



APRENDIZADO RELACIONADO AO TRABALHO COMO METODOLOGIA PARA A FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES

WORK-RELATED LEARNING AS A DIDACTIC METHODOLOGY FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

EL APRENDIZAJE RELACIONADO CON EL TRABAJO COMO METODOLOGÍA PARA FORMACIÓN DOCENTE

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Resumo: A formação de professores que são capazes não só de pensar e agir, e vice-versa, mas também de julgar e redesenhar seus próprios atos é cada vez mais crucial diante dos novos desafios que enfrentamos no contexto global: por essas razões, parece razoável configurar o período de formação inicial de professores em torno do paradigma do aprendizado, estruturalmente fundamentado na aprendizagem baseada no trabalho. Só assim pode superar o paradigma separativo que coloca em primeiro lugar a teoria e a reflexão e, em um segundo momento separado, a prática e a ação, promovendo a recomposição circular entre a teoria e a prática, sem reduzir o aprendizado a um mero “estágio”.

Palavras-chave: Educação inicial de professores. Aprendizagem. Aprendizado relacionado ao trabalho.

Abstract: Training teachers who are able not only to think and act, and vice-versa, but also to judge and redesign their own acts is increasingly crucial in front of new challenges we are facing in the global context: for these reasons, it appears reasonable to configure the period of initial teacher education around the apprenticeship paradigm, structurally grounded on work-based learning. Only in this way it could overcome the separative paradigm that puts first the theory and reflection and then, in a second – separated – moment, the practice and action, thus promoting circular recomposition between theory and practice, without reducing apprenticeship to a mere “traineeship”.

Keywords: Initial Teacher Education. Apprenticeship. Work-related learning.

Resumen: Formar docentes capaces no solo de pensar y actuar, y viceversa, sino también de juzgar y rediseñar sus propios actos es cada vez más crucial frente a los nuevos desafíos que enfrentamos en el contexto global: por estas razones, parece razonable configurar el período de formación inicial del profesorado en torno al paradigma del aprendizaje, basado estructuralmente en el aprendizaje basado en el trabajo. Sólo de esta manera podría superar el paradigma separativo que antepone la teoría y la reflexión y luego, en un segundo momento separado, la práctica y la acción, promoviendo la recomposición circular entre la teoría y la práctica, sin reducir el aprendizaje a una mera “pasantía”.

Palabras-clave: Formación inicial de docentes. Aprendizaje. Aprendizaje relacionado con el trabajo.

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Teaching to learn³

Teaching is an inevitable difficult, insidious process in everyday life, and from the very beginning, the progress of humanity has developed also thanks to the work of a direct teaching meant to transmit knowledge and skills from generation to generation; then at a certain point in human history we have exclusively shared cultural, technical and wisdom heritage of the community, a historical moment happening everywhere on Earth at different times and in different ways always with the advent of external and new training devices compared to those given from previous tradition.

In the Western classical culture of Greek origin, we found historical and cultural steps, and social factors which allowed these changes: the transition from orality to writing (Ong, 1982); the teaching of the Sophists in the democratic Athens of the fifth century BC (Plato, Capp. IX, X); the novelty of Christianity underlining the importance and dignity of work, as shows the whole history of monasticism (Stark, 2005); the apprenticeships for young people to shop at the beginning of Modern Age (Lori Sanfilippo & Rigon, 2014); the printing press; the establishment of schools linked to religious orders and public schools (Spadolini, 2004); the widespread school for all citizens (Houston, 1996). And also, the teaching transmission and insertion in the world of traditional values that have always took place in the family context, and which is suffering today from a deep crisis in the West (Benasayag & Schmit, 2003), should be considered in an informal context.

