia, p. 137.

thought that the school ought to be "positive", meaning that it ought to meet the true needs of the Italian people in this new period of the country's national existence. Unity had been achieved. The romantic spirit which had pervaded the curricula made at the time "when the fatherland was only in our dreams"[22] had now to be discarded. According to this educator, it was time to forget the great ideals which were actually beyond reach, and to look at the practical problems of life. "If we want to be modern", he said, "we must be modern in everything. A people, like an individual, can do as much as it knows"[23]. Gabelli fought with great determination against illiteracy and the other typically Italian weaknesses of the time: rhetoric, lack of discipline and superficiality. He had recognized that the best method of education was to encourage a pupil's critical analysis, and understood that the school of the time could not fulfill this task. In his celebrated essay on the method of teaching[24], he drew the following picture

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[22] Quoted by Paolo E. Lamanna in Filosofia e Pedagogia nel loro sviluppo storico, 3 Vols.(Firenze Le Monnier Editore, 1953), Vol. III, p. 125.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Aristide Gabelli, Metodo di insegnamento nelle scuole elementari (Torino: Paravia Editore, 1880).

of Italian teachers. He said that teachers were those wise men who hotly disputed whether a dead fish weighs more than a live one or vice versa, until a peasant came along, weighed the fish alive and dead and showed that the weight was always the same. This aphorism stands for the proposition that children should be trained to the attitude that beliefs are to be accepted and acted upon only if they first have been confirmed by actual experience. They should learn to question claims of authority and abstract theoretical reasoning as source of reliable belief. The direct apprehension of self-evident truth, deductive reasoning and intellectual intuition should prevail over unsupported authority.

Gabelli's preface to the curricula for elementary school, which he submitted in 1880, was inspired by his "experimental" method. He met fierce resistance from the conservative opposition which argued that his curricula of the elementary (popular) schools were too sophisticated and detailed and that a simple basic knowledge was more than enough for the working class. The conservatives' pedagogical argument was that science means nothing to children, their practical argument was that science is useless for children who will eventually do work on the fields or in the factories[25].

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[25] The most frequent debated issue was certainly the fear that "mass" education would arm the lower classes of society against the privileged establishment.

Nevertheless Gabelli's theories were accepted. His curricula became law in 1888. Even though shortly after Gabelli's death in 1891 they were substantially amended and modified, they were for long time the basis of the Italian elementary school curricula.

Education in Twentieth Century Italy

At the beginning of the twentieth century a new concept of education found its way into pedagogical thinking. This was no longer based on Positivism but rather was influenced by Neo-Idealism. In Italy, Neo-Idealism (or Neo-Hegelianism) took the form of a spiritualistic reaction to the spread of Positivism that had followed upon the unification of Italy. This reaction developed into two directions: that of the "actualism" of Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944) and that of the "historicism" of Benedetto Croce (1866-1952). These were two scholars who divided the realm of philosophy between themselves and occupied it for four decades. Gentile's Idealist philosophy became naturally allied with educational concerns, for he denied the existence of individual minds

and of any distinction between theory and practice, subject and object, past and present. According to him, all of these categories exist only in the mind; they are merely mental constructs. Mind is the Absolute, and education is the process of revelation of the Absolute. The goal of education is the mind's complete consciousness of itself. Thus, education is always self-education and is identical with philosophizing. Viewing the act of thinking as the only real act, Gentile considered all thought as the actualization of the idea. Hence he called his system "Actual Idealism".

Gentile's highly theoretical concepts found a solid practical adapatation in the famous book, Lezioni di didattica[26], published in 1912 by Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice, an educator of outstanding scientific achievement and moral standing, who had been a former student of Gentile. This book focused with rare lucidity on the fundamental aspects of the educational relationship between teachers and students. Sociology and psychology - which pure Idealism had repudiated - were brought back by Lombardo-Radice as vital components of a fully-developed dynamic

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[26] i.e., Didactical Lectures, intended as a guideline for elementary teachers.

concept of education. Family, society, teachers, school and the "organization" of culture were, in this author's opinion, all components of the teaching process, conceived not as isolated activity but as the result of many facts of highly relevant individual value.

The Lezioni di didattica shows how principles can become reality. The book endeavours to show that a method is good if it induces a child to think and work, that a lesson is good if its result is personal discovery of knowledge by the child, that a technique is good if it develops originally from the work assigned, that discipline is good so long as it is not passive obedience. The educator guides the teacher through his working day and discovers, for him and with him, the value of each act of participation and shows him how the child's mind and knowledge develop. According to Lombardo-Radice, education means emancipation to freedom and development of humanity arising from free consent of the members of society to accept authority. Autonomy and freedom of the pupil form the core of his doctrine.

It was illusory to think that a nation, with all the social, economic and political problems as Italy had

at that time could ever hope to achieve such an ideal educational mandate. This was clearly demonstrated in the early twenties, when the Fascist party took control of the Government. Fascism was a political creed which placed the nation or race at the center of life and history, disregarding the individual and his rights. According to Benedetto Croce, under Fascism egoism displaced civic virtue, rhetoric dislodged poetry and truth, and the pretentious gesture replaced authentic action. Fascism naturally tried to proselytize its authoritarian doctrines among the youngster. Education became thus an important tool for the advancement of Fascist ideology. To achieve this end the party called Gentile to head the Ministry of Education. This move was probably intended to induce reliance and confidence in the party's educational programs. Gentile was probably too honest and naive to realize that he was being used as a puppet by Benito Mussolini (1883-1945), the Fascist party leader from 1922 to 1944. He believed that Fascism could not be so bad if it supported his educational reform theories. How wrong he was became evident when the "Gentile" school reform Bill was tabled for approval in 1923.

The Bill conceived of education as self-education, the child's mind being perceived in a state of continuous development and the relationship between teacher and pupil as purely intellectual communication. The character of the school, according to Gentile's guidelines, was "formation" of the pupil's means of knowledge. Actual quantity of knowledge and command of information was a secondary issue. The need to develop individual capacities through activity ranked at the first place. Gentile's theories provided the most modern and theoretically balanced curriculum Italy had had thus far. But in practice the reform turned out to be disastrous because it effectively abolished the existing structures which had survided by patchwork and continuous adaptations, without providing for appropriate substitutions.

The Bill prolonged compulsory education to eight years through the creation of a three year middle school programme intended as a continuation of elementary education. But this compulsory middle school was not provided on a completely free basis and it kept the unwholesome separation in the three traditional branches which were a mirror image of the Italian social components of the

time: the Latin branch for the aristocrats, the commercial branch for the lower bourgeoisie and the traders, and the technical branch for the children of the workers.

With respect to upper secondary education, not only did Gentile leave unchanged the separation between classical studies leading to university and instruction in technical skills leading to a diploma, but his reform resulted in total exclusion of university access for students of some branches of the technical school who had enjoyed university admittance before[27].

Gentile thought that a rigorous system of checks was needed to measure the students' progress. Thus he introduced the so-called "state" exams for the passage from elementary to Latin middle school, from the latter to ginnasio, from this to liceo, and at termination of liceo for obtainment of the general leaving certificate (maturità classica, maturità scientifica)[28]. The Bill

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[27] It is submitted that this was not intentional, but was due to an oversight.

[28] This system of examination survived after the fall of Fascism and was changed only some years ago.

further reduced the learning opportunities of a great number of middle and lower class children and it became highly unpopular by reason of its unjust methods of selection.

Gentile's Education Act of 1923 left all unsatisfied: the poor, because of the persistent impediments to higher education due to the prohibitively expensive fees and the total absence of Government aid; the wealthy and bourgeois because of the high standards of performance required by the new curricula which threatened to abolish the magic of an established system which had allowed them to be pushed and kicked through all the grades until they obtained the traditional university degree[29].

Gentile eventually left the Ministry of Education in July 1924. His successor, who was not an educator but merely a man of the Fascist party, followed his superiors' orders and accepted all suggestions for amendments. The Bill was thus substantially changed and became a collection of isolated provisions and regulations with no structural unity at all. The Lateran Treaty of

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[29] Giuliano Balbino, La politica scolastica del Governo Nazionale (Milano: Ed. Scolastiche, 1924) p. 60.

1929[30] jeopardized further Gentile's curricula by the uncoordinated reintroduction of mandatory courses of religion[31]. Over the years things worsened with the increase of Mussolini's self-delusion. The process was completed by the School Charter of 1939 which declared that "in the Fascist order, school-age and political-age coincide. School, GIL (Gioventù Italiana del Littorio) and GUF (Gruppo Universitario Fascista) form together an unitary instrument of Fascist education"[32].

At the end of World War II the organization of the educational system was not changed appreciably. However, serious attempts were made to democratize the spirit and objectives of Italian education. During the period of Allied military occupation[33], the interim "corrected" curricula were prepared according to the suggestion and under the control of the American educator

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[30] The Lateran Treaty, signed on Feb. 11, 1929 (and confirmed by the Italian Constitution of 1948), established the State of the Vatican as an independent and sovereign State. The Roman Catholic religion was affirmed as the only official religion of Italy.

[31] Abolished by the Casati Act, as amended.

[32] Anthony A. Scarangello, Progress and Trends in Italian Education (Studies in Comparative Education, Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1964).

[33] Decreto Luogotenenziale, May 24, 1945.

Carleton W.Washburne. The preamble of these curricula drawn up in 1945 stated that they aimed at physical and intellectual development of the children, respecting individual aptitudes, social behavior and solidarity among pupils. Suggestions for parents' participation were also made but were not pursued further. These emergency curricula which covered all levels and grades were not a real reform. They dealt with pressing needs. Textbooks were changed, Fascist"cultural values"were removed and the Ministry of Education issued a number of bulletins and circulars with the intent of changing the attitude of educators, especially with respect to their relationship to pupils and the content of lectures. Those educators who were still faithful to the past regime were dismissed.

This phase, characterized by the imposition of external ideas and values, came to a halt in 1955 when the new "modernized" curricula for elementary schools were implemented. These curricula were based on the three pedagogical principles of interest, activity and individualized teaching. The unit of measure was again the pupil. The generalized curricula were discarded because they were only pertinent to collective acquisi-

tion of knowledge. Elementary school was now split into two "cycles"[34], each with a distinct pedagogical approach. The first cycle covered two grades, and the second three. Practical guidelines were provided in order to assist teachers in the implementation of their task.

The new 1955 curricula were optimistically labelled "modern". However all the work done until the early sixties, turned out to be isolated and piecemeal changes of an old fabric. Adjustments to the curricula of the classical upper secondary school and of the teacher's training college made in 1952 and the 1961 amendments to the curricula of the technical institutes were of this rather haphazard expedient kind. What was needed was a completely fresh approach in consideration of the radical changes of the post-war socio-economic and political Italian structure.

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[34] See also, Law Dec. 24, 1957 N. 1274.

CHAPTER II

STRUCTURAL REFORMS

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The Constitution of the Italian Republic of January 1, 1948 established that education was to be free and compulsory for at least eight years and that upper secondary and university education should be made accessible, by way of scholarships and other allowances, to poor but deserving students. In the years following the Second World War the democratic development of the country demanded an educational system in which the school had to promote social participation in school administration and to favor peer-group interrelationship. At the same time, industry asked for greater emphasis on vocational curricula. Thus, the school was required to convey a blend of general culture and technical skill in order to prepare the students for working life. The advocates of the "new" Italian school outspokenly maintained that the educational system should be structured in a way conducive to equalization of opportunities, elimination of discriminating methods of selection and logical integration of academic and vocational curricula. Families re-

quired more support, ranging from assistance at the nursery level up to financial help for secondary and university students and, inspired by the American model, direct participation of the parents in the affairs of the school was sought. Such commendable proposals and suggestions were easier to proclaim than to implement. In the post-war years up to the time of writing only scattered reforms without adequate coordination within the existing obsolete structure were achieved.

Over the years, from 1956, the successive Ministers of Education announced ambitious plans of reform[1]. Most either died on the order papers due to the fast and continuous changes of legislatures, or were substantially changed at the committee levels,and so the much needed structural reform was constantly deferred. A true structural reform ought to be conceived as a basic change of the entire school system in order to provide continuity and uniformity. It should also provide a variety of flexible patterns which would enable the school to meet the demand and needs of the youth.

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[1] See Annali della Pubblica Istruzione , quarterly, from the first issue in 1955.

In order to understand the difficulties which the reformers faced at all levels, it is important to know how the Italian school was structured and organized.

After World War II, the structure of the Italian school system was as follows:

- Two years of preschool, private or denominational, not compulsory;
- Five years of elementary school, compulsory and equal to everyone;
- Three years of middle school, divided into three branches, the humanistic, the technical and the vocational middle school, compulsory only on the paper, and allowing for easy evasion;
- Five years (or less) of upper secondary school, open only to students coming from the humanistic (Latin) middle school, with a humanistic, a scientific, a technical and a vocational branch and different leaving certificates and requirements for admittance to university.

Great emphasis has always been placed on keeping a neat distinction among the three main types of school, with respect to clientele, educational mandate and concepts of

intellectual capacity of the students. Admittance to the "humanistic branch" was subject to an examination at a very early stage (end of the elementary school). If pupils failed this exam or did not take it, they had, as a general rule, no chance to attain higher education, because only the humanistic branch opened the doors to university.

It is clear that this structure was rigid and incapable of admitting routine horizontal interchanges. Thus, criticisms of the system concentrated on the following issues:

a. The "three-channel" system (humanistic-technical-vocational) was simply a reproduction of the old class society, a social structure which the recent democratic Constitution of the young Italian Republic had condemned as unsuitable within its new political image as a "Democratic Republic based on the work of the people"[2]. The traditional school system provided an educational mandate for

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[2] The Constitution, published in G.U. N.298 of Dec. 17, 1947, in force as of Jan. 1, 1948: Art. 1. See also Art. 3 ("All citizens are equal before the law...").

each social class but this was no longer appropriate. Practical and technical education were given in technical and vocational secondary school to children of the middle class and theoretical education with full possibility of university access was given in humanistic or scientific secondary school. The theory of three kinds of skill was no longer justified since technology and science required all children to be educated in practical and theoretical matters at the same time. The system did not sufficiently develop the skills and capacities of all children.

b. The restrictions imposed by the selective channelling with no possibility of horizontal interchange was indefensible. The passage from elementary school to the higher levels was made at a time and was subject to examinations which were improper, inadequate and unfair with respect to the age of the children.

c. Separation of children in three different school channels made social coeducation and integration impossible. The class-concept was maintained and social contacts between classes were hindered.

