EDUCATION AND STATE FORMATION IN ITALY

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Introduction

In many respects, the evolution of the Italian education system since the Unity of Italy (1861) can be investigated according to an interpretation that is not too far from the one usually adopted in international literature about education and state formation. At a deeper level, however, failing to take adequately into account the distinctive features of Italy's socio-political situation might prevent an understanding of the process itself.

This chapter is intended to make the following point: from its origin in 1861 to very recent years, the Italian State has constantly suffered from a lack of legitimization and full sovereignty, which has strongly affected all its political events and has had a particular influence on the raising of national awareness and the possible role of education therein. Although the reasons for this phenomenon have not always been the same during the time span considered, the full acknowledgement of the legitimacy and sovereignty of the Italian State has been limited for a much longer time (and more severely) than is emphasised, especially in the literature on Italy's education system.

This has brought about a somehow paradoxical situation, marked by a long-standing national feeling on the one hand (suffice it to remember Dante's *invidiosa* in the *Comedy* or Petrarca's *Canzone all'Italia* in the fourteenth century), and a relatively belated and troubled process of state formation on the other hand, with sovereignty being continuously challenged and apparently never fully achieved. In turn, this has negatively affected the development of a sense of belonging to the new nation state – the weakness of this sense of belonging having often been denounced from the Unity of Italy up until today.

In order to understand the roots of this situation, issues of international policy and international balances need to be considered in the first instance. Upon the unification of Italy, these balances were seriously challenged by the deterioration in the relations with the Pope and the Vatican State. Later on, they played a key role for different reasons, both early in the twentieth century and after the Second World War, to an extent that has probably not been investigated enough yet, especially in terms of education.

During the period from the Unity of Italy to the Second World War, the legitimacy of the Italian State was first challenged by the Pope not recognising the State itself, with all the implications this had both domestically and internationally in the relations with

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European Catholic powers. Later on, the Concordat signed by Mussolini's Government and the Holy See (1929) somehow settled this *vulnus*. Very soon, however, the authoritarian nature of the Fascist regime questioned in turn the full recognition of the Italian State's democratic legitimacy vis-à-vis many other countries.

In the years after the end of the Second World War, the newborn Italian Republic had to prove its *bona fide* democratic nature and break with its authoritarian past, on the one hand; on the other hand, its sovereignty – meant as the real possibility of Italy's choosing its own government – was conditional on the geopolitical situation resulting from the Yalta Agreement reached by the victorious powers to set out post-war world balances.

This conditioning had a profound effect on the ways in which democracy evolved in Italy, which needed to re-establish its institutions and, in particular, try and define the features of an education system that was supposed to shape the 'new' democratic citizen, according to guidelines that were particularly complicated by a tangle of domestic and international factors in which both Catholic and communist forces played a crucial role.

Therefore, the deep change in international balances from 1989 onwards had a very strong impact on both the politics and institutions of the Italian State, by restoring greater autonomy while upsetting a reference framework that had lasted for almost five decades. That was the so-called transition to the Second Republic. This transition period is actually still in place and, once again, has profoundly affected the education system too.

This chapter intends therefore to follow two directions: on the one hand, analysing the evolution, structure, and features of Italy's education system according to an interpretation that is similar to that applicable to most other European nation states; on the other hand, constantly refocusing on the distinctiveness of the Italian situation as the key interpretation of this analysis.

The Problematic Framework

The Unity of Italy was achieved – as in other countries – through a process of reunification of areas that had been previously governed by rulers of different dynasties or had been under the direct rule of a foreign government (as was the case with Lombardy and Veneto under the Austrian Empire). In addition, a significant part of the country was under the Vatican State, headed by the Pope.

As a consequence, the Italian State was founded in opposition to the Papal State, by first (1860) annexing most territories that had once belonged to the Pope, except Latium and Rome. About ten years later (in 1870), with the well-known 'Breach of Porta Pia', Italian troops marched into Rome and proclaimed it the capital of the new State, while the Pope retreated into the Vatican enclave. As the years went by, the conflict became less fierce, although it was not until 1929 that the Lateran Pacts signed by the Fascist Government led to mutual recognition, with the birth of the Vatican City State. Nevertheless, this recognition did not completely settle the dispute.