Teaching is therefore inevitable to ensure the progress and maintenance of humanity, but it is difficult at the same time, since it requires not only to own knowledge which has to be transmitted and to be aware of open wide horizons, but it also involves the presence of another person willing to learn, (Paparella, 1988), and the awareness of what a Lacan Italian psychoanalyst slightly describes: the stretch that marks each authentic transmission of knowledge for which school is responsible at each level, from elementary school up to postgraduate level, is neither the existence clarification nor reduction of truth to a sum of information, but it is the emphasis on how it revolves around an 'impossible' to transmit it. The teacher is not who possesses the knowledge, but the one who can establish a unique

³ This work is the fruit of a joint reflection by the two authors. However, sections 1-2-3 have been written by Cristina Casaschi, whereas Francesco Magni is the author of section 4-5-6. The section 7 has been written jointly.



relationship with the impossibility that crosses the knowledge, that is the impossibility to know everything, the relevance of the limit (Recalcati, 2014, p. 5).

As a result, teaching is also a tricky task, because it involves at least three major risks. Firstly, probably the least serious, is to be limited to train, without taking into consideration the entirety of the person before you; it would be a teaching implemented to transfer skills through repetition, always equal to themselves or, at most, improved in the progress of knowledge and the exercise of skills; a purely technical teaching which is valid if it does not forget to be inextricably linked to science and knowledge; sterile if merely a training (Bertagna, 2004).

Second, a very well known risk in teaching history, is to be limited to introduce, and try to convey concepts, or to offer a theoretical teaching, so that theoretically, as Bordieu says (Bordieu, 1995, p. 197) it becomes abstract and turns around to the multiple meanings of the terms losing any reference to the situation in which they acquire full meaning (“Scholastics view”). All attempts to separate the “concrete” from the ideas of the person who thinks them, have already failed or have paid the price for abstractness that has nothing to do with preparation for life, one of the teaching outcomes that cannot be considered secondary.

A third risk, probably the most insidious, is to exercise power over the other, through the teaching weapon. The asymmetry between teacher and student if, on the one hand, can introduce the student to the desire for knowledge and to reading skills of reality enriched by disciplines, on the other it may generate a crippling addiction to a sort of extension of teacher’s personality in the student up to crystallize the growth, in severe cases, , freezing it in a pattern determined by others, rather than open up its freedom, a dimension that every form of education showing to be educational, can promote (Pareyson, 2005, p. 78).

These three forms of teaching risk pertain, of course, both to already trained teachers and those who are training and become ready to teach, benefitting themselves from teaching.

It is therefore crucial that those under training to become teachers, and those, in turn, teaching the future teachers, are aware of the complexity and also the radical nature of the stakes.

If, in Europe, one of the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2006/962/ec) is called “Learning to learn”, here we face the problem of “teaching to teach”. But, as in the first case it is utterly abstract to talk about a “learning to learn” whether this learning does not have



an object on which rest, in the same way the teaching of teaching cannot be accomplished in the abstract but must clash with the most powerful form of learning, the reflected experience (Merizow, 1991).

Learning to teach

Teaching and learning are inseparable and deeply interconnected dimensions, linking also all aspects of human reason: relational, rational, sensory, without excluding any of them. In either case there is a question, as J.H. Pestalozzi would say: heart, mind (spirit), hand (Pestalozzi, 1801 It. ed. 1929).

Holding together the theoretical, technical, practical, and experiential dimensions, guarantees that teacher trainees have the opportunity to take into account all the factors that are involved in the teaching-learning relationship, which appear very numerous and complex.

These strategic observations should not be confused or limited to a sort of methodological innovation, as in the experimental activist of O. Decroly (Decroly, 1925), but even to a simple content innovation or technology (Handgun & Ferrari, 2010, pp. 9-68), or even to a technical dominion of teaching, as in the proposal of B. Bloom, R. Mager and in all educational models deriving from them (Bloom, 1976). It is, rather, to take into account and make at the same time leverage on the entirety of the human person, because the teacher is a human person as well as the student is, and educational event takes place always and only in human persons in which cognition, emotion, and relationship are combined together in various though inevitable ways.