The Minister of Education tried to respond to this state of affairs with three important new Bills. The first, the Comprehensive (Unified) Middle School Act of 1962, was intended to abolish the three different channels at the middle school level; the second, the Preschool Act of 1968, was concerned with the introduction of State Preschool; the third, the Liberalization of the Access to the University Act of 1969 opened access to university to all students who held an upper secondary school diploma. These actions, however, were inadequate to meet the demands. Italy needed a general plan of coordinated reforms, rather than isolated innovations.

The 1962 Bill, for example, had, as a side-effect of its lack of coordination with upper secondary school, a widening of the gap in knowledge and preparation between the two orders of schools. Students coming from middle school had now a much harder time to catch up with the highly demanding curricula requirements of upper secondary school. The next development was, of course, dissatisfaction and, from time to time, outbreaks of violence. Eventually the standards of upper secondary school had to be lowered in order to accomodate

the new less skilled and less knowledgeable clientele. In the end-effect, the 1962 reform resulted in an important fall of quality, which was most probably the last thing the reformers wanted to obtain. On the other side, the indiscriminate opening of university, without consideration for the deteriorated general standards of upper secondary school and without taking into account marks and curricula, had, as its most evident result, the precipitation of the universities, which were already in a critical situation, into a complete state of chaos.

These developments and reforms of the school structures will be considered in the following pages, not in their strict chronological sequence, but rather proceeding organically from the lowest to the highest level of schooling.

The Preschool Act of 1968

One of the noteworthy trends of the structural reform efforts of the sixties was an increasing attention to preschool education. To some extent this was a response

to the socioeconomic conditions that required the entrance of women into the labor force, but it was also the effect of research findings and public statements made by educators and specialists asking for a wholly new conception of preschool instruction.

Kindergarten (asilo, scuola materna) used to be controlled exclusively by private organizations and local charitable or municipal institutions. This situation was reminiscent of the traditional view that kindergarten was merely a place providing for social aid. In the late 1820s a Roman Catholic father, Ferrante Aporti (1791-1858), while working to establish elementary schools, became dissatisfied with the progress made by his pupils and was led to investigate the conditions under which their preschool years had been passed. After having done studies and research in the field of preschool education, he established Italy's first infant school in Cremona in 1827 and devised an educational plan that aimed at a harmonious combination of moral, intellectual and physical education[3].Such modern and equilibrate aims degenerated immediately,either because of poorly prepared "teachers"

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[3] According to Ferrante Aporti manual work, at all educational ages, was to give education a certain concreteness and rationality, making it a process of pupil involvement.

or because of lack of understanding for the children's real needs. Preschool institutions then became a service of day-care and play centres with the primary function of mere custody for children of working mothers or for children who could not otherwise be cared for at home. The Casati Act of 1859 had completely ignored preschool education. In the early 1920s Gentile and other educators maintained that kindergartens were of important preparatory educational value, but nothing was done at the time and for long afterwards to give kindergartens the pedagogical status which they deserved.

Approximately 350,000 children attended kindergartens at the beginning of the 20th century[4]. In the late twenties kindergarten attendance rose to 750,000. The increase was the effect of new needs of a society which was becoming more and more industrialized. This figure stood practically without substantial variation until the end of World War II. Then there was a steady increase until 1968 when the Preschool Act 1968 c. 444 introducing

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[4] Italian population was about 32,000,000 in 1901, 38,000,000 in 1921, 42,900,000 in 1936, 47,500,000 in 1951, 50,600,000 in 1961 and 54,000,000 in 1971.

State kindergartens was passed[5]. The plan for a State kindergarten may be traced back to the first Center-Left Government[6] in 1962. It was taken up again in 1963 by the Commission to Investigate the State and Development of the School (composed of fifteen Members of Parliament drawn from all parties and fifteen experts) and, after being reworked several times, reached the point of being approved by the Chamber of Deputies in December 1965.

The legislation did not have easy passage. The Catholic world had always maintained that kindergarten education belonged to the family and had to be infused with traditional ethical and religious values and, further, that at this level one could not speak of "school" but simply of activities mainly of a socializing kind. These activities could be provided best by voluntary associations under the control of the Church. A group of Deputies from the majority mostly Christian Democrats, voted against

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[5] At this time kindergarten children were about 1,500,000. See, Luciano Benadusi and Aldo Gandiglio, La scuola in Italia: valutazioni e statistiche (Firenze: La nuova Italia, 1978).

[6] See Scuola e città, monthly, N. 2-3 and 12, 1965 with articles, opinions and interviews on various problems of childhood education and documents.

the Government's plan, considering it unacceptable "for reasons of conscience". Three more years of efforts were necessary in order to obtain the enactment of the plan in 1968. The denominational institutions kept opposing it, remaining firm on their concept that kindergarten children should be left with their toys and should not be bothered with school education. However, the real point of conflict was rather the possibility that the teaching personnel of future State infant schools would be drawn from among the elementary teachers. This would have meant breaking the monopoly in the training of kindergarten teachers, until then a preserve of the all-female scuole magistrali operated exclusively by religious groups.

State preschool nevertheless quickly met the favor of the public and its clientele increased rapidly in the following decade, especially in the Southern Regions. Thus in 1977, about 77% of all children of preschool age attended kindergarten (State and private institutions). The steady increase of attendance in State run kindergartens was partly the result of a greater demand, partly the effect of growing confidence in the State kindergartens which, after all, were available at no fee. Apart from the matter of cost, the different pedagogical approach in State kindergarten undoubtedly had its influence on the progressive preference for State as opposed to private institutions.

Table 1: Children in Preschool from 1968 to 1977

Year	State School	Private School
1968-69	68,000	1,435,000
1969-70	89,000	1,470,000
1970-71	93,000	1,494,000
1971-72	191,000	1,429,000
1972-73	298,000	1,388,000
1973-74	365,000	1,369,000
1974-75	434,000	1,334,000
1975-76	502,000	1,188,000
1976-77	575,000	1,214,000

* Source: ISTAT

Great efforts were made to provide the new State preschool with adequate facilities and supply them with teachers in sufficient number to meet their organizational and pedagogical requirements. The ratio of children to teachers and assistants remained almost stable, notwithstanding the significant increase of children attending kindergarten. The number of children per class was also approximately the same in 1975-76 as it had been in 1968, although it fluctuated over the period. These developments are shown in the Table 2.

Table 2 Number of Schools, Classes, Teachers and Children in State run Preschools from 1968 to 1976*

Year	Schools	Classes	Teachers	Assistants	t..& a. per cl.	Children per cl.	Children per t.& a
1968-69	1865	2701	2978	1920	1.81	25.3	14.0
1969-70	2064	3060	3381	2128	1.80	29.2	16.2
1970-71	3006	4941	5518	3090	1.74	27.1	15.5
1971-72	4405	7803	8933	4628	1.74	24.5	14.1
1972-73	5641	10966	12733	6278	1.73	26.3	15.2
1973-74	7147	14069	16356	7822	1.72	26.0	15.1
1974-75	8372	17043	19936	9300	1.72	25.4	14.8
1975-76	9596	20053	23528	10815	1.71	25.8	15.1

* Sources: Ministry of Education data as reported in Benadusi, La scuola in Italia

Despite its fundamental innovative value, Law 1968 c.444 could aim only at modest goals because of the poor financial support available for this peripherical issue of the Italian educational structure. In effect,what it obtained was a limited result. The wording of the Act itself made this almost inevitable. The character of the Italian State preschool is ambiguous as is shown clearly by the preamble of the law, in its Art. 1, where it is said that the new type of school aims at "assistance" for the family and at "school preparation" of the children. This wording was chosen because of the impossibility of reaching an agreement on character and purposes of the school: the Christian Democrats had been adamant in their concept that State preschool should have the prevailing function of helping the mothers and the children, the Communists and Liberals saw in preschool exclusively an educational institution. The real reason for this bitter fight on the nature of preschool was,however,not so much the mere educational and sociological issue: it was rather a subtle debate on the construction of two sections of the Italian Constitution, namely sec. 31(2) which provides for the protection of the youth generally, and for the support to institutions aiming at that end; and sec. 33(3) which pro-

vides that private persons have the right to run schools and educational institutes provided there is no charge for the State ("senza oneri per lo Stato"). The Communists feared that if the preschool were characterized under the heading "assistance to families" thus falling under sec. 31 Constitution, this would have opened the doors to State financing for all preschools which were actually established under the authority of sec. 31 Const. The Christian Democrats on the other hand were concerned not to accept the restrictive construction of the sentence "without charge for the State", of sec. 33(3) Const. The basic reason for all this was that the party of the majority wanted to protect the monopolistic position of religious kindergartens, which the Consiglio Superiore of the Ministry of Education still described in 1958 as a school where the "religious inspiration as is received from the catholic tradition must guide and enlighten the pupil"[7]. The opposition wanted to curb direct and disguised State financing of such denominational institu-

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[7] Anna Laura Fadiga-Zanatta, Il sistema scolastico Italiano, (Bologna: Ed. Il Mulino, 1976), p. 37.

tions. The opposition was well aware that there was little chance to exert its influence at the preschool level so long as preschool was under control of Catholicism.

For the outside world, however, the fight was centered on the pedagogic issue of early education as opposed to poor families assistance, and on the sociological question of cultural integration in tender age as opposed to the institution of "ghettos" for the most deprived families.

Financing of the State preschool was inadequate teachers, premises and teaching material were inadequate everywhere. The Law 1968 c. 444 was openly accused of having fostered private interests. The Communists, Socialists and Unions tried on many occasions to set aside the most negative effects of this law[8]. They submitted several Bills suggesting that State preschool should be made available to all children, that the curricula should clearly be set and be mandatory, that the preschool should be under the responsibility of the town administration, with supervising authority of the Regional Government, that the families should participate in the government of the schools, that all private pre-

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[8] Fadiga-Zanatta, Sistema scolastico, p. 44.

schools should be transformed eventually into public ones, that mandatory schooling should commence at the age of five.

None of these Bills has been adopted at time of writing (February 1980). But things are slowly adjusting themselves. To face the new competition, religious kindergartens had to be modernized, State preschools had to become attractive for the general public. These efforts are still in the making. The end-result will probably be that both the public and the private preschool will survive. But State control of private preschool is likely to increase substantially.

The Comprehensive Middle School Act 1962 and Other Elementary and Middle School Reforms

Until 1877 compulsory attendance to school was restriced to the first two classes; with Law of July 15, 1877 the classes became three; with Law n. 4 of July 8, 1904 the classes were six; with the Act of December 31, 1923 the classes were eight. Nevertheless, until 1962 the duty to send children to school up to the age of fourteen could be complied with by having them sit in

the last available class of elementary school until they reached the prescribed age[9]. This was a simple way of complying with the letter of the law while avoiding its spirit. Parents and small local enterprises liked it because it allowed easy possibility of escape from prosecution,but it meant that children were denied opportunity for secondary education. Indeed, youngsters were frequently sent to work rather than to school. This was changed with the Comprehensive (Unified) Middle School Act 1962 c. 1859 (Scuola Media Unica).

In the post-war years much attention had been devoted to the lower secondary school whose tripartite subdivision was no longer accepted. Many educators believed that it was unfair to ask eleven year-old school children to make a choice between institutions which would allow a full educational curriculum and those institutions leading to early employment. This bias led eventually to the Law June 9,1961 n. 478 regarding the abolition of admission exams, and to the enactment of 1962 which brought about the unification of all middle schools,

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[9] This state of affairs was favored by the fact that in little hamlets there were no middle schools.

and other plans for the creation of after-school sections (doposcuola), special class sections (classi differenziali), the substantial increase of existing and the introduction of various new types of school assistance. Another enactment of 1971 established that middle schools could, where necessary, be set up in communities with fewer than 3,000 inhabitants.

All these facilities were intended for a new middle school which could give a general opportunity for personal growth to everyone. However, the advent of a single middle school was neither quick nor easy. In a vast complex of reorganization efforts a commission was nominated in 1947. It proposed, after more than two years of work, a lower secondary school divided into three sections (classical, technical and normal), but before these proposals could be discussed in Parliament, the Government fell and the proposal was shelved. Another commission appointed in 1954 proposed, two years later a new middle school of three years duration, single and optional, flanked by a post-elementary or complementary track. This "track" idea obviously caused violent dissension and the work could not proceed until a group of Communist senators proposed a middle school which would be a second phase of compulsory instruction from six to fourteen years of age - a

single school without Latin but with emphasis on the scientific curriculum. This proposal of the opposition obliged the Government to take action. Minister Medici in 1959 proposed a middle school of four distinct sections, but this was vetoed by the Consiglio Superiore of the Public Instruction, so that the Government was forced to substantially change its proposals. The next Minister Bosco added further modifications and in the years 1960-1961 a plan providing for one single school in which Latin was to be optional was tried experimentally. It was proposed that later other subjects were to be optional. No curriculum in the middle school would preclude the possibility of access to further training. The Government's plan encountered some difficulties in the Chamber of Deputies, because of the Socialists' demand of a middle school for all, not a mere single school without Latin. The Socialists were not interested in debating the character of the curriculum, but rather in the establishment of a modern school, free and functional for all. A compromise was agreed upon: the Socialists obtained the development of after school sections (doposcuola) for children of working mothers and other educational facilities for the less favoured children, the Christian Democrats gained the retention of Latin as an optional course

in the last grade of the middle school. Access to successive secondary schools was open to all. Only those who proceded with the liceo classico had to pass a Latin examination.

Though in the following years there have been problems connected with programmes and hours of instruction, division of subject matter among the teachers, the standards of grading and the ability of the newly trained teachers coming from the different middle schools, it was unanimously recognized that the new school has been successful quantitatively. It is also recognized that the law of 1962 represents the effective realization of compulsory education to age fourteen, by providing a school for students from eleven to fourteen years of age, which is compulsory, free and non-discriminatory.

It is interesting at this point to go through the available data concerning the situation of school attendance at present and in the past decades. Statistical data are not easily available for the years before 1950. The figures are, however, indicative of the disregard of the law on the turn of the century: in fact, less than 50% of all children in the compulsory education age bracket attended school. The situation improved significantly under Fascism. The improvement was probably due first

to the general and worldwide trend for a better consciousness toward education at all levels of the population and, secondly to the emphasis laid upon education by the dictatorial fascist regime in order to achieve its political goals. Things changed substantially in post-war Italy. In the 1960s attendance reached a rate of over 90%, a standard which could be kept (and even slightly improved) over the following two decades, although the number of children in age of compulsory education increased between 1962 and 1977 by over 26% (from 6,000,000 children in 1962 to 7,600,000 in 1977). The following Table 3 shows the increase of number and percentage of children attending compulsory school in Italy from 1871 to 1977.