There is a very extensive bibliography of historical and juridical texts on Church-State relations and the 'laicity' of the State (Veneturo, 1972, 2003; Lariccia, 1971) which cannot be dwelt upon here. There is no doubt, however, that education – namely

the school system – was one of the major battlefields in the Church-State conflict, for quite understandable reasons. The notion of the national education system as the primary institution of citizens' education – consequently involving public responsibility – clashed with the Church's view of education as natural right of families which, however, must be enlightened and guided by straight faith: this implies that education institutions to which families must/can entrust their children cannot but be inspired by, and accountable to, the guardian of faith itself, i.e. the Catholic Church.

This conflict was not something peculiar to Italy. The specificity of the situation in Italy was that the very legitimacy of the Italian State – and, consequently, of its educational action – had not been acknowledged by the Church for a long time, because the State had been established by an act of 'aggression' against the Papal State and the Pope himself was both a Head of State and universal religious authority; hence the contrast over education was of major significance.

This aspect, while not being the only criterion to be taken into account for the interpretation of the history of united Italy and of its education system, should however be considered as the background and framework within which events took place, in order to realise the distinctiveness of the situation in Italy, as compared to other countries, at the time of the state formation.

The Birth of the Italian Kingdom and the Casati Law

In the first semester of 1859 a highly surprising event took place in the frame of the European political evolution: Cavour, Prime Minister of a small Italian State, the Kingdom of Sardinia, skilfully took advantage of Paris's mistakes in the evaluation of the Italian situation and of the even greater diplomatic mistakes by Vienna. He thus succeeded in channeling the centuries-old conflict between the two mightiest European states, France and Austria, into a war which would lay the foundations of an Italian Nation State (Ugolini, 2001).

When the two great empires, the Napoleonic and the Asburgic, realised that the only state to take advantage of the war was the Kingdom of Sardinia, they tried – without effect – to stop the fight (Villafranca's armistice), to engage an impossible reverse motion.

In fact Great Britain, trying to prevent at all costs the war from overflowing the Italian theatre and trespassing on European and worldwide territory, adopted Cavour's policy, that is the thesis according to which the establishment of the Italian Kingdom was the price to pay to recover the international equilibrium and thus make up for Paris's and Vienna's incautions and deleterious policy.

So in just two years, in this international context, the unification of Italy was accomplished, bringing about the quick establishment of a 21-million inhabitant new national state.

By February 1861, in Turin, the Italian Parliament started its sessions, in a somewhat gloomy atmosphere for the new State that had to face several serious problems big enough to justify the lack of international confidence in its life expectancy.

The first problem was related to the completion of national unity: still outside the kingdom's boundaries were Veneto and Latium, and above all Rome, considered by acclamation as the new State's capital. But Rome was already the capital of a state, the

Papal State, whose sovereign, Pius IX, also held religious powers of divine origin and with universal jurisdiction.

Thus the second problem was to persuade the Pope-King to split his two powers, temporal and religious, and give up the first one. That problem had already been debated for many years by the international secular and catholic circles. Pius IX's ultimate answer came – unequivocally – when, in the spring of 1860, some former papal territories expressed their will to recognize Vittorio Emanuele II as their own king. The Pope excommunicated the Piedmontese king and all those who made an attempt on his territories; he did not recognize the new State and consequently ordered the Catholics not to take part to the institutional life of the Italian kingdom. This created a deep inner cleavage in the new Nation and, on the international side, made it hard for Catholic States to recognize the Italian State.

This international isolation made it even harder to solve another problem, maybe the gravest for the new ruling class: the financial crisis due to the sum of the seven pre-unitary states' budget deficits. It was evident that Italy had to increase its income internally and cut expenditure: failing to do that would mean losing the newly gained independence.

And then the issue which was perhaps the most important: one State was made out of seven, but there was the need to create those unifying norms (such as laws, weights, and measures) and those infrastructures (such as streets, railways, and postal services) necessary to make the unification real and to make people perceive it as an effective reality. To echo a famous motto, 'once Italy had been created, Italians had to be made'; through many complex actions in which education (discussed below) had a role. For a few months, at the beginning of 1861, it was thought to have its politics managed by an administratively decentralized State, but the risks connected to such a hypothesis (catholic opposition, international isolation) forced the ruling class to take a decision to centralise – in an effort to reduce internal strife.