The largest international research on the condition of the recently published teachers (OECD, 2016, pp. 30 et seq.) certifies that, on average, the majority of currently serving teachers received a training on teaching formal content (epistemology of the subjects), how to convey them and on the pedagogical aspects related to their profession. The survey, however, cannot comfort because the imbalances within this homogenized average are many and significant: in Italy only 35% of teachers declares to have received an educational training, less than half of Iceland and Alberta teachers reported that their formal education also affected content related to matters currently taught, and more than a quarter of Finland, Japan and Mexico's teachers (showing surprising results, given the setting of the country's PISA



results), feels at all or poorly trained in relation to both content, teaching and pedagogical considerations.

On the contrary, there is an increasing body of researches that positively correlates the effectiveness of teaching practices with the current financial situation made during the phases of profession training (Ronfeldt, Reininger & Kwok, 2013; Preston 2017).

Similarly, since the actual universally shared principles enunciated by Shon on professional reflexivity (Shon, 1983), there have been many studies highlighting the reflective competence as one of the basic qualifications of a “good” teacher (Fabbri, Melacarne & Striano, 2008), directly affecting the professional effectiveness (Körkkö, Kyrö-Ämmälää, & Turunen, 2016).

It is therefore necessary not only to think a teacher training in a unified way that reminds of reflexivity coming from a critical reading, without neglecting the content, but to also plan it in order to configure training practices that realize concretely this circularity (spiral) from the academic organizational and methodological point of view.

The circularity between learning and teaching is required for different reasons, among which:

- Respecting the unity of experience, going beyond the separative paradigm that theorizes, first, the possession of a good theoretical preparation and, only then, his role in the situation. This would imply the completely abstract possibility to learn “on paper” skills which are not thereby attemptable, though scientifically explicable on the logical and physical level. Even if we learned all the mechanisms of static and dynamic balances and the laws of motion, it does not mean that we would be able to ride a bicycle, nor the study of flotation of bodies in physics would make us good swimmers. Any of us has certainly learned to swim after being brutally thrown into water, and still retains the trauma; we do not mean that when we talk about a “full immersion” into an educational environment whose purpose is learning to teach, since some knowledge is necessary to approach the task not only in an epistemological way, but also morally and ethically correct, we do not learn how to swim from the edge of the river, but only by accepting the risk of raising your feet from the point of support that gives us assurance, but which still keeps us anchored to the ground.
- Avoiding ideas and standardized procedures. When even beginner teacher would face an entire class, he will always find himself in front of a non- inhomogeneous multiplicity of singularities. Any



form of theoretical preparation, by merely being divorced from embodied reality, provides predictable cause-effect combinations. But, as everyone may experience, something is to imagine a model student, even if problematic, something else is to be faced with a life and all its particularity that, among other things, also light in ourselves feelings and thoughts that we would not have planned. Trained on techniques, teaching methods, on relational and even psychological aspects of teaching-learning in context and dynamic business structure allows ourselves to observe the situation and, not least, to observe ourselves in the situation, giving the opportunity, to some extent in a still “protected” way as that of work-related training, to reflect on the experience enlightening it with the general theoretical that can be useful for the purpose, but, in turn, showing also the theory in the light of practice. Not surprisingly, pedagogy is defined as the theory and practice of education.

- Reassessing learning value of imitation. Even present as a baby, imitation is the first way of learning. As recalled by Reboul (Reboul, 1983 It. ed. 1995 p. 36), imitation indicates two different realities; at first the action to reproduce what the other is doing, but this is not learning because the imitator “does what he can do”. Imitation, however, indicates the attempt to do what the other is doing. In this case there is the possibility to implement its own capacity (no human will be able to sing or fly like a canary, because they do not have the capacity). In such sense, any imitation or repetition is effective in learning experience only when, a step forward, a customization, and a personal creation of the original takes place in each performance. So then even imitation can be said to be the beginning of a personal training.