There are still 7% of children in school age who escape the statistical check, but this does not mean that they remain illiterate. Frequently they are enrolled in full private or foreign schools whose data do not appear in information on State schools and officially recognized private schools.

Table 3: Children attending compulsory school from 1871 to 1977 and percentage with respect to population in age 6 - 14 years *

Year	Elementary School		Middle School[b]	Total: elementary plus middle school	
	Attending children	%[a]	Attending children	Attending children	%[a]
1871-72	1,716,000	38.5			
1881-82	2,307,000	44.7			
1901-02	2,734,000	49.0			
1911-12	3,150,000	53.2			
1921-22	3,988,000	57.6			
1931-32	4,717,000	74.5			
1951-52	4,443,000		796,000	5,239,000	81.9
1961-62	4,421,000		1,539,000	5,960,000	91.4
1971-72	4,926,000		2,287,000	7,213,000	91.7
1976-77	4,741,000		2,869,000	7,610,000	92.4

a) of population between 6 and 14 years of age.
b) including vocational & technical preparation (scuole di avviamento professionale)
* Source: ISTAT

The continuity between elementary and middle school has increased since introduction of the Comprehensive Middle School Act of 1962 attaining practically 100% in 1975/76. But there are still 6.3% pupils attending middle school who abandon school after the first class.

Table 4: Children continuing in Middle School *

Year	Regional subdivision			Average %
	North, %	Center, %	South, %	
1961-62	76.3	82.8	80.5	79.1
1966-67	88.9	91.5	85.5	88.0
1973-74	99.5	99.9	89.7	96.8
1974-75	100.5	100.9	94.1	98.1
1975-76	101.5	101.4	96.1	99.4

* Source: Ministry of Education and ISTAT

It might be noted that the higher than 100% in the North and Center of Italy for the years 1974-1976 is due to an imbalance caused by families migrating from the South to the North.

As far as success at school is concerned, the situation is still unsatisfactory. The Southern Regions of Italy show especially high rates of failures. This is due to various factors such as income and social structure of the families, education of the parents, local availability of schools and school organizations. The following table attempts to give an idea of this phenomenon. It shows the percentage of children failing classes over a period of five years for elementary school and of three years for middle school. Out of 100 pupils who had enrolled in first class of elementary school in 1968, 79.8 pupils in the North, 80.8 in the Centre and only 61.7 in the South passed final examination in 1973. The same relationship is reflected in middle school where the percentage of pass marks at final examination was 73.1 for the North, 70 for the Centre and 57.5 for the South in 1974.

Table 5: Success at school: significance of regional differences *

School	Year	Regional Subdivision			Average %
		North %	Center %	South %	
Elementary: 1st class	1968-69	100	100	100	100
2nd "	1969-70	92.7	93.3	84.2	89
3rd "	1970-71	86.9	88.3	74.7	81.6
4th "	1971-72	83.7	85.1	68.7	77.1
5th "	1972-73	81.2	82.4	64.1	73.6
Final examination	1973	79.8	80.8	61.7	71.7
Middle: 1st class	1971-72	100	100	100	100
2nd "	1972-73	86.8	86.3	77.3	83
3rd "	1973-74	79.8	78.0	64.5	73.5
Final examination	1974	73.1	70	57.5	66.4

* Source: ISTAT

Naturally, social structure influences the percentage of school attendance. Parents with university education or with a middle school leave certificate range at the top and school attendance of their children is practically 100%. Children of parents with no school leaving certificate range around 85%, whereas children of illiterates are in the 72%.

The occupation of the parents also plays an important role in the children's attendance at school. Parents in top professions provide the highest figure (around 100%), whereas manual workmen and unemployed parents are at the bottom with less than 90% of their children attending school on a regular basis. This situation has been summarized in the following Table 6, adapted from a special inquiry made by the Italian Central Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) in the year 1967.

Table 6: School attendance according to education and occupation of parent (in percentage)*

Parent's condition	Childrens' school attendance %
Parent's education:	
University or College degree	100
certificate of Middle school	99.1
certificate of Elementary "	93.5
no certificate of any school	84.7
illiterates	72.3
Parent's occupation:	
managers, academic professions, executives	99.0
autonomous workers	91.2
workers in employment	90.4
not in employment	88.8

* Source: ISTAT

School attendance and success are negatively influenced also by an inadequate distribution of school houses and by lack of the required equipment. Unfortunately the Schools Distribution Act of 1971 c.829 has added confusion rather than solving the problem. It provides that the public administration has the duty to establish an elementary school wherever there are at least ten pupils between the age of six and fourteen within a radius of 2 km, and a middle school whenever the population of a township is of 3,000 or more persons. These rules have caused school units to be built where there was no real need, whereas no money was left to build new schools where there was the greatest shortage. The decision,when to build new school facilities and where to enlarge and modernize existing ones requires careful factual analysis, case by case, of the needs of the individual communities. Hard and fast rules such as "ten pupils equals one school" are unworkable. In addition to wasting public money, these mini-schools have created a host of side-issues.

One of the most deleterious consequences of these small schools is the accomodation of pupils of different ages and school-levels in the same classes (the so-called pluriclasse). This promiscuity has had a negative outcome on the instruction and on the results.

On the other hand, especially in large industrial cities, which have recently supported massive internal migrations, the available schools are inadequate to meet the steadily increasing number of students. There is no money to build new schools or improve the existing ones. The pupils have thus to be accomodated by double, and even triple daily shifts, with great inconvenience for the pupils themselves, the teachers and the families, and with negative consequences for new educational plans such as those dealing with full-time schools (scuole a tempo pieno). Demographic decline has caused a regression in new registrations in the seventies. Nevertheless in 1973-74, 13% of elementary school pupils and 4.4% of middle school students were still compelled to attend second or third shifts[10]. The situation appeared more favorable in 1977-78 with only 9.7% children in second or third shift in elementary school and 2.4% in middle school[11]. In many schools classrooms were inadequate with respect to size and fitness for school use. According to estimates, this is still the situation in no less than 13% of elementary school and in as much as 22% of middle school[12].

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[10] Benadusi, La scuola in Italia, p. 57.

[11] Alberto Zuliani, "La spesa per l'istruzione in Italia: dimensioni e recente dinamica", Annali della Pubblica istruzione, Vol 24, N. 4-5 (1978), pp.401-430.

[12] Benadusi, La scuola in Italia, p. 57.

A structural problem which needs a fresh legislative solution is class population. The Law September 24, 1971 c. 820, sec. 12 , has prescribed a maximum of 25 pupils per class in elementary school and of 30 pupils in middle school. No minima have been set. Thus any number of children may be sufficient to open a school. The rate of pupils per class room is declining slightly in elementary school, where it was 17% in 1975-76 as opposed to 17.4% in 1973-74, but it is increasing in middle school, where it was 22.5% in 1975-76 as opposed to 22% in 1973-74. On the other hand, the teacher/pupil ratio is improving as can be seen in the Table 7. However, the data contained therein should be read with caution, since classes are in reality significantly overcrowded in large cities, which contrasts with the favorable statistical figures shown in the table. This is certainly due to the fact that the national figures average among overcrowded city schools and sometimes empty schools in small towns. Also the relation pupils/teachers appears more favorable because the figures include the so called soprannumero (overload teachers) who have no class and work in the school as clerks or replace sick teachers.

Table 7: Pupils/Teachers ratio *

Year	Elementary school *	
	Teachers	Pupils per t.%
1961-62	183,000	21.7
1970-71	210,000	21.4
1971-72	216,000	21.2
1972-73	226,000	20.7
1973-74	237,000	19.6
1974-75	238,000	19.3
1975-76	240,000	18.8

* Source: ISTAT

One of the most critical problems of compulsory education has always been the concept that elementary and middle school were the preparation for the higher levels of education, rather than the basis for the necessary schooling of all citizens. As a general policy schools were open to everyone, but no efforts were made to have children mandatorily enrolled in them.

It can therefore be said that the Law N. 1859 of

1962 was in fact rather than a school reform law a social reform law. It was a revolutionary law, because it has done away with a state of mind that had lasted over a century in Italian school thinking: the triple tracking of middle school, which was maintained over the years not in view of offering alternatives for different aptitudes, but solely to give each social class its own school. The 1962 reform came in the wake of profound transformation and renewal of Italian society. It was, with all its compromises and midway solutions, a good reform, though it has failed in its aim of complete elimination of class-selection at school.

The Situation of Upper Secondary School

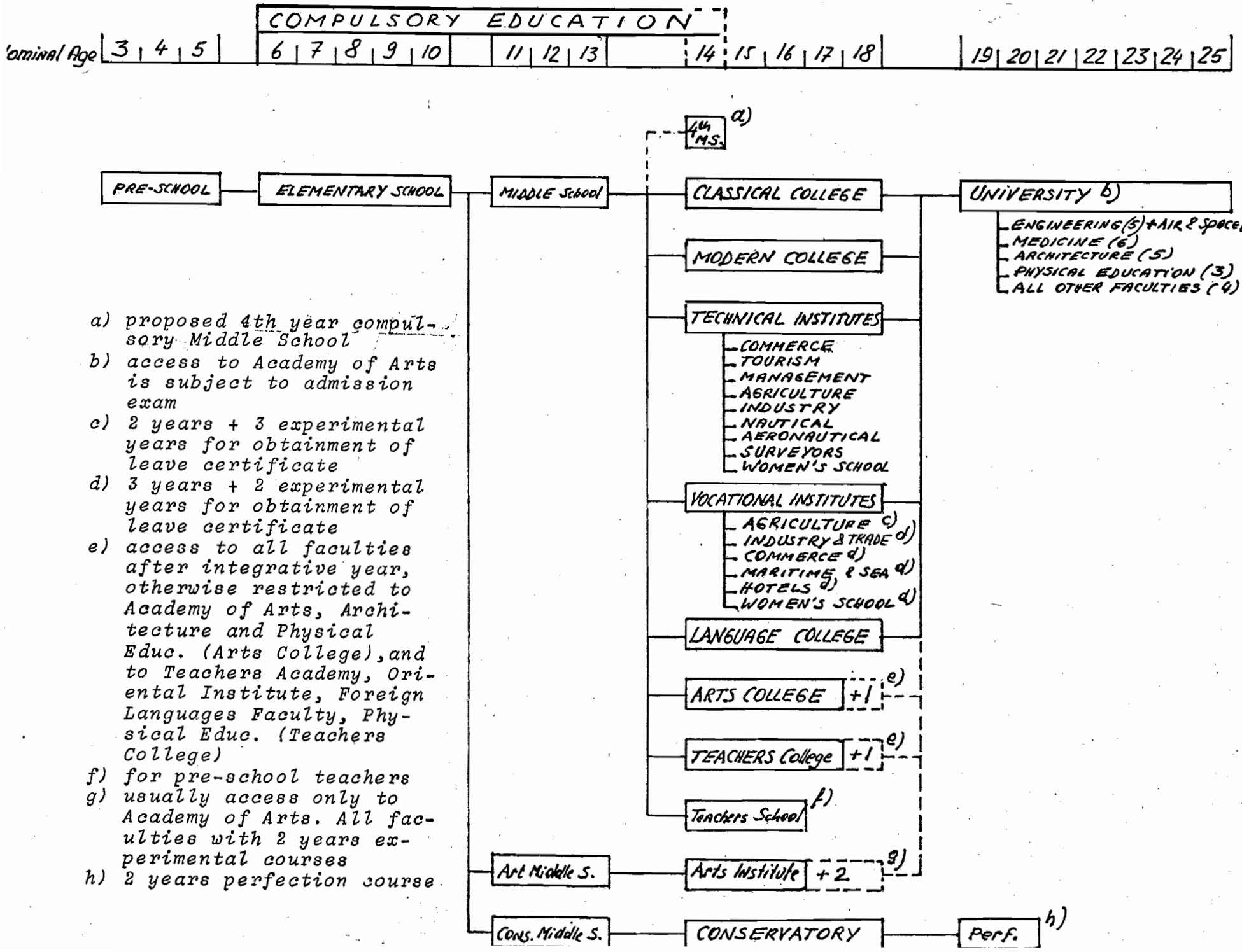
No reforms have been implemented so far in the domain of upper secondary school, except for one important Bill, the Liberalization of the Access to the University Act 1969 c. 910, the intentions of which were dubious and the effects open to questions. This is regrettable, because school reform should be conceived from a global viewpoint. The time has since long past

when it was appropriate to consider the "compulsory" part of education as an isolated problem subject to its independent pedagogical and social rules and solutions. It is unfortunate that this was not the driving idea of the Italian reformers. Accordingly, the first three years of middle school offer, at the time of writing, an integrated curriculum whereas the upper years are still structured on a system of rigid channels or "columns", all of them being distinct and exclusive patterns of "specialization". This can no longer be accepted because such a structure is clearly the heritage of the misleading assumption that students are capable of making, at the age of fourteen i.e., when they enter upper secondary school a definite and irrevocable choice for their future education. This assumption is unsupported and there is no doubt that the student aptitudes can be better discovered and developed if they are allowed to change from one section to the other, or to choose their own program from among them according to their interests.

The rigid patterns of upper secondary education form five such sections each having further subdivisions or branches:

1. Classical and modern college (liceo) with a curriculum of five years.
2. Teachers training institute and school, with four and three years, respectively.
3. Technical schools with nine sub-categories or sub-branches (trade and commerce, tourism, management, agriculture, industry, maritime navigation, air navigation, land surveyors, women's technical institute), with a curriculum of five years; language schools, with a curriculum of five years.
4. Vocational school with six sub-branches (agriculture, industry, trade and commerce, maritime and sea, hotel activity, women's professional institute), with a curriculum of three years, plus two experimental additional years since 1969, in order to allow access to university.
5. Art college, four years; arts school, three years, plus two experimental additional years in order to allow access to university; music conservatory with a special curriculum of five years.