For the preservation of the unity a basic consensus was achieved by all the political forces of the Italian peninsula, the liberal and conservative right wing as well as the democratic and revolutionary left wing. In the first 15 years of its institutional life, owing to such consensus, the Italian State could complete its unification. (In 1866 Veneto was annexed, followed by Rome and Latium in 1870.) It could also achieve the legal, administrative, financial, and transport unification of the country and be recognized by the other states. Notwithstanding such positive outcomes, the problems related to the Catholic opposition and to the structural financial weakness intensified.

After 1870, the Pope was far from acknowledging the loss of his temporal power: he declared himself 'prisoner' in the Vatican, and systematically incited the Catholics not to support the new State's institutions (*Non expedit*),¹ in expectation of a providential restoration of the *status quo ante*. The new State, with its structural weaknesses, just about had the economic strength to support the unity already achieved, but it was not capable of investing enough to create the hoped-for transformation from a rural to an industrial economy.

Any reform in nineteenth-century Italy had to satisfy two main conditions: it had to cost the bare minimum needed, and it had to be able to survive the inevitable Catholic opposition.

Education laws were the first to have to fulfil such conditions. So did the Casati law, enacted by the Piedmontese Government with plenipotentiary powers in November 1859 – at the very beginning of the unification process. The law, comprising 380 articles, fully regulated all parts of the educational system. When it was approved, it was neither enthusiastically welcomed nor explicitly rejected: it was considered as a temporary law for a temporary political situation. Its main purpose was to show the willingness of the Kingdom of Sardinia to meet the requirements of Lombardy, which was then the only new region annexed. Gabrio Casati was the first Milanese in the government and his law was intended, at the moment in which it was passed, only for the Piedmontese and Lombard territories.

Actually, the Casati Law ruled Italian education up to 1923, when, under the Fascist Government, it was replaced by the Gentile Reform. This juridical longevity was due to the fact that after the unification of Italy it was quickly realised that such a law – outlined and brought into force in only four months – responded perfectly to the delicate social and financial equilibriums maturing in the new State after 1861. Gabrio Casati was a conservative Catholic, and he had intended the law to be non-ideological, not too directive of families and communes, and not very expensive for the Treasury. Moreover, his law had the merit of having been accepted by Piedmontese and Lombard Catholics without too many reservations.

Relying on such qualities, the Casati Law was progressively enforced in the whole Italian Kingdom as unification was being achieved. Right from its first enforcement, many scholars and experts of education highlighted its faults and contradictions, but such claims faded whenever it came to suggesting an alternative text, for fear of having to face insurmountable ideological, political, and financial problems.

The law provided for a four-year elementary school, divided into two periods of two years each. Attendance of the first two years was compulsory for all pupils aged between six and eight. After elementary school, different branches of secondary education were established: classical secondary education, divided into a five-year lower cycle (*ginnasio*) and a three-year upper cycle (*liceo*); lower and upper technical education (a three-year technical school followed by a three-year technical institute); and two- or three-year 'normal' schools for the training of elementary teachers.

This law – and relevant enforcement regulation, passed in 1860 – set its mark on the very concept of Italy's education system and established its foundation for many decades. It is therefore proper to dwell upon it in order to highlight the features that are strongly linked to state formation.

The Casati Law was traditionally criticised by Italian education historiography in the second half of the twentieth century for being selective, for providing different branches of education with a clear hierarchy, and for being 'centralistic', as it imposed the same system on the whole country, leaving little autonomy to local authorities.

Despite the fact that this criticism, among others, was raised right upon the passing of the law (Semeraro, 1996; Talamo, 1960), one might argue that the emphasis placed on it in the twentieth century suffered from an *a posteriori* interpretation given on the basis of the hottest issues of that period, rather than based on a careful consideration of the context in the mid-nineteenth century.

As regards centralisation, in the situation outlined above, while the country was getting unified with so much resistance and there remained the unsolved problem of the relations with the Pope, it is no wonder that the ruling class, which had bound its destiny to unification, chose to keep a firm central grasp, especially considering that in many regions the Church exerted a strong influence on schools and that a significant part of the teaching staff was made up of clerics, even in public schools.