The student’s teacher must therefore have eyes to see, head to think (which also means to decide, to do, and to re-evaluate in retrospect), knowledge to compare, tools to facilitate.

May all this be learned in an academic context which consists of lectures, exams, acquisition of college credit?

Perhaps, as St. Francis de Sales stated not without paradox, nor without truth, “teaching is the basis for learning” (Francis de Sales, 1619 ed. 2009, p. 29).



Circularity, reflective and formative alternation for the teacher

The teacher performs different tasks depending on the cultural paradigm characterizing this function.

He can be considered as a transmitter of knowledge, engaged in optimizing the transfer of knowledge through appropriate stimulus-response techniques (Thorndike, 1932); a facilitator of building processes and strategies (Ausbel, 1968; Gagné, 1971); and then deputy to create the conditions so that learning takes place; yet, he may be considered a promoter of reflexivity in the student (Self-regulated learning) (Winne, 2016), particularly attentive to the metacognitive aspects; in a constructivist view the teacher routes and accompanies the student in his own process of construction of knowledge and in social perspective as well, teacher can turn its attention to the process of knowledge that arises from the common interaction (Pepper, 1970; Wenger, 2006), during which the attention of the teacher is addressed to the group, more than to the individual learner. One could go on, and certainly deepen this aspect. But these brief hints are sufficient to say that it is not the same as entering the classroom with an idea of teaching rather than another (Amenta, 2013, pp. 217-234), or, even less, enter the classroom with an idea and realize in practice that things are different since class is not a laboratory, and children are not guinea pig.

As a teacher, is he aware of his choice of teaching? Does he realise that every choice implies a cultural paradigm and an idea of man as well as a professional one? (Xodo & Bertagna 2011).

The constant exercise of reflexivity that, if guided, you can acquire as a professional practice since the basic training of the teacher, supports this fundamental awareness, which, over the years, will allow the teacher to restructure his educational and teaching activity in relation to the characteristics of his class, of his own pupils, the contemporary social demand, and to be continuously formed for this purpose, and not just once for all.

This can only be done by alternating active work contexts and critical analysis moments of what occurs at work, and in class. So as to return on the field, in a never-ending cycle, , to innovate the practice in the light of what is contained, and to understand better, thanks to the evidence of the practice. no one without the other, ever: action marked by good reasons, and good reasons that might be present, and acting to vivify the situation and



critically reflecting on the fact. A work that has, in turn, to be re-read in relation to its intention and to its effectiveness, as well.

Please note that this operation cannot be performed by the student being alone during the training; it requires a community peers to confront with and a tutorial figure who can lead the teacher training in the use of media's thoughtful devices and who, indeed, always points out, the unity of active and reflective moments as two sides of the same phenomenon, and if necessarily they should be interchanged so as not be conceived as separate blocks, although properly separated (Arendt, 1987, p. 100).

The importance of Teacher Education and the “practice turn”

In an Introduction to a recent book Ian Menter, Emeritus Professor of Teacher Education at the University of Oxford, wrote that «an analysis of teacher education policy in any state system is deeply revealing of the currently dominant values within that society. Through defining how and where teachers should be prepared for their work and sometimes through prescribing exactly what they should know and be able to do, we see how those in power in society are seeking to shape the world for future citizens» (Menter, 2016, p. 3).

Similarly, one of the most important OECD reports underlines that the quality of teachers «is the only most important school variable influencing student achievement» (OECD, 2015a).

Over the last years, confirming the initial statement of Menter, the attention to teaching profession and teachers has increased, and issues linked to their education and recruitment have become an important matter debated also at European level: «rethinking how we attract, educate and support teachers, school leaders and teacher educators is a pressing issue, with the teaching profession across Europe strongly affected by demographic trends» (European Commission, 2013, p. 7).