The Table 8 may help to give an idea of the structure of upper secondary school in 1979. It shows clearly the vertical columns which provide the rigid isolation of the different school orders and skills, a thing which cannot be said to be either logical, as a system, or beneficial to the students.



a) proposed 4th year compulsory Middle School
b) access to Academy of Arts is subject to admission exam
c) 2 years + 3 experimental years for obtainment of leave certificate
d) 3 years + 2 experimental years for obtainment of leave certificate
e) access to all faculties after integrative year, otherwise restricted to Academy of Arts, Architecture and Physical Educ. (Arts College), and to Teachers Academy, Oriental Institute, Foreign Languages Faculty, Physical Educ. (Teachers College)
f) for pre-school teachers
g) usually access only to Academy of Arts. All faculties with 2 years experimental courses
h) 2 years perfection course

Table: 8 ITALIAN SCHOOL STRUCTURE (1979)

The great problem of these sections (or vertical "columns") of upper secondary school was access to university.

Only the classical branch of the first section used to permit access to all faculties. Modern college students were excluded only from a few faculties. The other sections stopped students, save for few exceptions, at the upper secondary school diploma. This has been changed with the Liberalization of the Access to the University Act 1969 c. 910. Upper secondary school remains, nevertheless, the expression of an educational philosophy where different skills are obtainable, along different, well defined and isolated routes. The reformers claim that the liberalization of university access was a great step forward. In fact, it could have been foreseen that the reform of upper secondary school could not possibly be implemented simply by changing the admission requirements to universities. The Act permits access to university to students of any faculty after any five-years upper secondary school program, regardless of marks, provided the students have an upper secondary diploma. This was probably a demagogical rather than an educational reform. It was a response to political pressure, and it has by no means eliminated the problems which afflict the system of upper secondary education.

Reform proposals at the end of the seventies demanded the abolition of these outdated structures. It is still being argued that upper secondary school should be structurally unified and that different combinations of curricula should be open to the students' choice, in addition to required compulsory courses, as is done successfully elsewhere in European countries. At time of writing there is much discussion in Italy on the transformation of upper secondary school into a comprehensive logical and functional continuation of the unitary middle school. Several bills on the subject matter have been tabled in Parliament[13]. All political parties participate in the debate with their own proposals and suggestions. The Socialists, for example, maintain that unification of upper secondary school is a necessary step in the process of democratization of the social bases of education.

At attempt to break through the system has been made by the proposal to extend compulsory education to the age of sixteen (or at least fifteen) in order to keep students, who are nowadays diverted to work at the

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[13] See the Bill N. 1257 approved by the Chamber of Deputies on Sep. 28, 1978. See also, Francesco Nisi, "Sulla riforma della scuola secondaria superiore", Cultura e Scuola, N. 70 (1979),pp.211-215; Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri - Servizi Informazioni, La scuola in Italia (Roma: Istituto poligrafico dello Stato, 1976) p. 144.

age of fourteen, at school and induce them to pursue further education after having been compelled to attend two compulsory years of upper secondary school. Against the Socialists' pleading for extension of compulsory education at the level of upper secondary, the Conservatives' view is to add the additional years to middle school as its natural extension and completion.

The issue is a fundamental one.The Socialists argue that if the latter proposition goes through, the function of upper secondary school as a social filter would be preserved, which is unacceptable. They also argue that these two additional years of compulsory education could be attached to the bienniums of vocational instruction. But the vocational schools are themselves bound to disappear when the unification of upper secondary school eventually takes place. Thus, the choice will be to either enlarge the middle school with a forth and possibly a fifth year, or to extend compulsory education in the domain of upper secondary education. This could cause education in Italy to develop into a homogeneous programme throughout the school route, from elementary school to university. The idea is that compulsory education should be eventually extended through all grades of upper secondary school, in order to establish a system in which everyone obtains

a high school or college diploma[14]. How this can be realized is still obscure[15].

The problem is complex and the solution very difficult. Things are made worse by the political situation and the fast changes in Government which cause continuous delays in the implementation of new legislation. Some of the proposals were accepted by the Chamber of Deputies, but were rejected by the Senate and continuous cabinet changes stopped other proposals midway. Year after year, the upper secondary school is hopelessly waiting to be restructured and modernized, and the students are frustrated by a school that does not meet the needs of society and is unable to convey to them the required competence and skill.

After the Comprehensive Middle School Act of 1962 there was a large increase in the upper secondary school population as shown in Table 9.

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[14] See on the problem, Giovanni Gozzer, "La riforma della scuola secondaria all'1 gennaio 1978", Annali della pubblica istruzione, Vol.24, N.2 (1978), pp. 125-132.

[15] Benadusi, La scuola in Italia, p. 93.

Table 9: Students in Upper Secondary School*

Year	Students
1951-52	416,348
1961-62	838,099
1971-72	1,732,178
1972-73	1,820,458
1973-74	1,915,856
1974-75	1,967,587
1975-76	2,077,760
1976-77	2,189,183

* Source: ISTAT

This increase of students - see the Synopsis of school population in Table 10 - created an overabundance of high school and university graduates with few jobs available to match their training. This happened because there was and is not still enough connection between upper secondary school programs, students' counseling and world-of-work demands. It should also be noted that the increase of the school population, the lack of professors' updating and of curricula has produced a parallel decrease in the quality of the academic preparation of the new graduates. Obviously, graduates coming from poor families

Table 10: Synopsis of School Population (State and Private School)*

year	Pre-school	Compulsory		Upper Secundary	University	Totals
		Elementary	Middle[a]			
1950-51	930.000	4.640.000	719.000	383.000	145.000	6.817.000
1960-61	1.154.000	4.418.000	1.414.000	762.000	192.000	7.940.000
1970-71	1.587.000	4.857.000	2.168.000	1.656.000	561.000	10.829.000
1971-72	1.620.000	4.926.000	2.287.000	1.732.000	631.000	11.196.000
1972-73	1.686.000	4.974.000	2.422.000	1.820.000	658.000	11.560.000
1973-74	1.735.000	4.963.000	2.530.000	1.916.000	675.000	11.819.000
1974-75	1.631.000	4.934.000	2.615.000	1.968.000	716.000	11.864.000
1975-76	1.690.000	4.835.000	2.762.000	2.078.000	731.000	12.096.000
1976-77	1.789.000	4.742.000	2.869.000	2.189.000	746.000	12.335.000

a) including schools of professional preparation

* Source: ISTAT

may meet even greater difficulties due to the fact that they rarely have friends who can help them finding appropriate employment. If we look at the distribution of students within the upper secondary school sections there is indication that the highest increase in school population was experienced in technical and vocational schools, i.e., the schools which provide leave diplomas for immediate employment upon graduation (Table 11).

Table 11: Registration in the different types of Upper Secondary School (1st year)*

Branches	1966-67	1971-72	1976-77
Technical institutes	350,000	390,000	537,000
Vocational institutes	78,000	116,000	133,000
Modern college	49,000	77,000	91,000
Art institute and college	10,000	14,000	16,000
Teachers training college and school	90,000	56,000	60,000
Classical college	47,000	44,000	41,000

* Source: ISTAT

As far as success at upper secondary school and registration at university are concerned there is a marked imbalance between overrepresentation of certain classes of the population and underrepresentation of others. The social condition of the "head of the family" (capofamiglia) is the determinative factor of this phenomenon. The figures indicate that students from low-income families are at a disadvantage, though there has been substantial improvement throughout the decade under analysis. If we look, for example, at the first and the last line of Table 12, it can be realized at first glance that there is disproportion between fathers of the top professions and their children attending the different schools, and fathers of the lowest working class and their children. As an average, in 1961, 2.1% "wealthy" fathers had 11.1% children in upper secondary school (i.e., over 5 times the fathers) whereas 48.1% "poor" fathers had only 21.1% children in upper secondary school (i.e., less than half of the fathers). There is an impressive improvement if we look at the situation of 1971: in the range of the wealthy fathers the excess of children at school was only three times the fathers, and the relation between poor fathers and children has dropped to one third.

Table 12: Relation between and parent's (hea

Social condition of head of family	Head of family in age 45-64 in 1961	Studen in 1972-73						University registration 1973-74	
		Technical institute	college	Over/under representation	Classical college	Over/under representation	Average 1972-73		
Entrepreneurs & acad.profess.	% 2.1	% 8.1	% .9	4.48	% 19.0	6.13	% 9.4	3.03	% 10.7	3.3
Managers & employees	11.6	33.8	.4	2.49	50.6	2.61	35.6	1.83	42.9	2.6
Autonomous workers & ass'ts	38.2	29.8	.7	0.71	19.1	0.63	24.4	0.80	23.1	0.1
Workers & similar	48.1	28.3	.0	0.34	11.3	0.24	30.4	0.64	23.3	0.4
	100%	100%	%	--	100%	--	100%	--	100%	--

* Source: ISTAT

It is apparent that on the issue of equality of chances many problems are still unsolved. Equality is a slow process which requires a long period of complex adjustments. Its solution lies in the development of a new, more reasonable and more human concept of life in society generally. The best reforms can only provide leads for the course to take, they cannot shape the patterns of social behavior.

CHAPTER III

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

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During the 1960's, the Italian education system witnessed considerable upheaval. Major events around the world, such as the war of Vietnam, widely publicized students' protests, as for instance the outbreaks of violence at the Berkeley and Berlin Universities, the political disorders in Greece and Spain as well as internal factors, such as the unprecedented increase in enrollment, the decay in the quality of teaching and the crisis in job opportunities, led Italian students to become politically active. They protested against the educational system and the political parties which were in charge but had not, in the students' view, accomplished any of their mandates of reform. At this time the trade unions also started to participate actively in the problems of the school. They shared with the students the idea of creating a more equal society and of throwing off the traditional and inhibiting shackles of a rigid class structure.

Under the pressure of the particular historical

situation which occurred at the same time in many European countries, the demand for democratization developed into a request for the participation of the parents, students and representatives of the business community in the administration of the school. It was the period when the first generation of a "free" Europe found itself adult and confronted with all kinds of political, social and psychological problems.

In Italy the structural reforms of the sixties, in particular the 1962 reform, had prepared the road for further reforms, which were needed in order to obtain real democratization of the school. Foreign, more advanced school systems were studied and compared with the Italian, and became the basis for the projects of reforms. The models from which most of the new ideas were drawn were the Scandinavian countries and the United States. They had the most advanced legislation with respect to decentralization and parents' participation in the school. The idea was, that only society as a whole could really know which were its needs and, consequently, how school had to prepare the students in function of these requirements.

The reform efforts became eventually law with the 1974 Delegated Decret Laws. They allowed inter alia direct involvement of members of society other

than teachers in the school administration. This was an experiment which was unique in Europe.

The Delegated Decret Laws

Until 1974 the administrative organization and bureaucratic control of schools was the sole responsibility of the central Ministry of Education. The Minister was the supervising authority of all educational institutions. He was represented in each Province by a Provveditore agli Studi with broad delegated authority. Each Province was divided in School Districts headed by Inspectors of Schools, and each District was further subdivided into groups or circles headed by a Headmaster or Principal who supervised 60 to 100 teachers.

There was only one centralized advisory body in the Ministry, called the Consiglio Superiore della Pubblica Istruzione (the High Council of Public Education) which was composed of 60 members, all teachers and professors and was chaired by the Minister himself. This advisory Council's responsibility was to provide the Ministry of Education with an awareness of the public and professional opinion, but no direct representatives of the public were

admitted. The exclusion of the public from this and all other educational councils was one of the reasons for serious grievance. But many other problems were also on the table when the reform law was being discussed. The relationship between teachers and administrative authorities were difficult because of the sophisticated bureaucratic structures; the relationship between parents and teachers were unsatisfactory; the relationship between students and teachers, especially after elementary level, reflected the distance which existed on the other side of the fence between teachers and the administrative authority.

In the early seventies the time seemed ripe to yield to the pressure for popular participation in the school. A school reform bill, known as the Delegating Act, was prepared by a commission appointed by the Minister of Education, and passed through the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in the exceptionally short time of less than one year, obtaining assent on July 30, 1973. It contained the general principles and guidelines for the people's administration of the school. The Delegating Act was followed by the Delegated Decret Laws (Decreti Delegati) in 1974 which were powers given to the Government in order to implement, interpret and elaborate on the law[1].

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[1] See further references in Saverio De Simone and Michele Salazar, La nuova scuola italiana, vol. I, (Milano: Giuffré Ed., 1975).

Five Delegated Decret Laws were introduced (chapters 416 to 420). But the one which promised spectacular changes and induced enthusiastic expectations, causing immediate mobilitation among the Socialists and open hostility in the camp of their Conservative opponents, was the Delegated Decret Law c. 416. This instituted the "Educational Councils" as prescribed by section five of the Delegating Act 1973 c. 477. The Delegated Decret Law c. 416 set up a new educational pyramid-like administrative structure, comprising individual School and Class Councils, 760 District Councils, 94 Provincial Educational Councils and a National Educational Council. The other four Delegated Decret Laws dealt with the following matters: c. 417 ruled on tenure and career of teachers, directors and inspectors of State preschools, elementary and secondary schools of every level; c. 418 ruled on remuneration for extra work of directors and inspectors of State preschools, elementary and secondary schools of every level; c. 419 ruled on experimentation and educational research, cultural and professional modernization and institutional establishments; c 420 ruled on the careers of non-teaching personnel in State preschools, elementary and secondary schools of every level.

The scope of the Delegated Decret Laws was to create

an "open school", i.e.,a school open to all social components, the families, the local administrations, the work and production representatives, the pupils and students themselves. Everyone should take part in and have responsibility for the smooth functioning of the school and its self-government in order to create a true democratic school, receptive to the external reality, a so-called community-school (scuola comunità). The goal of the new legislation was to eliminate the traditional bureaucratic centralism and to bring into concrete reality the principle of social participation within the national process of decentralization of responsibilities[2].

Preparatory work for the organization of the first School Councils elections started in Fall 1974. The first elections took place in Winter 1975. The election campaign faced moments of tension, and several times the Ministry of Education intervened to annul arbitrary decisions. The political parties' representatives participated to the electoral campaign treating it as if it were a political contest. When the elections became due, the polls could

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[2] Bruna Bianchi Valentini, Problemi della scuola primaria (Firenze: La Nuova Italia Ed., 1978), p. 334. See also, Viktor von Blumenthal, "School Reforms and Alternative Schools in Italy", Western European Education, Vol.10, N.2 (1978), pp. 51-89.

be taken only for the School Councils, since voting on District and Provincial Councils had been delayed for a period of over 18 months, due to insurmontable difficulties in drawing the Districts' boundaries. Participation at the polls was higher in the North than in the South, with a general average of about 70% of students and parents. The second election took place in 1977 . It renewed the School Councils and voted for the District and Provincial Councils. The participation dropped considerably with respect to the 1975 elections, reaching barely an average of 45%.

