

The Current Scientific State of Reform Based on the Bologna Process in Italy

Maria Pia CAVALIERI *

Abstract

The advanced medium school and the University of the Studies of Italy have seen a series of legislative provisions finalize the restructure of the Scholastic and University Institutions in order to start a process of adaptation of the structure of several levels of education in the UN.

The Conference of Lisbon has already sped up the country-members of union to start this educational and instructive process within the participation on the system of each level. Also the Conference's aim was the acknowledgment of the titles and their validity on all European territories, gradually joining other countries.

In this context the diversity of cultures represent one fundamental aspect for the realization of one inter-culture that, also in the respect of conservation of roots of traditions of every country, finds in exchange of a ferment to increase attainment of common purposes. Two are, therefore, priority thematic ones:

- a. to construct one European society in a position for privileging the formation of citizens;
- b. to realize, and in this case Italy is moving fast, a formation that offers citizens the opportunity of the life-long learning.

Key Words: Diversity of Cultures; Life-long Learning.

To point out Italy's answer to the challenges of the Lisbon 1999 Conference and to those pointed out in 2000, always in Lisbon, in order to construct a European knowledge space, I will follow three particular paths:

- a. the Italian initiatives that could be read as anticipations of the challenges launched in Lisbon making the scholastic system more adequate in a society whose needs are continuously changing;
- b. Italy's answer to a scholastic system construction on the basis of European commission suggestions on instruction and training, paying more attention to teacher training
- c. Italian University innovations after the Bologna Process.

Every innovation of the field of instruction and training together must guarantee quality of teacher training for the development of student competencies.

Regarding the Italian initiatives, whose main objective was an evolution in the school system, I quickly cite some important changes which brought about a first change in school institutions:

- a. The introduction of college organs or student's parent representative participation in Schools of all levels;
- b. Experimental investigation of didactic activity, a new organizing model with the possibility of substitution traditional pupil classes with laboratories and/or open classes. Through this innovation, the Italian Constitution abolished requests are more effective. This school movement in some way anticipates the cited change immersed in the 1999 Lisbon Conference;
- c. Schools must and have to be prepared to receive "pupils who, in school age have particular difficulties in learning and relating". Innovation complexity is felt by the same central organs. In the Ministry dispositions, in fact, it is clearly stated that that integration "needs a new way of being on behalf of the school" involved in specifically preparing a steady reception of subjects with "physical, psychic or sensorial problems or defect".
- d. The difficulties cannot stop an evolution process of great size and uniqueness in this sector, and the Ministry tries to give initiatives for both student reception and training. Carrying out

* Prof.Dr., Aquila University.Italy

provisions for special-aid and learning-adaptation-difficulty subject integration is open-handedly received, on behalf of the whole society, placing Italy under the attention of the other European Community member countries. Legal provisions complete the scenario from more parts and institutions, given the respect of the Right of all citizens to completely develop their personality. The integration obligation of special aid subjects in both elementary school and middle school also needs the institution of a socio-psychopedagogical support team for special education teachers;

- e. A mere Secondary School Diploma and a University Degree is not enough to deal with the range of handicaps and difficulties. Specific teacher courses are organized for special education. Special education teachers should get a specialisation Title, at the end of a two-year theory-practice course in both schools or institutions recognised by the Ministry of Education. The first courses organised in L'Aquila were put in the hands of the University and were of great success due to the attention given to pedagogical, psychological and methodology-didactic training;
- f. Another equally-important novelty is the substitution of the traditional quantitative evaluation criteria of the students, with an evaluation criteria more adapt in following each student in his learning process. Student and parents are periodically informed on progress in various knowledge fields, and paths to be taken are then indicated. This teacher-training renewal anticipates the requests contained in the Report, presented to Bruxelles the 14 February 2001, from the Council (instruction) to the European Council on «Future objectives and system criteria in instruction and training» An evaluation, in fact, wanting to eliminate the concept of an intelligence-selective school, to change it into an institution contributing, together with the family and other educative agencies, to discover and evaluate each pupil's potential, in substance anticipates 2001-requested Report: Increase reading ability and guarantee to all citizens an essential operating level to give them quality learning. "It is this – one reads in the report – the key to all the following learning and occupation capacities" paying attention in making school training just a moment in instruction. To face the unknown future it is necessary that instruction changes into **taste for knowledge**; the stronger the pleasure in knowing, the stronger the will to keep up with the new.