With the teaching profession currently evolving and facing «a number of challenges, including an ageing population, variable working conditions and negative view of the profession» (OECD, 2015b, p. 88), in many European Countries policy makers are wondering about the best ways to attract young, prepared and motivated graduate students to the teaching profession; moreover, the aim of prospective reforms is to raise the quality of the teaching



staff, overcoming thus a merely quantitative approach. In this perspective, it will be increasingly important to select and train future teachers in the best way.

Learn to teach, in fact, is a long process, continuous and complex, in which intertwine various factors: theory, epistemology discipline, interpersonal relationships between teachers and between teachers and students. Teacher education has a start, but it has not a real end: it is a continuous process, that has to integrate formal (courses, etc.) and informal moments (on-the-ground experience) (Baldacci, 2013).

Therefore, initial teacher education has to integrate different perspectives simultaneously, encouraging to act in a thoughtful way, essential for a real practitioner (for this “multi-faceted approach”, see Darling-Hammond et al., 2012).

After all, Benedetto Croce already wrote in 1918: «I have experienced myself the lie of a pedagogical doctrine which locks up education into early life (the preface of the book), and the truth of the contrary doctrine that sees the whole life as a continuing education, and the knowledge as a unity of knowing and learning. And when you know, no longer able to learn, when you have been educated without the possibility of a better education, life stops and it can no longer be called life but death» (Croce, 1918).

Training teachers who are able to think and act, and vice versa, and are able to think, judge, redesign its own acts, is increasingly crucial in front of the new challenges in the global context (Bertagna, 2016a; Magni, 2016).

But if there is on the one hand a wide agreement internationally recognized about the importance of a good and effective initial teacher education; on the other «there is a wide range of views about how to develop it» (Darling-Hammond, et. al, 2012, p. 151), even if it is possible to recognize one of the most recent trends of evolution in initial teacher education around the world.

In her foreword to a recent and important book about teacher education, Marylyn Cochran-Smith identifies in “the practice turn” one of the five trends in current educational policies for teachers training. She writes: «the practice turn has emerged internationally in the face of mounting claims that college and university preparation programmes have failed to



produce effective teachers in part because of the long-perceived “gap” between theory and practice. The notion of a “theory-practice gap” is based on the perceived failure of the university model of teacher education, which presumably emphasises theory, values and belief at the expense of actual teaching practice, thus leaving new teachers on their own to implement or translate theory into practice» (M. Cochran-Smith, 2016, p. xiii).

Similarly, other authors (Mattsson et. al, 2011; Reid, 2011; Bird et. al., 2013; Zeichner, 2014) recognized that teacher education reforms are internationally placing much greater emphasis on teacher learning to teach in extended practice periods in schools. And one of the education systems where this “practice turn” is more evident, is the English one.

Recent trends in Teacher Education in England: theory vs. practice?

If on the one hand “defining work-based learning is challenging as the literature is often vague and contradictory” (Malloch et al., 2011), on the other, we can start from some international experiences (like England) in which the relationship between theory and practice in teacher education is already quite widespread and implemented. In England, in fact, already “in the nineteenth century a classroom-based apprenticeship model of teacher preparation was favored. (...) Recent governments of all political persuasions have (...) once again pursued a more extensively work-place model of teacher pre-service and continuing professional learning” (McNamara et al., 2014, p. 1).

Although English teacher education system has a long-standing model based on pupil-teacher apprenticeship, between the ‘70s and ‘90s of the last century «teacher education became increasingly academic and its relationship with practical teaching skills became extremely tenuous» (Mc Namara et. al, 2014, p. 185; see also Bell, 1981).

The last 30 years have been a period of unremitting change for pre-service teacher education in England: this time has been seen as a “pendulum swing” (Murray et al., 2016), «away from the dominance of higher education institutions (HEIs) towards a greater role for schools and teachers in the formation of beginning teachers» (Mutton et al., 2017, p. 14). And the path chosen by recent English governments, of all political persuasions, “has increasingly been towards a more extensively workplace model of pre-service teacher education» (Mc Namara et. al, 2014, p. 183).