Many explanations could be given for this significant loss of popularity: The indifference for social involvement, the traditional pessimism toward Government measures which caused, after initial enthusiasm, the absence of the working class and the growing disinterest of the wealthy class for the public school. It must also be admitted that the operating mechanism and machinery of the Delegated Decret Laws was so complicated and intricate that the less educated and inexperienced parents had no chance of succeeding with this experiment in school participation[3].

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[3] See Vittorio Martino, "Tendenze funzionali dei nuovi organi collegiali", Annali della pubblica istruzione, Vol. 24, N. 1 (1978), pp. 93-99. See also, about results and analysis of the first elections, Pippa Pridham, "The Problems of Educational Reforms in Italy: The Case of the Decreti Delegati", Comparative Education, Vol.14, N.3 (1978), pp. 223-241.

As a consequence the disillusioned Socialists were heard to say that the Delegated Decret Laws were simply skilled manoeuvres of the governing party to avoid responsibility for the malfunctioning of society. They accused the governing party of corrupt practices and manipulation. This was for them the only and exclusive reason for the poor results of the first school elections which took place in 1975 and the even worse results of the second election in 1977.

The Educational Councils

The Educational Councils are distinguished, according to the levels of the institutions which they are covering and their geographical extension, in Circuit and School Councils (Organi collegiali a livello di circolo e di istituto), District School Councils (Consigli scolastici distrettuali), Provincial School Councils (Consigli scolastici provinciali) and the National Education Council (Consiglio nazionale della pubblica istruzione)[4].

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[4] The section emphasizes that this is done in order to give the school a community character which is interrelated with the larger social and civic community. See Act of Oct 11, 1977 c. 748 on the requirements for meetings to be held public.

Circuit and School Councils

Section 2 of the Delegated Decret Law 1974 c.416, establishes administrative autonomy for each school and provides that each school, or group of schools (circolo) shall have the following councils:

- The Inter-class Council (consiglio di interclasse), called Class Council (consiglio di classe) in secondary school,
- The Board of Teachers (collegio dei docenti),
- The School Council and Executory Committee (consiglio di circolo e giunta esecutiva),
- The Pupils' Disciplinary Council (consiglio di disciplina degli alunni),
- The Committee for Assessment of Teachers' Service (comitato di valutazione del servizio degli insegnanti)

The Inter-class (and Class) Council is the first important innovation. According to the previous structure, parents have only occasional chances of participation in the school affairs. Under the provision of the Delegated Decret Law c. 416, the administration of the school is itself under control of the parents who have become "a component of the school". The Inter-class Council has merely advisory functions on educational actions and on experimental initiatives. The pedagog-

ical coordination of the curricula, which is uniform on a national basis, is still left with the teachers. Section 3 of this Delegated Decret Law explains how an Inter-class (and Class) Council is composed and how it works.

The inter-class Council of elementary school has as its members all teachers of the school and all the parents of the children attending that school. Representation is provided for by the teachers of the class and of parallel classes and by one parent. The chairman is the principal or a teacher.

The Class Council of middle and upper secondary school is structured in a different way, and fine distinctions are made among middle school (scuola media), upper secondary school (scuola superiore), art school (istituto artistico) and evening schools for working students (scuole serali). With the exception of the middle school pupils, students have a right to be represented. The teachers', parents' and students' representatives are shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Representatives on Class Councils

Members	Middle School	Upper Secondary School	Evening School
a) Teachers	the Teachers of each cl.	the Teachers of each cl.	the Teachers of each cl.
b) Parents	4 Parents per class	2 Parents per class	Nil
c) Students	Nil	2 Students per class	3 Students per class

The chairman of the Class Council is the principal of the school or a teacher whom the principal delegates.

The Decret Law says nothing about the Board of Teachers (sec.4), save that all teachers of the school are members of the board and that the principal is the chairman. The board meets at the request of the principal or of one third of its members.

The School (or School Group) Council is defined and described in great detail. There is made again a distinction between elementary and secondary school on one side, and upper secondary school on the other. The Decret Law distinguishes further between schools with more or less than 500 pupils, as is shown in Tables 14 and 15.

Table 14: Representatives on School Councils (Elementary and Middle School)

Members	School Population	
	up to 500	over 500
Principal	1	1
Teachers	6	8
Non-Teachers	1	2
Parents repres.	6	8
Pupils repres.	NIL	NIL
TOTAL	14	19

Table 15: Representatives on School Councils (Upper Secondary and Art School)

Members	School Population	
	up to 500	over 500
Principal	1	1
Teachers	6	8
Non-Teachers	1	2
Parents repres.	3	4
Students repres.	3	4
TOTAL	14	19

This School Council is the only board which has decision-making power, and its chairman has to be chosen among the parents. Its Executive Committee is responsible for the enforcement of the Council's directives. Within its scope of responsibilities are, inter alia, accounting, finances, purchase of school equipment and implementation of extra-curricular activities. The Executive Committee is composed as follows:

Table 16: Representatives on Executive Committee

Members	School Type	
	Elementary & Middle School	Upper Sec. & Art School
Principal	1	1
Teachers	1	1
Non-Teachers	1	1
Parents repres.	2	1
Head of the secretarial services	1	1
Students repres.	NIL	1
TOTAL	6	6

The Pupils' Disciplinary Council (section 7) has the preeminent task of protecting the pupils' rights in disciplinary proceedings. It is composed of five members as follows:

Table 17: Representatives on Pupils' Disciplinary Council

Members	School Type	
	Middle School	Upper Sec. & Art School
Principal	1	1
Teachers	2	2
Parents	2	1
Students	NIL	1
TOTAL	5	5

The Principal chairs the committee. Resolutions are taken by secret poll and at simple majority, but the Chairman has a casting vote. Disciplinary proceedings are still subject to the rules outlined in a circular of 1971 (Sep.20, 1971 No 001/GTC) which prescribes that deliberation on disciplinary measures shall not commence before the pupil has been given an opportunity to explain and

justify himself. A recourse to the Provveditore agli Studi lies against the decisions of the Disciplinary Council. The Provveditore decides upon advice of the District School Council (Art. 13 Delegated Decret Law c. 416). His decision is final.

District School Councils

The District School Council (sec.9-11 Delegated Decret Law c.416) has a rather complicated structure.

Its function is to implement democratic participation of all members of the local community to the government of the school. Among its major responsibilities are the task of giving suggestions on basic curricula and coordinating and rationalizing school services. It is required to submit at the beginning of each year a schedule of "para-school", extra-school" and "inter-school" activities (section 12) and to provide programs for school and work advisory activities, medical, social and psychological assistance, continuing education and "people's" schools, increase of sports, cultural activities and experimentation. The Council advises the Director of the Provincial School Office and the Regional

Administration about the need for establishment of new schools and for reorganization of existing ones, it also advises the Minister of Education on how to make the best use of teaching personnel and recommends changes of curricula in order to adapt them to the local needs. Its detailed composition is shown in the following table.

Table 18: Representatives on District School Council

Principals:	state schools	3
	private schools	1
Teachers:	state schools	5
	private schools	1
Parents:	state schools	6
	private schools	1
Union designated members (employees)		3
Other union designated autonomous members		2
General social representatives (1 designated by the Board of Trade and Commerce, 2 by the Provincial Trade Association)		3
Township		7
Pupils/students		7
Provincial Administration		3
Non-teaching personnel of schools		2
	TOTAL	44

The representatives of the students, the Provincial Administration and the non teaching personnel were not included in the original version of the Delegated Decret Laws c. 416. They were added in 1975 (Art. 3 Law Jan. 14, 1975 N. 1) along with other changes, such as the provision that the students are excluded from voting on the financial statements and the use of funds if they have not attained their majority. The Council appoints among its members a Chairman who represents the "District", keeps contact with the municipalities, the Province and the Region and with the local institutions for school administration. The Council may proceed to the appointment of a management committee composed of the Chairman of the District School Council who chairs it, and by other six members. The District School Councils are, according to their nature, institutions created to foster the advancement of educational activities and the development of structural facilities. They are similar to public territorial corporations, but they have no legal personality, though their administrative autonomy and powers are very wide[5].

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[5] See, for a recent report on developments in District School Councils' activities: Francesco Nisi, "L'attività di programmazione del Distretto, Territorio e Comunità", Cultura e Scuola, N. 69 (1979), pp. 153-158.

Provincial School Councils

The Provincial School Council (sec. 13-15 Delegated Decret Law c.416) can be composed of a minimum of 42 and a maximum of 66 members according to the following factors: population, number of schools and State school personnel. Private schools' teachers are also included. Section 13(a), (b) and (c) set forth the following structure:

Table 19: Relation among Population, Number of Schools, School Personnel and Representatives on Provincial School Council

Population	N. of Schools	School Personnel	N. of Representatives
up to 100,000	up to 100	up to 10,000	12
100,000/ 300,000	101/ 300	10,000/ 30,000	16
more than 300,000	more than 300	more than 30,000	20

Section 13(d) provides that six additional members are as of law part of the Council.

The Provincial School Council is mainly an advisory council for long range policies. Its detailed composition is shown in the Table 20.

Table 20: Representatives on Provincial School Council*

		Sec. 13 (a), (b), (c): N. of Representatives						
		1st combin.	2th	3th	4th	5th	6th	7th
Principals:	state schools	3	3	4	4	5	5	5
	private schools	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Teachers:	state schools	19	21	23	24	26	28	30
	private schools	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
Non-teaching personnel	state school	1	2	2	2	2	3	3
	peripherical administr.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Parents		4	4	5	5	6	6	7
Workers:	dependents	3	4	4	4	4	5	6
	autonomous	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Economy		1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Sec. 13 (d)		6	6	6	6	6	6	6
	TOTAL	42	46	50	54	58	62	66

* Elaborated from Delegated Decret Laws

The Provincial School Council is elected for a term of three years. It meets every three months and whenever at least one third of its members request it. The Chairman is appointed among its members. It has a management committee, chaired by the Provveditore and composed of eight members, of which four shall be selected among the teachers. It has also a disciplinary committee which supervises the provincially appointed teachers, and is composed of four members under the chairmanship of the Provveditore. The Provincial School Councils reproduce partially homonymous institutions established under preexisting law. The novelty of the Delegated Decret Law lies in the fact that now the Provincial School Council covers the whole spectrum of primary and secondary education, while the old one had its authority limited to elementary school.

National Education Council

The National Education Council is the highest Committee. It has advisory function and reports directly to the Ministry of Public Education. It is elected for a term of five years and is composed of 71 members in the proportion as is shown in the Table 21.

Table 21: Representatives on National Education Council

Representatives of:		N. of Representatives
Teachers:	state schools	47*
	private schools	3
Technical inspectors		3
Principals:	middle, upper secondary & art schools	3
	elementary schools	2
	private schools	1
Non-teaching personnel		3
Workers and business community		5
Central administration		2
Superior Council of Education		2
	TOTAL	71

*Kindergarten 4, elementary 14, middle schools 14, upper secondary schools 11, art schools 3, Italian State schools abroad 1 = 47

The National Education Council operates through five "horizontal" committees which deal respectively with pre-school, elementary, middle school, secondary school

and art school. There are also other "vertical" committees which deal with specific problems that are common to more than one of the "horizontal" committees. It is usually in the Minister's discretion to ask the National Education Council's advice. However in some domains, such as delayed promotions of teachers, dismissal and suspension from service, re-admission to service of inspectors and headmasters, alternate employment of personnel that is unfit for teaching by reason of health, general problems of planning for school development and curricula, the Minister is bound to ask the National Education Council's advice though he is not obliged to follow it. In a few cases the Minister is not only obliged to ask for advice, but he has also to follow the Council's opinion (for example,in case of removal of personnel with tenure due to serious situations of conflict).

The National Education Council submits suggestions for new experiments with curricula and school structure. The Departments of the National Education Council are: The Presidential Office, the Disciplinary Committee for inspectors, headmasters and teachers with and without tenure, and a quasi-judicial Committee whose responsibility is to handle complaints and give advice thereon to the Minister.

The Reaction to the Delegated Decret Laws

The Delegated Decret Laws are criticized by the Socialists and the Conservatives. Both claim the enactments were not a true reform. The lawyers criticize them because of their numerous inconsistencies, omissions, ambiguities and provisions which are ultra vires the Delegating Act and the Italian Constitution.

The Socialists' View

A fair description of the feeling in the Socialist camp is given by the following passage of a contemporary Italian writer in educational problems:

> It seems almost useless to say, explicitly, at this point, that the Delegated Decret Laws are in nature repressive and conservative. Their primary function is to maintain the status quo, i.e., to keep unmodified through only limited and formal adjustments - which are absolutely inadequate to shift the balance of power within the school - the tasks and scopes which the bourgeoisie has entrusted to it, i.e., on one side the indoctrination of the workers to its values, on the other side the social selection and discrimination. [6] (Author's translation)

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[6] Mario Gattullo, "Di fronte ai decreti delegati" in Graziano Cavallini, ed., Sui Decreti Delegati (Milano: Emme Ediz., 1975), p.50.

The Socialists further allege that the decision-making power has been hampered by the bureaucratic governmental agencies[7]. Control by superior agencies is prescribed for only in rare instances (for example in sec. 26 c. 416) but also in these cases the subtle distinction between the binding (vincolanti) and the mandatory (obbligatori)[8] advisory function of the National Education Council is kept alive. These sophisticated doctrines are not understood by ordinary people and, as critics complain, they are used as an instrument for keeping centralized administrative control. Moreover, the scope of activity of the "technical" inspectors as envisaged by Sec. 4, c. 417 seems to cover not only advisory aid to the schools, but also "inspections" ordered by the Minister of Education and the Provincial School Council. In other words, the category of inspectors seems to provide further evidence of the intention of the central Government to maintain control from the top[9].

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[7] Gattullo, "Decreti Delegati", p. 32.

[8] The merely mandatory opinions can be disregarded by the Minister of Education.

[9] Giovanni Maria Bertin, Educazione al "cambiamento" (Firenze: La Nuova Italia Ed., 1976), p. 181.

According to the Socialists, the real innovative entity is the District School Council. There, the social components wield the greatest weight. These Councils have potentially great political weight, but they do not have corresponding administrative powers. Thus, the Socialists fear that their functional scope may be effectively compromised and their contribution to the reorganization of the school minimized. They argue that the scope of "cultural and educational development of the local community" (crescita culturale e civile della comunità locale) has been completely misconceived[10].