As to how Italy has responded to the building of a school system on the basis of European Commission suggestions on instruction and training, it is to be pointed out that notwithstanding effort and the innovations that have somehow anticipated some European Commission requests, changes in school institutions have not always followed an organic and complete procedure. Secondary School has seen, here and there, additional school courses including disciplines more responsive to new disciplines, but it has always dealt with non-real structural and cognitive revision experiments. Other innovations in the teaching and learning field have followed, through the introduction of organised college didactic activity to carry out training-intervention strategies, bringing out the best in each student. Didactic criticism in this sector is supported by recent psychology, neuroscience and pedagogical studies, underlying the importance of emotions in memory and learning processes.

Notwithstanding the studious and the researchers' intuitions in the education, instruction and training field, however, Italy urgently needs more decisive and radical interventions to be able to be, with Europe more competitive even on an economic level to overcome the homologation risk of other world markets.

We must dispose of all means and idealise all strategies to recover not only a state of health, but to complete by 2010, the Lisbon Conference root objective: "that Europe become *"the world's most competitive and dynamic economy based on knowledge, capable of substantial economic growth with more qualified work posts with a major social cohesion"*. How to arrive at this winning-post is clarified in the report itself: "...an important role in instruction consists in the promotion of human values shared by our societies» who will have to make an effort to share and satisfy three objectives they cannot do without:

1. Increase the quality and effectiveness of the European Union instruction and training systems
2. Make instruction and training systems within easy reach
3. Open up instruction systems to the external world
4. Only under these conditions can the European ideal to construct an European conscience space be carried out successfully.

What is the Italian situation on teacher training?

Italian Universities have traditionally offered very complete training, but most of all, if not totally, disciplinary. Didactic aspects, typical in a more notion-based teaching, have been widely evadable. While didactics, psychology, sociology and technology opened new scenarios soliciting a teaching profession re-qualification, one was still tied to an obsolete form of instruction with respect to society's expectations in constant and rapid change.

The same elementary school teachers followed a study program in which pedagogy, psychology and didactics were not faced with productively, for such an important and delicate profession. In any case it was the only institution that gave an approach to knowing, that should have at least awakened a need for further knowledge. Elementary school, in fact was, and under some aspects remains the most efficient school to begin knowledge with.

For the following level schools, after getting a degree and if they would like to be teachers, they must attend a Specialisation School for Secondary School teachers. It is a two-year course and the number of hours more conspicuous, reserved for the area called common because teachers from every disciplinary field are obliged to attend, and to take evaluation tests. The other disciplinary fields follow specific lessons, paying particular attention to didactic modalities of teaching itself.

The SSIS are of the University, and for teacher nomination those who are already University students are given priority. In their absence the teaching position is given to external teachers who have particular cultural requests on didactics, psychology, sociology, etc. besides having work experience.

The most important new thing is that, besides the lessons, the attending undergraduates must do a training done in two ways:

- a first phase in-depth study of didactic dynamics;
- a second phase of real school experiences.

The title obtained qualifies as teachers and, up to today, it is not necessary to do competitions because you are employed on a basis of provincial and regional lists.

The new Minister Fioroni is trying to change these paths.

For quality training that fully develops the taste for knowledge, a school structure revision was however necessary.

This was attempted before with the Law Design of Minister Berlinguer, and then with Minister Letizia Moratti who concluded commission works with an organ reform of the whole articulated school system in:

Kindergarten (for three years) – not compulsory

Primary school (for five years)

Middle school

Primary and Middle school compose the first compulsory cycle; follow:

Secondary school (4 years + 1 of orientation)

Or

Professional instruction or apprenticeship or school-training (5 years)

Secondary schools, after a year of orientation, and having passed a final exam admit to Universities

Professional Institutes and Apprenticeships admit one to Technical Secondary Schools. Those who have attended these Institutes can, before completing the path chosen, decide to change to Secondary Schools, or after five years attend another year, followed by a State exam if they decide to continue to University.

Observation: The system looks functional and responsive to the different potentials of each pupil, but it is the separation between Secondary Schools and Professional Schools, with two different roads to follow at the same time, that has brought up a series of discussions and debates.

Up to today Secondary School still has not found a practical realisation. There is a certain will to deeply reflect and eventually revise the School Reform that has already become law in 2003, n.53.

I must still point out a third point proposed at the beginning of this congress report:

how Italy has responded to the Bologna Process.

In the university sector the traditional structure of four, or five years, according to the type of degree taken, has been substituted by the system three plus two suggested by the European Commission, to make a structure uniform, facilitating the free professional circulation within Europe, who in turn is welcoming new countries.

After the first three years a brief research work is discussed to obtain the title of doctor.

A further two years are needed for the magistracies degree. The two years are of specialisation. The student concluding the first level can decide or to be put into the working world, or to follow studies to get a sounder professionalism in the sector of his choices.