However, the 'centralist' policy preference met with some hesitation and opposition, not least because the liberal ruling class was in turn quite opposed to a statist view of education (Soldani & Turi, 1993: 18), and, as stated above, had seriously considered a more decentralised approach. Therefore, efforts were made to try and reconcile the different demands. In the covering report of the law itself, the choice was discussed also on a comparative basis. With respect to some European models – the British one, with a very limited state role; the Belgian one, with private and public schools competing; the German one, with the highest degree of state authority over education – Italy chose a 'system of medium liberty, supported by those cautions that keep it into its boundaries and by those guarantees that defend it from manifest and hidden enemies that might spoil it and its fruit' (*Relazione*, 1859, in Talamo, 1960: 73). The reference to the opponents of the new State could not have been clearer.

As to the criticism about the school system structure – with particular regard to the mutual positions of classical and technical education – the (few) views that interpret the Casati Law without forgetting to set it in both a historical and comparative context seem much more convincing.

According to Barbagli:

The most interesting thing – which has instead been neglected by many scholars, all intent to prove the reactionary nature of the Casati Law – is that the education system resulting from that law – if compared to those existing in Europe at that time and those that followed in Italy from 1923 onwards – was relatively open, in that its internal structure was such as to foster relatively high university attendance rates. (Barbagli, 1974: 81)

Barbagli continues the analysis by stressing that there was no internal differentiation in elementary education in terms of schools for pupils willing to pursue their studies and schools for those who did not mean to. Furthermore 'more than at the elementary school level, however, the relative openness of Italy's education system was to be found at the lower or upper secondary education level' (Barbagli, 1974: 82). The opportunities of entering higher education were not exclusively restricted to students coming from academic secondary schools: access to the Faculties of Science and Engineering was possible for pupils coming from the physics and mathematics branch of the *Istituto Tecnico Superiore* (upper secondary technical school) (Barbagli, 1974: 82–83).

In short, one of the distinctive traits of the Casati Law was that no school in the whole education system was conceived as a 'blind alley'. This feature can be understood in relation to the education policy undertaken by the Italian ruling class, which was supposed to ensure the growth of the new State, also from a political standpoint.

If this growth was to be founded on education, it needed to find a practicable way between the need for selection and that for socialization. That meant not restricting participation in the school system too much, in a situation in which schooling was already hindered by socio-economic backwardness, especially in some areas of the country. The main target was therefore the education of the middle classes, through relatively 'open' channels at secondary level, with a view to possibly fostering some social mobility. If the focus on technical education might have been considered inadequate by some of the most advanced productive forces – especially in some regions of northern Italy (Semeraro, 1996) – it was however probably even more than the global economic situation of the country required and allowed for. The model of social control through education adopted by the ruling class clashed with resistance from reactionary groups, while, on the other hand, the social demand for education – especially at the elementary level – was still low, even in the North.

Our school system resulted, as it were, from the convergence of the education policy undertaken by the Italian ruling class and the difficulties in creating an adequate demand for education among people' (Barbagli, 1974: 99). The relative openness of the education system stemmed from the fact that in a situation of poor attendance, greater selection would have been counterproductive.

The law was quite successful in promoting the education of middle classes: enrolments grew considerably – especially from 1870 onwards – in technical institutes above all. Gradually, during the following 15 years, the concern became that lower classes too be reached in a more direct way, by promoting elementary schooling and, in particular, by enforcing compulsory education, also in order to bridge the gap between school levels.²

In 1874, the new Italian State balanced its budget for the first time. In 1876, when the first left-wing government came to power, one of the first measures adopted was a law (*Legge Coppino*) that aimed to make compulsory schooling as real as possible, providing sanctions for offenders and regulations to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of schools in communes.

The Coppino Law also began to better define the 'formation of citizens' in elementary school syllabi. Rather than a true subject, the Casati Law had envisaged 'readings' on national history – though mainly on the Savoia dynasty's – national geography, and citizens' duties to God, their families, and the country (Santerini, 2001: 19). The Coppino Law, instead, included the *First Notions on the Duties of Men and Citizens* among the subjects taught in elementary school syllabi – this was particularly meaningful, considering that the law equally abolished the compulsory teaching of religion in elementary schools.