The most acrimonious criticism is aimed at the insufficiency of political and social participation. There is consensus among the critics of socialist orientation that the new structures of committees and councils frustrate the expectations of the low-income classes and workers, who had fought for renovation of the school with the goal of abolition of class discrimination within the school and of achievement of a guarantee right to education for all. The criticism is aimed mainly at the preference given to parents as opposed to the inadequate representation of

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[10] Bertin, Educazione, p. 181

unions in the National School Council[11]. According to one educational commentator, Giovanni Bertin[12], parents should have nothing to say beyond the Class and School Councils; at the higher levels, representation of the parents' interests should be entrusted to politically trained citizens.

Pupils and students are excluded from the District and Provincial Councils. This is regretted by the Socialists since, they argue, the students should have a right to express their ideas and opinions on organization and programming of life and activity at school.

A general criticism of the Delegated Decret Laws is their bureaucratic complexity (farraginosità) which,the Socialists fear, will have the effect of allowing the Councils to become an exercise of mere formal democracy, as every other reform in Italy. The parents will not attend the meetings, the unions will be left in minority positions, the teachers will remain as the "functionaries and slaves" of the capitalistic state[13].

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11 Bertin, Educazione, p. 181.

12 Ibid,

13 Gattullo, "Decreti Delegati", p. 31, 44, 53.

The criticism goes into much detail. One author complains strongly about the provision that on the list of candidates for the School Councils the names "may be preceded by the indication of the profession" of the candidate (section 6 of the Circular No 283) [14], since this enables, indirectly, the conservative-thinking parents to vote for a"trustworthy" candidate. The word trustworthy (genitori fidati) is obviously used to connote a middle-class person whose behavior and political views are based on tradition and respect for established institutions. "The Minister and his bureaucrats knew perfectly well that not everybody has professional qualifications to show, since this is a natural and deserved privilege of the bourgeoisie" [15].

The same Section 6 provides that the electoral lists shall be handed over to the secretary of the school (or other institutions) within a period ranging from 9 o'clock of the 20th day before the day scheduled for election and 12 o'clock of the 15th day before the election. A critical

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[14] Prot. No 25008/269/MF, Nov 14, 1974. The section is four pages long with many procedural details.

[15] Gattullo, "Decreti Delegati", p. 53.

objection to this was the following: "[These] time-schedules obviously coincide with the office hours of the school, but they do not necessarily coincide with the spare time of the worker-parents"[16]. Criticism also deals with the participation of private schools. Some argue that it is untenable that private schools be allowed to participate to the general organization and functioning of the State schools without themselves being submitted to the same kind of controls as are imposed on State schools[17].

The Socialists maintain that the Delegated Decret Laws have brought about problems which nobody can hope to cope with and keep under control. That it is too early to provide an answer to the question "whether the Minister and his staff have pushed their opponents to the ropes or whether they themselves will be pushed out of the ring"[18]. That perhaps both are already on the ropes, and that, in that case, the conservatives will have difficulty in succeeding with "their techniques of experienced balancers"[19]. That the Minister wants to renovate the school

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[16] Gattullo, "Decreti Delegati", p. 54

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 45

[19] Graziano Cavallini, Introduction to: Sui decreti delegati (Milano: Emme Edizioni, 1975) p. 7, 8.

with "knowledgeability, order and competence which are the same ideals and the same objectives of Mister Benito Mussolini"[20]. Empty rhetoric without any logical relationship to the issues is used by otherwise respectable writers. One author, for instance, wrote the following incomprehensible sentence: "If the parents come to the school and ask that the school serve them without creating excluded and subjugated children (emarginati e inferiori), then they are in the same position as is the great black race which has until now abused and martyrized . The parents will have no confidence in any teacher. And if a teacher who has honestly spent his life for his pupils shows indignation for their lack of confidence, he will truly show to have deserved being treated that way"[21]. This language does not reflect contemporary concepts of society. Unrelated political and social issues and feelings are mixed together, in the disorderly fashion of politicians rather than in the style of competent researchers.

The Socialists' consensus is that the Delegated Decret Laws will not abolish class discrimination and

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[20] Giorgio Pecorini, "Un sindacato dei genitori?", in Cavallini, Decreti, p. 197.

[21] Ibid., p. 201.

that they will not bring enough politics in the class room. Their motto is: "Twenty-eight apolitical school-children plus three fascist kids, make thirtyone Fascists"[22].

The Conservatives' View

The Conservatives argue that more responsible solutions could have been obtained if smaller groups had been called to take over the control and government of schools. They suggest that the selection should have been restricted to parents and staff of the school. Such a procedure would have made it easier, at least for a period of transition, to give them specific responsibilities without saddling all members of society with too broad and indefinite duties[23].

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[22] Pecorini, "Sindacato", p. 198.

[23] Spina, "Educazione e istruzione nei rapporti tra scuola e famiglia", Rivista giuridica della scuola, 1974, pp.1-23; Mario Reguzzoni, "La partecipazione delle comunità naturali alla gestione della scuola", Civiltà Cattolica, N. 2849 (March 1969) pp. 444-461; De Simone-Salazar, La Nuova scuola, p. 12 et seq.

According to the Conservatives, some of the new Councils, such as the District School Councils, are simply duplicates of existing institutions like the Provincial School Office (Provveditorato agli studi) which have never worked in a satisfactory way because of financial problems and lack of personnel. They argue that the District School Councils could have been avoided and the Provincial School Offices developed instead.

The Conservatives admit that the Italian school system needs true social involvement. But, they say, the proper way of realizing the reforms would have been to proceed step by step, without risk of compromising the whole structure by radical changes and untested innovations. They maintain that only the "parents synthetize all forms of the natural community"[24]. Thus, they raise the question of why "all those strangers" are gathered to cooperate in the administration of the school affairs[25].

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[24] Mario Reguzzoni, "La gestione sociale della scuola", Civiltà Cattolica, N. 2985 (Nov.1974), pp. 216-231.

[25] Mario Reguzzoni, "Esplosione scolastica e riforma della scuola", Aggiornamenti sociali, Apr. 1967, pp. 279-294.

The Constitutional Aspect

The critics of the Delegated Decret Laws maintain that some provisions are clearly inconstitutional. This seems to be the case of section 28(1) of the Delegated Decret Law c. 416 which provides that any council is validly constituted though all representatives may not have been appointed. There is no indication in the Delegating Act c. 477 that Government had the power to enact a provision of this kind. Actually, it may be held by implication from section 6(III)(1) Delegating Act c. 477 that a council cannot work, since it is not validly constituted, until all its representatives have been duly nominated[26].

Another provision which seems clearly ultra vires is section 60(VII) Delegated Decret Law c. 416 which provides that union meetings can be held on request of the unions during normal school operations and, if necessary, after cancellation of classes, provided advance notice is given to the pupils' families[27]. This provision appears

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[26] De Simone-Salazar, La nuova scuola, p. 82.

27 Michele Salazar, "In tema di libertà sindacale di riunione degli insegnanti", Rivista giuridica della scuola, 1974, pp. 122-138.

clearly in contradiction with section 4(1)(16) of the Delegating Act c. 477 which states that union meetings cannot be held on school premises during the time scheduled for lectures.

Finally, the Delegated Decret Laws make an unwarranted distinction between the representation of workers and employers. According to section 11(II)(e),(f) of the Delegated Decret Law[28] c. 416 workers (employees and autonomous workers) are represented in the Councils in a much higher proportion than employers (section 11(II)(g) of the Delegated Decret Law c. 416). It can hardly be believed, the critics say, that the Delegating Act c. 477, sec. 7(II) intended to introduce such discrimination between employers and employees when it enacted the general provision that representatives of the industry and of the unions shall be appointed on the board of the District Councils. A discrimination of this kind would have been unconstitutional, since the Italian Constitution requires all members of Italian society to take an active part in the political, economic and social organization of the country (Art. 2, 3 Italian Constitution). The Italian Republic does not re-

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[28] see also, Section 1 Education Act 1975, c. 1.

cognize a distinction of its members by classes. It is a Republic founded on the work of all categories of the productive process (Art. 1 Constitution). This basic understanding was affirmed most clearly in many sections of the Delegating Act c. 477, for example in section 2(1) and 4(1)(a) where language as the following was used: "Within the framework of the constitutional principles... In respect of the constitutional principles...". All critics agree that it is a well established principle of law that the exercise of delegated powers granted to the Government by Parliament cannot be broader than the statute under which the Government takes authority: It is the power to carry into effect the intention of the Parliament expressed in the delegating statute. This should be true for the Delegated Decret Laws the same as for any other delegation of law-making powers.

Conclusion

At the time of writing, five years after the enactment of the Delegated Decret Laws, the obvious questions are asked: What has really changed? Which improvements were obtained?.

Before attempting to answer these questions it may be interesting to clarify whether and to what extent the Delegated Decret Laws have really improved on pre-existing structures. None of the new Councils is, in fact, a duplication of previous school organizations. Some are completely new as, for example, the Circuit and School Councils, the Pupil's Disciplinary Councils (at secondary school level), the Committees for assessment of the teachers' service, the District School Councils, the Regional institutions for research and experimentation. Others are simply old structures in new clothes. For example, in the Class or Inter-class Councils the novelty lies in the representation of parents and students. The Board of Teachers is new for elementary school. The Provincial School Councils, which used to be limited to the elementary level, extend now to the secondary level and admit parents and representatives of the business community. The National School Council replaces the second and third sections of the High Council of Public Education.

The most important goal these Delegated Decret Laws have achieved is probably that they have made the school an object of general public discussion. The innovations they have brought are rather insignificant: School is, indeed, still under control of the central bureaucracy.

The say of the School Councils is practically limited to nominal power, save for the advisory functions. They have no authority to make final decisions. Everything is subject to supervision by the headmaster, the school staff and, finally, the Provveditore. The District Councils are excluded, by statute, from any direct right to influence action on didactic matters, recruitement of personnel, content of curricula and institution of new schools. These fundamental aspects of school policy and legislation are still the exclusive domain of central State authority.

The enthusiasm of the first years, especially 1974 and 1975, to bring as much politics as possible into class, is abating dramatically. Many of the parents who passionately advocated political involvement of school children, are rediscovering that it pays more to learn reading and writing at school.

The time is not yet ripe for definite assessments. Everything is still in flux and awaits clarification from the political establishment. It seems likely,however,that the centralized hierarchy of authority will eventually prevail.

CHAPTER IV

PEDAGOGICAL REFORMS

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In most societies, pedagogical reforms are among the slowest to develop and the most difficult to implement. This is due in the first place to the long time they require to plan and to the essential need for coordination. A long overdue comprehensive pedagogical revision has not yet been devised in Italy. However, several partial pedagogical reforms have been the object of recent attention and research.

Two of these dealing with the so-called "full-time" school and the integration of handicapped pupils in normal schools have reached the experimental phase of implementation; another has already been implemented and has substantially changed the practices of evaluation of the pupils' success at school through abolition of marks and supplemental exams. All three are of particular significance and will be discussed in more detail in this chapter.

School Experiments

According to the writers[1] who have explored and analyzed the problem, "full-time school" (scuola a tempo pieno) is at present one of the most interesting and progressive pedagogical experiments taking place in Italy. "Full-time" in this context means school time extension in order to keep the children at school from morning until late in the afternoon. "Full-time" experiments have covered only elementary and middle school. Though substantially different in conception and purpose, they represent the development of "after-school" (doposcuola) which was adopted in the years preceding and following World War II, on the initiative of the municipalities of large cities or of charitable institutions. The primary purpose was to take care of the children of working mothers after normal school hours.

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[1] Livia Bellomo and Silvia Vegetti Finzi, Bambini a tempo pieno: Un'esperienza di tempo pieno nella scuola primaria (Bologna: Ed. Il Mulino, 1978); Giacomo Cives, Scuola integrata e servizio scolastico (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1974); F. De Bartolomeis, Scuola a tempo pieno (Milano: Feltrinelli Ed., 1972); F. Martinelli, Strutture di classe e selezione scolastica (Napoli, Liguori ed., 1975); A. Pagnin and S. Vergine, La personalità creativa (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1977); Aldo Visalberghi, Educazione e condizionamento sociale (Bari: Laterza Ed., 1964).

In Italy, all lessons at primary and secondary school level were (and are) scheduled from 8:30 to 12:30 (or from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM in case of double shift), from Monday to Saturday. Since working parents had no possibility of picking up their children in the middle of the day, municipal organizations for social aid (patronati scolastici) were charged with solving this problem. These organizations were eventually covered by a Law of May 4, 1958 c. 261 (sec.2) which fixed their scope and purpose[2]. They had to provide lunch (refezione) for the children, and hire young teachers, who had not yet obtained State employment, to play with the children and do homework with them. "After-school" lasted until 4:30 PM. Since this was still an inconvenient time for the parents, an "over-after-school" service was provided, consisting in gathering all children in the largest available class-room (or in the gymnasium) with one person looking after them until they were taken home by their parents. It may be interesting to mention that there was also a child-care "pre-lesson" period in the morning. Parents could bring their children at 7:30 AM and the school provided personnel who looked after them

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[2] See for further references Cives, Scuola integrata, supra note 1.

until lessons commenced at 8:30. "After-school" assistance was free for children whose parents showed to be poor (they also received free books and stationery and sometimes clothes), otherwise a small fee was charged. Initially these innovations covered only elementary schools but after the Comprehensive Middle School Act of 1962 they were extended to middle school. "After-school" is still part of the Italian school system, but it has limited relevance from a pedagogical point of view, since it is not "school" but simply child care.

This state of affairs induced educators in the sixties to develop a concept of "integrated" school where the teachers' activities would be coordinated over the whole day and the children given an appropriate environment for spontaneous self-organization and introduced to socializing experiences. One adverse aspect of "after-school" was (and is) its non-mandatory nature. The children who had to stay at school the whole afternoon while their classmates went home at lunchtime felt a sense of frustration at being deprived of the privilege of being with their family. This was especially great at lunch time when all members of the family traditionally gathered together. Some educators considered that these negative aspects of "after-school" could be easily avoided by making lunch and school in the

afternoon mandatory for all children. They maintained that significant educational value could be added to the curricula if the concept of "child care with homework" were discarded in favor of a new approach in which school in the afternoon became real "school" following the common lunch for all children and teachers. The solutions adopted in other countries were studied and eventually a proposal of "full-time" school came before Parliament.