Along this path first level Master courses are foreseen that can be attended by first level graduates, and second level Master courses attended by those with a magistracies degree to get other useful titles to carry out his profession.

Many Italian universities have undertaken supplement diplomas foreseen by the European Community itself.

I conclude by saying that Italy has been making great efforts to fit in with United Europe's requests, and to contribute through a series of opportunities put at the student and researcher's disposition to obtain a movement of study titles.

In the university field a series of programs are annually activated for student participation in community programs as well as many research programs for teachers like Erasmus Socrates, Comenio, Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, etc. Regarding L'Aquila's Academy in the last few years it has seen an increase in the enrolment number, of at least the scientific and technological Faculties, while the humanities faculties have updated formation offers increasing Degree courses, in Communication Science and Social Science. Even the enrolment number has increased, a vital and projecting sign towards the request fulfilment emerged from the Lisbon Conference, at the Bologna Process. I would like to take a glance at my Faculty that was instituted two years ago in the 2006/2007 academic year. It has seen 700 enrolments in first year, and registered a flux of students coming from the southern regions, and others who preferred to transfer themselves from other much older Italian universities. The Faculty of Psychology, having overcome many difficulties mainly caused by few teaching spaces was able to create and make function a good number of research laboratories, and is well-linked with other laboratories in the United States, Brazil, Columbia, Germany and Switzerland.

A series of conventions with psychology studies and health structures of other Italian cities have been activated to meet the training of the enrolled. Compulsory training both during university life and after a degree is indispensable for the state exam and the enrolment among professional psychologists.

All Faculties are now obliged to follow all the enrolled both in laboratory experience and training.

Theory and practice are no longer two separate paths; they are complementary in guaranteeing the best professional quality.

Professors of any scientific discipline sector are asked to evaluate both their didactic and communication work with the students, necessary to carry out their own professional duties. The Academy is subjected to a national evaluation because the higher the quality of the studies, the higher the economic contribution of the State.

The picture up until now highlighted gives a complete vision of what the public instruction path has completed in the last decades.

Without doubt a lot has been done, and a lot still remains to be done.

From the picture above, the necessity to complete a *Public Instruction System* organic restructuring very clearly emerges in the UE space. According to us, such a necessity does not result in being an isolated birth of a reflection on today.

Namely, as “*school people*”, historic memory custodians, we cannot forget that Europe, *our Europe*, in its long and historic walk towards the development of social model architecture (intended as complex society’s growth processes) has already had similar reflections, reflections that today are very contemporary.

This is the contribution that in the flourishing seven hundreds the Marquis Condorcet, with his *Report on Public Instruction* offers us. (20 April 1792)

A project which anticipates with an incredible lucidity the needs that modern society would have expressed, centuries later, in *Instruction* material, as a State’s first investment. A project which invested the whole society at that time, where Condorcet deals in: research freedom, teaching freedom, anticipating the permanent education concept, today identified as Knowledge Society’s main pillar, the *Long life Learning*.

Therefore we must not forget in the report’s closing to produce a fundamental passage on women’s equal rights regarding instruction law material (equal opportunity politics).

Two thoughts that sustain the entire thought processes spurred by the Lisbon Conference works.

Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat’s report, Marquis of Condorcet, mathematician, economist, philosopher and politician, protagonist and victim in the same revolution in which, according to us, believed up to his death and spurred from the preceding text “*Five memories on public instruction*”, given to be published in 1791, under the title “*Public instruction elegy*”.

A work dealing with the following themes:

- . **First memoir**, *Public instruction nature and scope*
- . **Second memoir**, *Of common instruction for children*
- . **Third memoir** taken from *Of common instruction for adults*
- . **Fourth memoir**, *Of relative instruction for professions*
- . **Fifth memoir**, *Of relative instruction for science.*

As imagined the topics dealt with by Condorcet, in his work, make one reflect on instruction's timeless nature, when It serves man's society and not his powers.

The issue that school, and the public Instruction system is the instrument of social economic growth, of equal opportunity, of individual permanent emancipation, of society's civil and cultural development, even if it is an every day first objective of "*Society of Knowledge*", results in being, in the light of the above exposed, an innate DNA objective of "*School People*", those "people" who have always "screamed", "shouted" to all the actors in "power" that society cannot but invest its resources in school and instruction.

For *It* and only *It* can guarantee what society asks for: development, growth, citizen social and civil emancipation, shared well-being and active citizen participation.

Due to time and space we can no longer indulge, even if we would have liked to go into depth on Marquis Condorcet's work, who does not take anything away from the praiseworthy work done by contemporary Europe's protagonists. Here one must remember Jacques Lucien Jean Delors and Edith Cresson's contribution to the construction of *Europe of Knowledge*.