Then, the last two decades of the nineteenth century were marked by a much greater emphasis on the formation of citizens in elementary school. This topic was included in the 1888 curricula – inspired by educational and pedagogical positivism – which had been developed by Aristide Gabelli, a renowned educationalist (Santerini, 2001). The need for education as 'national pedagogy' was even further emphasised in the curricula designed in 1894 by Baccelli, which criticised those of 1888 in that they had focused too much on knowledge content and not enough on general education (Ascenzi, 2004: 98 onwards). The strengthening of 'national pedagogy' certainly responded to the need

to 'provide new and greater legitimization to the political class that had achieved unification', at a time when socialist and Catholic opposition was growing; elementary education was thought to be the best channel for this legitimization, as emphasised by Minister Baccelli himself (Ascenzi, 2004: 113).

In that context, the call to 'make Italians', usually credited to Massimo d'Azeglio, was revived. The famous sentence 'We have made Italy, now we must make Italians' was not proclaimed as such by d'Azeglio; instead, it was pronounced in 1896 by Ferdinando Martini, former Minister of Education, who recalled and emphasised a different expression by Massimo d'Azeglio himself (Soldani & Turi, 1993: 17). Regardless of the philological dispute, this episode confirms that the issue of the role of education in the formation of citizens had become crucial.

Under Giolitti's governments (1903–1914), the State budget was more under control, and opposition became less fierce between most liberal forces and a significant portion of Catholic ones; this allowed major changes to be introduced in school structures. In 1904, the Orlando Law raised the compulsory age to 12 years, among a set of measures intended to widen social participation in education.

In 1911, the Daneo-Credaro Law shifted responsibility for elementary education from communes – where Catholic influence had been very strong in many cases – to the State. Due to Catholic opposition, the measure was only enforced in those communes that were not provincial capitals. The law also included further measures for popular education.

Therefore, on the eve of the First World War, the relative easing of tension with Catholics (the *non expedit*, in particular, had become less strict) and the better economic situation led to greater emphasis being placed on the development of the education system at the lower levels. The opportunity of introducing a more comprehensive structure at lower secondary level began to be considered. On the other hand, in the same decades, the rapid growth in secondary-school-attendance rates caused problems in terms of jobs available for school-leavers and also in terms of education quality – as argued by many contemporary politicians and intellectuals. As a consequence, the introduction of measures to restrict the number of secondary school pupils began to be discussed and was supported by non-conservatives as well (Canestri & Ricuperati, 1976; Semeraro, 1996). Idealist philosopher Giovanni Gentile recalled this controversy and these positions when he was called to serve as the Minister of Education after the rise of Fascism and worked out provisions to reform the education system.

The *Riforma Gentile*

The so-called Gentile Reform revised the education system as a whole, reorganising its central and local administration with a significant reduction of the number of bodies involved, and introduced several provisions covering virtually all key aspects of Italy's education system.⁴

With regard to the school system structure, the reform designed a system whereby, after a five-year elementary school cycle, a differentiated structure was provided.

Compulsory education was raised to 14 years of age, and a dead-end channel was created: the so-called complementary school (*scuola complementare*), lasting three years, for pupils who did not mean to pursue their studies. Classical education kept its structure: a five-year lower cycle (*gimnasio*) and a three-year upper cycle (*liceo*). In addition, a science branch was created: the *liceo scientifico*.⁵ Technical education was supplied by technical institutes, while 'normal schools' were changed into elementary teacher-training schools (*istituti magistrali*). A *liceo femminile* (girls' upper secondary school) was also created: it did not make pupils eligible for higher education and was meant (among other things) to divert a significant number of girls' enrolments from teacher-training schools, thus depleting the supply of female teachers.

Consistently with Gentile's philosophical approach, the school system was founded on the pre-eminence of philosophical and classical studies, namely philosophy. Nevertheless, at lower levels, where the 'light' of philosophy could not shine, religion recovered its educational role; hence, in elementary schools, 'the teaching of Christian doctrine according to the catholic tradition was considered as the foundation and crowning of all degrees of elementary education' (Royal Decree 1923, Article 3).