In 1971 the Ministerial Order of September 9, 1971 c. 1, for Middle School, and the Full-time School Act of September 24, 1971 c. 820, for Elementary School, were passed. The two enactments, both designed to introduce full-time had only minor differences in wording. Technically, there was the important distinction in that the Ministerial Order for middle schools was only an internal administrative ruling, while the Act dealing with elementary school was a binding law of Parliament. However, this seemingly substantial distinction turned out to be insignificant because up to now (Feb, 1980) both enactments have led to no further development than "experimental" full-time classes[3]. Surprisingly, despite over eight years

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[3] The Decret Law of the President of the Republic of Jan. 14, 1972 c. 2 had transferred some administrative functions relating to school assistance from State to the Regions. Another law of July 22, 1975 c. 382 provided the Government with the necessary powers to implement such transfer within 12 months.

of experimentation, no clear decision had been made as to the future potential for this highly interesting innovation[4].

Financial difficulties and paucity of facilities (in particular the lack of buildings) and the great resistance on the part of the teachers are the strongest obstacles to the improvement of the program. It is not easy to assess in depth the reasons which induce the majority of teachers to refuse to participate in these experiments which are potentially rich in stimulating professional contents. They are probably the same reasons for the unpopularity of full-time generally. On a purely theoretical level, teachers manifest interest for this kind of pedagogic and social integrative school, but in practice their interest is neutralized by emotional reactions. Teachers are accustomed to traditional schedules and typically try to avoid intrusions on their privacy and routine. The new patterns which are suggested by the integrated "full-time" experiments threaten disruption of teachers' life styles. Indeed, apart from the necessary changes in school organization and structure, the implementation of the innovative "full-time" models requires

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[4] Marcello Feola and Maria Pia Balsamo, "Sull'esperienza d'integrazione scolastica nella scuola media", Annali della pubblica istruzione, Vol. 24, N. 2 (1978), pp. 163-180; Livia Bellomo and Luisa Ribolzi, L'arcipelago sperimentale. Tempo pieno nella scuola d'obbligo (Bologna: Ed. Il Mulino, 1979).

fundamental changes of the role which the teacher is asked to play in the classroom.

Among the difficulties teachers face with these experiments are lack of competence, especially the capacity to plan and manage the educational context according to pre-set objectives. The situation clearly creates deep conflicts for the teachers. If they accept the innovation, they will expose to criticism the value and significance of their day-to-day work. The "full-time" experiments ask the teachers to abandon their customary role which has become in many cases the ritualized repetition of traditional subject matters and to insert themselves in a new context of interpersonal relations. They are now asked to update their knowledge and become more sensitive to social and interpersonal problems. Not surprisingly, many feel very insecure.

Nevertheless, many teachers do recognize that the possibilities of simply personal initiatives within the isolation of the school class are continuously diminishing. An experiment such as the "full-time" which is structurally based on the primacy of the"group" over the "lesson", can only succeed if the teachers unite and acknowledge the pedagogical needs of interaction and participation. It is clear that from a pedagogical view-

point, school can no longer be regarded as the place where children "who do not know" are educated by adults "who know". An adequate pedagogical situation can be obtained only if a community of adults have reached, as a team, their professional goals through the interaction with a community of children, who become the element of verification and promotion of their own "raison d'être". This attitude could also help overcoming the inconsistencies of a school which attributes the reasons of its failure to the incompetence, the ignorance and the deficiencies of the children, placing itself outside the dispute.

The difficulties met so far with the "full-time" school experiments indicate the great need for prudence and careful planning. They show in particular the need for improved teacher training and for well-prepared and clearly defined planning. However, in spite to the difficulties, "full-time" is the most interesting pedagogical innovation in contemporary Italian school legislation. It is much more than a simple extension of the school timetable. It involves a basic change in approach from one that asks "What should children know?" to one that wonders "What kind of adults should children grow up to be and in what kind of society?".

Abolition of Special Classes

For several years a number of Italian schools experimented with special class sections (classi differenziali) at the primary school level and, after the 1962 reform, at the middle school level[5]. These special classes had been formed for children with slight retardation, emotional and behavioral problems, and for those children who had minor difficulties due to insufficient basic instruction at home. The teachers of these classes were free to create their own style and method of work. They received few, if any, guidelines and materials from the central administrative authorities due to the experimental character of the program. The goal was to provide special training for these children. The differential classes followed the same curricula of normal classes and there were no differences in the time schedule.

Until the end of the sixties[6] public opinion and many educators were in favor of such special sections.

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[5] The Law Dec. 31, 1962, N. 1859 introduced special class sections in the middle school.

[6] See Report of the"A.Gatti School" in Asti (Italy) for 1965-66, "Differential Classes in the Scuola Media", Western European Education, Vol 1, N. 2-3 (1969), pp. 101-110.

But in the early seventies there arose a new trend of thought, promoted by the conviction that these special classes were not always well taught. Most educators felt now the handicapped children were being isolated from real life and removed from all opportunities for a tentative introduction and competition in the active world. Psychologists also questioned the merits of these special classes. Recent studies favored different ways of training such handicapped children and urged improved facilities at regular school in order to permit the "problem children" to attend regular classes with all other children. One psychologist wrote:

> It is true that differential classes are a way of relieving regular classes of children who slow up the work and increase the teacher's burden. But this does not seem a legitimate reason for preferring this solution of the problem to another one that requires more organizational effort on the part of the school and greater commitment and preparation from the teacher.
> If, until yesterday, the differential classes seemed to be the best solution (often theoretically so because their number was limited), nowadays the success of psychopedagogical medicine and the greater diffusion of the CMPP allow us to attempt solutions that are more in line with clinical reality and more respectful of the child's sensibility and of the delicate world of the school.
> ...The conviction that differential classes can solve almost all the problems of the elementary school can lead those in responsible positions to create a situation that, so far, appears inadequate. School reform must be considered in a broader, more modern perspective. [7]

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[7] Franco Bernocchi, "Differential Classes in the Primary School", Western European Education, Vol. 1, N. 2-3 (1969), pp. 111-116, at 115-116.

Starting in 1975, serious attempts of reform were undertaken. The Ministry of Education created at that time a special department whose task was to study the possibilities of full integration of "retarded" or "problem" children in normal schools. The task was very difficult because handicapped children pose not only school problems but also, and mostly in a greater dimension, heavy problems of human and social nature. A Law of March 30, 1971 c. 118 had dealt rather superficially with the abolition of "differential classes" and integration of handicapped children in normal classes. However, this law was practically disregarded until 1975 when the Minister of Education issued an instruction (Circular N. 227 of August 8, 1975) which led to the definite abolition of differential classes. Accordingly, all "problem children" were forcefully integrated in common school classes. This caused great disorientation and hardship for everyone, the teachers, the "regular" pupils and the "problem" children themselves, especially because there was great shortage of specialized teachers.

Lack of specialized personnel had always been a crucial problem of differential classes, but when these classes were abolished, "problem" children who could have been kept in one class were spread over many re-

gular classes, with the result that it was absolutely impossible to make one specially trained teacher available as assistant to the class teacher for each normal class attended by at least one retarded child. It is true that a law was passed immediately - the D.P.R. Oct. 31, 1975, N. 970 - which created special training courses for teachers of handicapped children, but it took another two years to have the curricula of such courses approved (D.M. Jun. 3, 1977) and to have the status of handicapped children clarified by a Law of Parliament (L. Aug.4, 1977, N.517)[8].

It cannot really be said that simply transferring "problem" children from differential to normal classes was a true reform. The reforms have still to come. There is, on the other side, great fervor of research activity which is aimed to achieving a pedagogically and socially satisfactory solution. The preparatory work in progress covers analyses of past experiences and elaboration therefrom of models to propose to schools and teachers in order to develop the organizational structure of a meaningful inte-

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[8] See also the Ministerial Circular (Min. of Ed.) N. 680 of Mar. 2, 1976, the Ministerial Circular (Min. of Ed.) N. 228 of Sep. 29, 1976 and the Ministerial Note (Min.of Ed.) N. 1320 of Apr. 15, 1977.

gration of the retarded children. An important aspect which is being studied and fostered is the interprofessional cooperation between experts of psychopedagogy and differential methodology.

A less inspiring but nevertheless extremely important problem is the availability of proper facilities at school. Everything changes dimensions. The organizational problem of establishing a few specialized centres cannot be compared with the necessity of organizing potentially all Italian schools to receive the handicapped and to provide them with at least the same quality of training as they could have had in differential classes. For the regular schools this imposes the additional burden of readjusting "different" children to as normal as possible social milieu. It is certainly a ground for satisfaction that serious efforts were made to study the aspect of developmental clinical and differential psychology, juvenile neuropsychiatry and the differential psychopedagogy of learning, rehabilitation and recuperation. In this extremely specialized domain, preparation of teachers is obviously the aspect of highest priority. This, the Minister of Education and the groups who are in charge of research and advisory functions

realized quite correctly, and the greatest efforts were put in this task. The psychological and social interaction of the handicapped between themselves, their classmates, their teachers and the school on one side, and the tendency of the school to technical inertia and lack of coordination with the social context are also being studied in great detail.

Many experiments are in progress and the experiences are gathered, compared, assessed and selected by teams of researchers. It is very likely that they will provide objective, scientifically supported models for the methodological approach, and the flow of exchange of information between the participants. The special curricula are in the making. The drafters are trying to avoid all grounds for personal, ideological and institutional conflicts. Finally, the relationship between school and the parents of the handicapped children and the role of the school as a transition from family to independent life in society are the object of careful scrutiny. It is felt that interaction among all participants to the social context is the key issue. The "real" integration of retarded children is far from being accomplished, but there is hope that it will eventually became true. This reform has actually an advantage over many others. This is due to the fact that, after the usual political battles in Parlia-

ment, politicians claim no say in the developments in process. The technicians are at work[9].

Changes in Evaluation System

The beginning of the 1977-1978 school year was marked by significant innovations due to the simultaneous application of two important pieces of legislation, namely the Law of June 18, 1977 c. 348 and the Law of Aug.4, 1977 c. 517. The first was a modification of the middle school legislation of 1962 and charged the middle school with the task of preparing students more explicitly for the world of work than had been the case previously. New curricula were provided to support the introduction of technical in-

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[9]See, Laura Serpico Persico, "I 'diversi' come tutti: il problema degli handicappati nella scuola", Scuola e didattica, N. 14, (Apr.15, 1976); Laura Serpico Persico, "L'integrazione degli handicappati nella scuola comune", La Scuola e l'Uomo, N. 6 (June 1976); A. Augenti, La questione scolastica dei ragazzi handicappati (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1977); Laura Serpico Persico, "Gli handicappati e la scuola. Un primo bilancio", Annali della pubblica istruzione, Vol.24, N.1 (1978),pp.13-20; Bice Laddomade, "Analisi di una esperienza di formazione per animatori dell'integrazione degli handicappati", Annali della pubblica istruzione, vol. 24, N. 6 (1978), pp. 622-630.

struction as a mandatory subject. The second contained provisions for the evaluation of students and the abolition of supplemental exams (esami di riparazione). in the elementary and middle school. A true agitation has been caused by two sections (4 and 9) of this second law. These sections state that the teachers shall no longer assess the pupil's success at school with the traditional marks, but that they shall rather express their evaluation in terms of descriptive words. This law was readily attacked by heavy criticism protest; refusal and polemic.

The reasons for this reform were twofold: on one side it was felt that marks had some discriminatory flavor which was no longer acceptable in the contemporary Italian educational context, on the other side it was hoped that the new system would provide more objective standards of evaluation. It was suggested that the personality of the pupils be assessed by continuous and global observation of their aptitudes and behavioral patterns, by annotation of significant data of their progress in learning and by the formulation of judgments of value. The difficulties of such kind of reforms are that they usually

shift the problem into a different dimension without solving it. This is exactly what happened with the abolition of marks. What was achieved was that a set of symbolic expressions with conventional meanings were substituted for other symbolic expressions with practically analogous conventional meaning.

The reform was actually implemented with the issuance by the Ministry of Education of a special evaluation form[10] on which the teachers were required to express their assessment of a great many of characteristic aspects of the pupils' learning capacity and personality. The "personal form", as this booklet is called, asked the teacher to give a comprehensive set of detailed information on, e.g.:

- Participation of the pupil in school activity, relationship with teachers, classmates and other school personnel, participation in group and integrative activities.
- Progress of learning and level of knowledge obtained in the different subjects with reference to

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[10] Cesarina Checcacci, Preface in Dalla Scuola dei voti alla scuola della valutazione (Roma: Edizioni U.C.I.I.M., 1978) p.213.

the situation at the start, the interest, the perseverance, the capacity to understand the methodological procedures belonging to each subject and the advancement with respect to the goals prescribed, taking into consideration the interdisciplinary context, the capacity to assume responsibilities and the pupils' aptitude to socialization; and observations regarding the need of individualized instruction.

- Systematic observations of improvement in learning and level of maturity obtained as a whole, and suggestions for more initiatives, cultural education, social and emotional behavior, self-confidence, possible negative elements of behavior, aptitudes and capacities, also with respect to the possible or actual choices of future education.
- Analytically motivated judgments on each pupil and subject-matter, with respect to each trimester, and adequate informative evaluation of the global level of maturity based on the elements from systematic observation and from the notes on participation to school activity.

Rating scales were readily made available to the teachers in order to assist their creativity and facilitate appropriate descriptive evaluations. One of these scales is shown in Table 22.

Table 22: Model of Rating Scale

LEVEL	Behavior with adults	Behavior with schoolmates	Participation in various activities
I	insolent impudent	hostile quarrelsome	ill-disposed destroyer
II	irritable impatient	sly isolated	disorderly disturbing
III	impulsive restless	envious jealous	discontinuous malcontent
IV	indifferent apathetic	vain ambitious	not very active inconstant
V	timid obliging	awkward accepted	unsure
VI	reserved respectful	prudent familiar	active
VII	composed calm	open pleasant	very active
VIII	fair disciplined	active hearty	autonomous
IX	candid responsible	generous and beloved leader	engaged productive tenacious
X	loyal mature		

Elaborated from: Checcacci, La scuola dei voti.

Interestingly, marks in Italy used to range from 1 to 10, one being the worst, ten the best. The same scale is now used for adjectives. One might well question whether any real improvement has resulted from this elaborate shift

from numbers to words. The dubious nature of the "reform" may be seen in the suggestions advanced to provide teachers with rubber stamps reproducing the most popular average combinations of adjectives. There were even more elaborate forms, as reported in recent studies on the subject[11].