Until 1984, “initial teacher education in England was the exclusive province of higher education; government automatically recognized university-validated qualifications for the formal award of “Qualified Teacher Status”. (...) The following 10 years were a period of intense struggle and confrontation between government and higher education, a struggle which higher education eventually lost” (Furlong et al., 2009, p. 46; see also Alexander et al., 1984).

Firstly, in 1984 the establishment of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, the prescription of minimum periods of school-based training (DES, 1984; DES, 1989) to widen “practical preparation of teachers, involving more classroom experience” (Craft, 1984, p. 338) and the introduction of the notion of “accreditation” was the first major state intervention into pre-service teacher training. Particularly, the latter has been used to diversify training provisions in order to include school-based routes and later for the introduction of School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) in 1993. The new routes were also intended to widen and diversify the pool of applicants to teaching.

But for a first period that lasted several years, these new routes into teaching had very limited impact and traditional routes offered through universities and colleges of education were the vast majority.

Furthermore, after a long history of attempts (Mc Nair, 1944; DES, 1983), partnerships between schools and universities in teacher education begun to develop as voluntary relationships with formal agreements (for example in 1987 was launched the “Oxford Internship Scheme” on which see Benton, 1990). Then, from the circulars 9/1992 (DfE, 1992) and 14/1993 (DfE, 1993) there was a statutory requirement for higher education institutions to build up partnerships with schools, with the expectation that they would “exercise a joint responsibility for the planning and management of courses and the selection, training and assessment of students” (DfE, 1992, paragraph 14, see also Mutton et al., 2008). Nonetheless, as claimed by some authors, the model has probably shifted from entirely university-led to entirely school-led (Furlong et. al., 2000).

Meanwhile, in 1994 the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education was replaced with the Teacher Training Agency (to be noted the shift from the term “education” to “training”): the Agency re-launched work-based routes (called “Employment Based Initial Teacher Training”), which reached in the late 2000s around 20%.



During the following years, there has been a general deregulation of the English education system and “a shift in location of initial and continuing professional learning from university to school, with increasing interest in learning that occurs outside structured, pre-determined curricula and undertake ever more varied roles” (Mc Namara et. al, 2013, p. 193). In June 2010, the Secretary of State for Education in England Michael Gove announced his intention to “reform teacher training to shift trainee teachers out of college and into the classroom” (DfE, 2010), because of his belief that “teaching is a craft and it is best learnt as an apprentice, observing a master craftsman or woman” (Gove, 2010). Just two weeks earlier, Gove had announced the abolition of the General Teaching Council of England, a little over ten years after it had been created.

Despite other documents (DfE, 2011a; DfE, 2011b; HoC, 2012; DfE, 2012) made reassuring noises about the continuing role of universities in the teacher education process, from the document “The importance of teaching” (DfE, 2010), the English government promoted more “school-based” initial teacher training pathways.

This happened despite the fact that not only there have been criticisms and misgivings by some commentators who noted that “postgraduate pre-service teachers already spend two-thirds of their training in the workplace on professional placement (practicum)” (Mc Namara et. al, 2014, p. 183; see also T. Are Trippestad, 2014); but also Ofsted itself, the government’s own inspectorate of pre-service teacher education, in his 2010 annual report had estimated that “was more outstanding initial teacher education delivered by higher education-led partnerships than by school-centred initial teacher training partnerships and employment-based routes” (Ofsted, 2010, p. 59). These inspections found that 46.8% of the 64 higher education institutions inspected were deemed outstanding, compared to 39.0% of employment-based routes and 22.7% of school-centered routes.

Even if it is true that there is “any evidence that a further increase in the proportion of practice-based training (over and above the two-thirds currently mandated) will automatically and inevitably lead to better quality learning for pre-service teachers” (Mc Namara et. al, 2014, p. 184), this was the path undertaken by the recent English governments. Questions like “What do teachers learn “on the job”? and “How, if at all, do they learn from experience”? are still “the central problem in policy-making and professional practice” (Ellis et al., 2014, p. 1).