Therefore, the Gentile Reform changed the school system – and the socialisation and selection approach adopted until then – not least in connection with the concerns voiced by many politicians and intellectuals in previous years. Secondary school enrolment was to be reduced, in order to safeguard the quality of education and to better match the labour market demand. On the other hand, however, driving too many pupils out of the school system prematurely would have caused a problem of lack of socialisation – a big risk, indeed, at a time when the new regime was just starting to establish itself. The matter, therefore, was not so much reducing the global number of pupils as reducing it in 'open' channels. That was the aim of creating a dead-end school after the elementary cycle – a solution that the Casati Law had never envisaged. Three-year complementary schools were supposed to be the backbone of education for the people: designed for the 'humble citizen' (*il modesto cittadino*) (Canestri & Ricuperati, 1976: 141) and ideally meant to provide 'education for all', if compulsory schooling until the age of 14 had been complied with.

If this aspect can be interpreted in the light of the openness/closeness issue described above, the reform action as a whole is a complex interpretation problem (Canestri, 1983) which cannot be addressed here as it should. The complexity of interpretation stems from a tangle of elements. On the one hand, the historical context referred to – i.e. the early years of Fascism (before the notorious murder of Matteotti, in 1925, marked its transformation into a 'regime') – was a transition period with elements of continuity as well as of rupture, with the previous situation having an influence on the government's action. On the other hand, Gentile was a philosopher and intellectual with a complex personality (Coli, 2004) holding an ideal and conceptual view of Fascism and of the role of education, which was not necessarily in tune with practical policymaking needs.

Therefore, the *Riforma Gentile*, defined by Mussolini as 'the most fascist of reforms', was actually an object of appreciation and criticism that cannot be identified and linked with any clear-cut political groups.

It was certainly an elitist selective reform and, as such, was criticised by socially committed groups. In Gentile's philosophical and intellectual view, however, the elite

had to be strictly selected according to its merits: this was something that disappointed bourgeois middle classes, whose approval was instead sought after by Fascism. On the other hand, the idea of an essentially humanistic elite culture was a cause of concern to emerging industrialists, while Catholics – who were satisfied with some aspects of the reform, like the compulsory teaching of Catholic religion in elementary schools – could not agree to the idealistic secular framework of Gentile's Reform as a whole. One should be reminded that the reform had been designed in cooperation with first-class intellectuals, representatives of a culture that was far from reactionary (including Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, who had drawn up the 1923 elementary school curricula⁵).

The discontent coming also from sectors of public opinion that the Government wished instead to please led to the so-called policy of readjustments carried on by the successors of Gentile (who left his post as a minister in the middle of 1924). Gentile himself referred to this policy as a form of 'betrayal', especially with regard to some provisions aimed at lessening the selectivity and strictness of education.

Measures were adopted to reform 'dead-end' schools, which had been completely unsuccessful in attracting enrolments. As a result, between 1929 and 1931, the lower secondary education cycle was reorganised by creating the so-called *scuole di avviamento al lavoro* (schools preparing for work) to replace complementary schools, thus reintroducing at least the opportunity for pupils to be made eligible for technical institutes and teacher-training schools.

The Fascist 'Regeneration'

In Gentile's vision, linked to the Ethical State and to an education conceived as a philosophy of spirit, the connection between the educational system and the State, is undoubtedly very strong, as having an authoritarian impact on all aspects of school life. In this light, Mussolini's definition as 'the most Fascist of reforms' is perhaps well grounded. On the other hand, however, the development of the system as it had been conceived by Gentile clashed with the political need to maintain the consensus of the different social strata (Canestri & Ricuperati, 1976: 142), and was, in some respects, inadequate to bring about an in-depth educational 'Fascistisation', which was subsequently achieved through different routes, not limited to school.

Numerous measures were adopted to this end by the various ministers who followed Gentile. Suffice it to mention the establishment of *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, a youth organization aimed at controlling physical education in schools, which, in 1929, came directly under the authority of the National Education Ministry (*Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale*); the adoption, again in 1929, of the State Common Text (*Testo Unico di Stato*) for elementary schools, followed, in the 1930s, by deep changes in curricula and in many aspects of school life, for the purpose of a 'Fascist regeneration of schools' (Pazzaglia & Sani, 2001).