The National Convention of the U.C.I.I.M.[12], which was held in Rimini from Oct. 31 to Nov. 4, 1977 and where the topic of "Evaluation in Middle School" was discussed felt that Italian teachers should be appropriately trained for this new kind of evaluation and it was suggested that the following initiatives be given priority:

- Use of national and local TV in order to have experts provide illustrations of the new system
- Appointment of committees in cooperation with the universities (maybe as itinerant committees)
- Provisions for adequate compensation of the extra work to be done by the teachers
- Duty of the teachers to update their knowledge

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[11] Luigi Calonghi, "Strumenti a modalità di verifica nella valutazione", in Checcacci, La scuola dei voti, p. 118.

[12] See Report of the Convention partially reproduced in Checcacci, La scuola dei voti, p. 171 et seq.

and training.(Art. 88, Delegated Decret-Law 1974, c. 417 should be accordingly changed)

- Increase of the number of staff inspectors of the Ministry of Education in order to facilitate supervision.

It was suggested at the Convention that long range initiatives and changes in policy be developed in order to prepare the upcoming generation of teachers to the new educational functions[13].

There is much controversy as to how a systematic implementation, as required by the law, can be obtained. However, there is at least partial consensus that, so far as methodology is concerned, the elements of evaluation be selectively weighed and functionally organized, cooperation among teachers be considered paramount order to obtain well balanced average results and homogeneous patterns of compliance be applied throughout. Suggestions have been made to establish "guidelines for compliance", and topics such as the following have been proposed as desirable uniform bases to start with:

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[13] See Report of the Convention, supra note 12, p. 182 et seq.

- Choice of the subject matter
- Manner of distribution of work load
- Method of work
- Intervention of the teacher
- Control of the roles within groups of pupils
- Communication between groups
- Original achievements
- Conclusions with respect to the achievement of the group[14].

Accurate methods of evaluation of written papers were recognized as very important, and complicated procedures were suggested in order to obtain the highest possible degree of objectivity in marking papers[15].

The new systems of evaluation faces serious reservations. Manifest difficulties are created by the overload of filling in the required details[16]. Concern has been expressed that the language used and suggested by the Ministry of Education could perhaps be "incomprehensible" to the parents[17]. Contemporary critics of educa-

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[14] Calonghi, "Strumenti e modalità", p. 135 et seq.

[15] Ibid, p. 136.

[16] See Report of the Convention, supra note 12, p. 177.

[17] Ibid, p. 179, 180.

tional problems show disapproval of this side-effect which, they maintain, is highly damaging and inconsistent with the efforts to foster active participation of families in school affairs. According to the critics of education there is an ethical, pedagogical, legal and psychological need for the parents to take active part to the schooling of their children. It is also suggested that, so far as the evaluation of the childrens' performance is concerned, parents should participate with continuity at three different levels: the "class" level, the "personal" level and the "school" level [18].

Other Reform Projects and Studies

A highly interesting special project has been started in the school years 1977-78 with the introduction of foreign language teaching at elementary school (ILSSE-Project).

The Ministry of Education was very careful with

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[18] See, Report of the Convention, supra note 12, p. 180.

this experiment and has allowed, so far, only 60 classes in Rome, 20 in Milan and 31 in Turin to participate to the experiment. This initiative met great resistance and criticism because of the widespread belief that early bilinguism is disturbing on the harmonious psychological development of the child. The Ministry of Education rightly pointed out in its instructions to the teachers of the experimental classes[19] that such kind of pre-occupation is scientifically unsupportable and that the only major concern was the best age to start with a second language. The Italian experiment has chosen the age of seven to eight years which is equivalent to grades two and three.

After two years of experiments the results are reportedly excellent. The pupils had no difficulties in learning the second language. But great organizational difficulties hamper the further development of the initiative. One difficulty is caused by the so-called "interdisciplinary" character of elementary school teaching,

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[19] Renzo Titone, "Un progetto speciale per l'introduzione dell'insegnamento delle lingue straniere nelle scuole elementari", Annali della pubblica istruzione, vol.24, N.1 (1978) pp. 3-12.

which means simultaneous concentration of all subject-matters of the curriculum in the person of one teacher. The Ministry of Education suggests that second language teaching should became part of the inter-disciplinary method in order to keep the character of a continuous coordinated pedagogical dialogue in the classroom. Besides, according to the Ministry of Education, it would be too expensive to provide second language through expert teachers.

Should these ideas prevail, then it will take a long time for passage from the first steps of this limited experimentation to the stage of nationwide implementation. As in any other pedagogical reform, the difficulties start with the preparation of the teachers. If the decision will be taken that second language teaching has to be provided by the class-teacher, then curricular changes have to be made to the Teacher Training College. An important question is also how "well" the foreign language must be known by the class-teacher. A further problem is the upgrading of middle school second language teaching. At present time, one foreign language is taught in middle school, and the teachers can cope even if their language knowledge is poor since they have freshmen before them. This can no longer be acceptable when pupils, who have learned for three or four years a foreign language at elementary school, enter mid-

dle school. Closely related to this is still another open question: What shall be done with the children who are now taking the special language instruction at elementary school when they reach middle school? It seems unthinkable to have them sit in classes where language teaching starts again from the beginning because all other children have had no elementary school language instruction. Unfortunately, this may be the outcome if no steps are taken for a harmonious continuation of the project in the middle school. No initiative to this effect has been made public so far (Feb. 1980).

Another domain which should be explored in depth and developed in the future is that of didactical equipment. The use of expensive visual and audiovisual equipment is limited to a small number of schools. On the other hand, practically all elementary schools have film projectors, and well made films are obtainable from the Provincial School Board.

So far as method of teaching is concerned the only guidelines are really the schoolbooks. It is unfortunate that there is no course on methodology in Italian Teachers Training Colleges' curricula, and the young teachers are therefore usually induced to teach as they have been

taught when they were themselves school children. The Delegating Act of 1973 c. 477 set new guidelines for continuation of teachers' instruction at university where methodology is part of the mandatory programmes. The requirement of a full university study applies, however, only to the new generation of teachers. In any event, as is spelled out clearly in sec. 1 and foll. of the Delegated Decret Law 1974 c. 419, method is part of the academic freedom and the teachers have the right to apply their own method and to do their own experimentation, the latter being subject only to previous coordination with the other teachers of the school, as prescribed by sec. 2 of the said Decret Law.

Summary

The changes regarding "full-time", abolition of differential classes and substitution of marks for "evaluation" are particularly important and probably unique to Italy. Each one had a different approach. "Full-time" has attracted great attention and it is likely to open new pedagogical avenues in fundamental educational thinking. Abolition of differential classes was a response to

impelling and, it is submitted, well founded demands of psychologists and behaviorists. Unfortunately, the theoretical needs of the ones did not meet the practical readiness of the others. This "reform" was nevertheless implemented without advance planning causing serious problems to the class-room organization. The switching from marks to adjectives of evaluation was an inconsidered rhetorical gesture, which serves no real purpose. It has been criticized by educators and has not met the favour of the general public opinion. The reform proposal of introducing a second language in elementary school curricula is too limited in scope and range. No opinion can therefore be expressed on it for the time being.

The examples discussed in this chapter demonstrate very clearly that pedagogical reforms should be the exclusive domain of educators. If collateral problems arise in a pedagogical context the last say should be left with the educators, since they have the ultimate burden of handling the problems.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

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Change in structure of the educational system, parents' participation in school administration and curricular planning, revision of traditional pedagogical concepts and of methodological approaches are the key issues of great innovative fervor in contemporary Italian school legislation. Italy is undergoing fast changes in allocation of political power, with a steady movement toward a Socialist takeover. Contemporary Italian lawmaking agencies are attempting to identify themselves as representatives of progressive ideals, showing readiness to implement all those changes which a true society of "equals" requires.

In this political climate, important reforms have radically changed the obsolete Italian educational system.

One, the abolition of the class-selective structure of post-elementary school, with its three channels of humanistic, professional and technical middle school, evidently tailored to foster early separation of three well defined social classes - the intellectuals, the traders and the workers - was vital for all ensuing re-

forms. Obviously, systems established under concepts which lasted for centuries,cannot be changed abruptly. This has been clearly shown with the 1962 Middle School Reform. The result was disorientation and hardship for teachers, pupils and parents. The teachers of the three branches of "middle" school had until 1962 different professional qualifications and were subject to different training patterns. As of 1962 they became all "middle school teachers" which caused,for at least a decade,great unevenness in quality of teaching. The result was that students of the generation that went to middle school in the sixties had great difficulty to pursue education in upper secondary school and eventually at university. The higher institutions had to lower their standards accordingly. The price which had to be paid for the sudden change introduced by the Unified Middle School Act was a significant decline in quality. It is true that probably no reform would ever come into force if all its effects were to be considered and taken care of in advance. But fundamental planning and preparation should really anticipate actual implementation of changes of substantial nature. In the seventies the difficulties diminished due to the interplay of two antithetic factors: on one side,

the system adapted itself partially to the new reality, on the other side, it returned partially to traditional concepts, whenever this was not in patent violation of the new law. The middle school experience, however, made the reformers very careful when it came to implement the next step, viz the unification of upper secondary school. The fact that of the many Upper Secondary School Reform Bills which were tabled in the seventies, no one reached legislative approval, and most died at the level of the study commissions is evidence that no one dares to push them any further, because nobody knows where the proposed reforms may end up. There is a general feeling of uneasiness toward pursuing this reform in the "blue-sky" as was done with the middle school reform of 1962.

With higher educational institutions made available to everybody, with the abolition of meritocratic assessments, with all political parties consenting thereto in order to enlarge the "parking-areas" for young unemployed people, no real advancement of society was achieved. Cultural distinctions were kept alive. Instead of having a structurally and organically unitary school with teachers capable of making selections, new types of discrimination were hitting the worthy pupil in the name of an ill-conceived principle of equality.

When the 1973/74 reforms (the Delegated Decret Laws) became law, social and political pressure prevailed again over pedagogical considerations. These reforms were passed in Italy in a climate of political paralysis, when the institutional structures were unable to resist extraparliamentary pressure groups.

The Delegated Decret Laws obviously do not conclude the battle for the democratization of the school. Unions have realized, actually, that the battle on the conditions of work involves very closely the question on education. The battle which started in the sixties with legitimate demands for a better functioning of the school can become an angry, mindless determination to destroy education[1]. On one side, new cultural, human and social values are sought in order to expand, from the school, to the whole life of the nation. But on the other side, insufficient efforts are made to change the school through preparation of teachers, appropriate facilities and structures, supply of means of work such as laboratories and libraries.

[1] See, on this aspect, an important document of the National Council of Education in Annali della pubblica istruzione, vol. 24, N.2 (1978), pp.200-208.

It would have been equally legitimate to expect that the heralded goals of the Delegated Decret Laws, i.e., didactic autonomy, experimentation, educational research, methodology[2] and people's participation in school and its administration would take place gradually, starting with new teacher training concepts. This was not done. The teachers' training colleges were not part of the Delegated Decret Laws and they continued to graduate teachers according to traditional educational concepts.

The solutions to problems such as "full-time" school and integration of handicapped children into normal classes were, again, inadequate. "Full-time" is still in the experimental stage,and it was definitely wrong to integrate suddenly all "problem" children in normal classes. A distinction should have been made at least between physically handicapped children and mentally retarded pupils, who usually create no problem, and children with behavioral problems, who on the contrary can cause great damage to the whole class by their incon-

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[2] Sec.1, Delegated Decret Law on Experimentation 1974, c. 419.

siderate conduct, such as rolling on the floor, climbing on the cupboards, tearing up their classmates' books and pads. In most cases it is certainly correct, from a psychological and social viewpoint, to keep such children in a regular class, but it is also indispensable that classes which host "problem" children have a specially trained teacher-assistant who takes care of them whenever special need arises.

School children like marks the same as they like sports contests. School is a continuous contest, in anticipation of the perennial contest of life. Why should school be made, artificially, different from real life? There must be different curricula, leading to different activities and professions. There must be reward for those who work harder than others. There must be means to establish capacity, skill and knowledge . Whether these aptitudes and skills are evidenced with a set of figures, alphabet letters, words or symbols, is immaterial, so long as is made clear what is meant. The expression "excellent" means the same as "A" in English schools, "1" in German schools, "10" in previous Italian school. Nothing but frustration on the side of the children was achieved by abolishing marks in Italian schools. The pleasure of coming home

with the trophies of their achievements has been taken away from the diligent.

The 1962 reform claimed that compulsory school should be equal for all. It is hoped that what was meant was that school ought to be equally accessible to all children and ought to provide to all of them an equal chance of success. It would be disappointing if it meant that in the modern Italian school all shall obtain the same success, under the motto: "No marks, no failures. Whether you learn or not, is unimportant".

Political differences and contrasts, continuous changes in Government and thus in the educational"study commissions" named by the Government and composed exclusively of political appointees who are not educational experts, are really the salient factors in the many problems within the Italian educational system. However, the most significant problem of the complex contemporary reform efforts lies in the teachers. Before thinking of any new structure in curricula, active parents' participation to school, advanced methodologies, the teachers must be prepared to their new responsibilities.

The reforms in the making are undoubtedly necessary

and many more are due. They should, however, not be carried out by isolated and uncoordinated innovations. The progressive steps should be research, decision of the models that shall be followed, planning, securement of funds, preparation of teachers, procurement of facilities, experimentation with the new systems, and implementation of the last step of the reform, which is the time when the students become involved. This has not been the manner of proceeding of the Italian school reformers of the 60s and 70s.

Some critics and educators say that in the end-result the outcome of the improvised Italian reforms is positive. The reason for this is seen in the impetus which drives contemporary Italian society to free itself from all cultural values and institutions which were created by the bourgeoisie, and which kept it alive. Others are more careful and skeptical. They point out the antagonism between independent individualism and organized collectivism, between the pedagogic theories which would stimulate the development of free personalities and society's propensity to level personalities to collective homogeneous standards. This dialectic between the individual and the general, the different and the equal is causing crisis and disorientation. The positive aspect and effect of school reforms is that they are taking education into the stream

of contemporary events. School is becoming more and more the place of training for active participation in life rather than of passive gathering of"knowledge". This is consonant with the basic understanding that education is a process of continuing transformation and change.

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