Returning to practice in Teacher Education: a story with deep roots

To understand the great success that a work-related learning has in England, it is perhaps useful to refer to the figure of Ellen Wilkinson, Minister of Education from 1945 to 1947. One of her last acts before her death in 1947, was to compose a foreword to a Ministry's pamphlet entitled "The New Secondary Education" in which she defended «the uniqueness of the individual child, and the necessity of developing forms of education that could relate to individual needs and interests» (Jones, 2016, p. 22). Commenting on her proposals for reform, she wrote: «these plans put the child first. (...) Their variety is designed to suit different children, not different income groups (...) No child must be forced into an academic education which bores it to rebellion, merely because that type of grammar school education is considered more socially desirable by parents» (Wilkinson, 1947, pp. 3-4); «some are attracted by the abstract approach to learning», others, the majority, «learn most easily by dealing with concrete things» (Wilkinson, 1947, p. 23). In this perspective, and during the difficulties of post-war reconstruction, manual work assumed a new meaning: «British people are learning the hard way how dependent is a civilized community on its farmers, transporters and miners, its manual and technical workers» (Wilkinson, 1947, pp. 3-4).

So, the recent (re)turn to practice in teacher education (Mathewson et al., 2017) in England is not a complete novelty, but maybe it's more a return to the origins.

Among the new, different routes to become teachers recently introduced in English education system, one of them is called "School Direct": what is new about this teacher education program is the fact of giving to individual schools, rather than universities, first the possibility to choose - with a broad discretion - their candidates for certification; and then the possibility to train their teachers directly in the schools.

School Direct is an innovative route into teaching, introduced in 2012/13 and designed to enable schools to take a leading role in Initial Teacher Education (ITE), whilst still working in close partnership with an accredited ITE provider, like universities. After one-year of full-time training, the "apprentice-teacher" gains the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). On successful completion of the School Direct program there is an expectation that trainees will be offered employment, either by the school in which they trained or elsewhere within the group of schools involved in the School Direct provision. However, this employment is not



guaranteed. School Direct provides a real period of practical training to be carried out directly in schools after graduation, starting with what has been called a “deep dive approach” in school life (Mincu, 2016). In this way it would be possible to pursue two main goals: on one hand to carry out a model of dual education in teacher education, which links simultaneously theory and practice; on the other hand, to promote and support greater autonomy of schools.

Despite some concerns (Wilson, 2013), School Direct has been a great success, growing from 722 apprentices-teachers in 2012/2013 up to 17.609 in 2015/2016.

The English case can be a touchstone for those educational systems, like the Italian one, still too uniform, rigid and centralized. In fact, before the glocal perspective and the current “liquid” and complex society (Bauman, 2014), in order to sustain education system-wide improvement «societies are increasingly demanding strategies characterized by diversity, flexibility and choice» (Hopkins, 2013, p. 64).

Teacher Education in Italy: a long way to go and the case of University of Bergamo

The recent Italian law No. 107/2015 introduced some hours of work-based learning (“*Alternanza scuola-lavoro*” at least 400 hours in technical and vocational institutes and at least 200 hours in other high schools, during the last three years of studies) as a compulsory part of the curriculum. It must be said that if the law No. 107/2015 introduced some hours of work-based learning as a compulsory part of the curriculum, previously, the law No. 53/2003 and the Legislative Decree 15 April 2005, n. 77, introduced for the first time this opportunity, even if only as a possibility.

This provision, though delayed and limited, is considered – even by European institutions – «a step in the right direction» (European Commission, 2016, p. 77): in fact, «at least, it will ensure that an entire generation of students will know and will deal with, as do other young peers from the European Union and the OECD member States, observative experience and/or active labor. And perhaps they could discover that, if you are well guided by experts who “know” and “do well what they do, knowing it”, any job, first observed and then practiced in a critical and reflective way, is an authentic gold mine” (Bertagna, 2016b, p. 3). This approach appears more and more important for the construction of “teaching and learning paths able to enhance and promote at the same time the excellence of everyone, without exception, and of each person” (Bertagna, 2015, p. 3). As it has been noted, in fact,



“future-oriented pedagogies involve large measures of collaborative and creative problem-focused learning to release wide-ranging talents for innovation and to liberate teachers and learners from bureaucratic constraints. (...) Indeed, a broader and less constricted curriculum and system of assessment are needed to facilitate reformed methods of teaching. (...) Smarter pedagogies and a more adequate organization of schools and teaching will bring significant improvements to knowledge, skills and competences that are needed for raising national economic competitiveness and increasing ecological sustainability. Specially, well-developed teaching methods include cooperative learning, problem-based learning and creative problem-solving and seeking separate pedagogies for these two global challenges is unnecessary” (Sahlberg et al., 2010, p. 296).

The same happens, even more, when it comes to the training of future teachers (Magni, 2016).

“Learning is to teach, to teach is to learn” (Bertagna, 2016c, pp. 13-18). Therefore, the Director of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, which houses the Master Degree in Primary Education Sciences, enabler for teaching in kindergarten (3-6 years) and Italian primary school (6-10 years) summarizes the pedagogical sense of the system, but also organizational and educational one, that characterizes the course. The Italian system regulates the qualifying courses for teaching with D.M. n. 249/2010.

The national legislation states that, from the second to fifth (and final) year of the course to the disciplinary academic teachings, the practice of direct and indirect training for an adequate number of hours (600) will be parallel.

The internship is considered to be one with the theoretical part of the course both longitudinally, in its chronological sequence, and transversely, in constitutive relationship with the educational dimensions of the various teachings and laboratories.

The aim of the internship is to foster in the student the maturation of professional awareness on the specificity of the nursery and primary schools and, at the same time, the development of the personal competence oriented to act professionally in the situation.

The tutors, who help the teachers, guide the reading experience according to orient perspective (what I’m doing does it correspond to my career choice?), Self-evaluation (I can do it, and well? And do I say it on the basis of such collected evidences?) and evaluative (how do others see me in action?)



The same students are called to build devices, observational criteria, analysis tools useful for this purpose. This is due to the laboratories attached to each teaching. Whether it is psychology or sociology, linguistics or teaching, geometry or history of the school, students are required to take the field, in schools, in order to verify the situation on the relevance of what they learn in the courses, and give birth to new practice questions that will help to deepen, select, make real learning what they have been taught.

The reference of the entire route is therefore that of alternation training, the method to “hold together” practically, logically and chronologically word and gesture, action and reflection, practice and theory (Casaschi, 2016).

From that perspective, although structured, organic academic facility may not be enough, and it would be preferential if it fails to open at the same time of a reciprocal relationship with the schools. For this, training agencies of the area have formed a planning dialogue with the University even before the establishment of the degree course, setting a real co-operation to the benefit not only of the trainee teachers, but also of those already in service, that become in turn a valuable educational resource.

From the first year students are expected to take care of filling out a personal portfolio in which it is useful to collect selected documentation to highlight the progress of cultural awareness, methodological-didactic and above all criticism (of weaknesses-strengths) concerning the cultural objects of the course, and skills gained over time, relating to the problems of teaching in nursery and primary school.

The guidance aspects, self-assessment and evaluation are appropriately documented through choices of artifacts, reflections, personal narratives, and developed also through periodic response to a series of leading questions.

The portfolio is discussed in the examination when the student is required a self-assessment of the path that also contains his analysis of metacognitive type, and that brings out slowly, fees incurred. At the time of the discussion of the final thesis, it is a comprehensive, structured and progressive evaluation on how as a young student to be born a competent teacher.

The hope is, indeed, that his compilation does not stop at graduation but, as already suggested in more scientific contexts, may accompany every teacher and his professional community lifelong (Davos, 2010).



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