In 1929 the signing of the Lateran Pacts brought about the recognition of the Italian State by the Holy See with a 70 years' delay, and the establishment of the Vatican City State. The Pacts mark a crucial phase in Italian history, their importance going beyond the Fascist era. Despite strong opposition, they would in fact be subsequently included

in the Constitution of the new Italian Republic which came into force in 1948, and be replaced by a new treaty as recently as 1984.

The delicate *quid pro quo* at the basis of the Pacts has been made the object of several studies and has been differently interpreted, especially with reference to the new balance of powers established between the State and the Church (Spadolini, 1967; Margiotta Broglio, 1969). Undoubtedly, the State did make several concessions: with reference to education, Catholic religion was recognised to be the 'foundation and crowning' no longer of elementary school alone, but of the entire school system. On the other hand, at the same time the State was forcibly indoctrinating pupils (to the point of speaking of 'Fascist Mystics' in education). Hence, education of the young came to be once again the setting for a confrontation for control over citizen formation, including outside the school, as, for instance, in the field of youth association movements (Jemolo, 1955).

Considerable concessions had therefore been made to obtain the recognition of the State by the Holy See, which also meant getting rid of that delegitimization which had had such a strong impact on Italian political life. Paradoxically, a guarantee of the fact that these concessions would not imply that the State would entirely surrender its prerogatives came precisely from its authoritarian character – although this very nature would impact on the democratic legitimisation of the State itself.

A deeper analysis than the one that can be done here would look at the *Carri della Scuola*, presented by Giuseppe Bottai, who had become Minister of Education in 1936. As it was intended to be 'the document of the full Fascist maturity in the political/programmatic approach to the relationship between economy, work, society and education' (Bertoni Jovine, 1958: 364), a careful examination would allow to better understand the general concept of the relation of education and society in the last period of the Fascist regime. However, it remained mostly unimplemented, owing to wartime and then to the fall of Fascism itself, except for a measure which was relevant in itself and for its future developments, i.e. the law, passed in 1940, that unified the lower courses of the secondary schools (*gimnasio*, technical schools and teacher-training schools), leaving out vocational and artisan courses (the latter not leading to any further study).

After the Second World War

Following the end of the Second World War, the reconstruction of the defeated Italian nation had to go well beyond merely making good the material devastation: it had to face once again, in a sense, the issue of state formation.

As a result of the referendum of 2 June 1946 Italy abolished monarchy in favour of the Republic. The years which immediately followed the Second World War were marked by a unitary approach to reconstruction, with a government that saw the participation of all the anti-Fascist forces which, together, after long and complex discussions, drafted the new Republic's Constitution, which came into force on 1 January 1948. The Constitution fully took into account the need to counterbalance forces that could cause the country to revert to the past, both recent and distant. On that need for 'countering',

the necessary agreement had been reached among forces which were deeply different and even opposed owing to their ideological background, political structure, and social representativeness, i.e. Catholic forces, liberal ones, and those influenced by Marxism.

Soon enough, though, a number of factors, the most important being the worsening of the international scenario, led to the break-up of this unity. This was replaced by a situation whereby more than the endorsement of the national spirit, what prevailed were those which have been defined as 'separate belongings' (Scoppola, 1993: 32), i.e. allegiances to the political and ideological forces mentioned above, which in turn referred to different supranational forces, in a world which was about to split.

A decisive event was the first general elections, which were held in 1948. The victory of left-wing forces would have strongly unbalanced international equilibria as they had come out of the agreements negotiated by the victorious powers. However, even after the moderate block dominated by the Christian Democrats prevailed, the revolutionary perspective was still the main scenario for the left-wing forces influenced by Marxism, preventing them from fully endorsing 'normal' reformist policies.

On the other hand, the Catholics were for the first time fully taking part in Italian political life and, while recognising the State, they could not but be influenced by their past history, both in their relations within Italy and with the Vatican State. The difficulties encountered in building up a national identity were compounded by the 'very high price paid for the *Questione Romana*' and the *non expedit* (Scoppola, 1993: 27; Rusconi, 1993).

The majority of Italian citizens' ideal allegiance to one or the other of the forces that presented themselves as two largely universal 'churches' made it even more difficult to build an ethically grounded, albeit non-nationalistic, sense of nation. The prospect of an agreement between the two, if any, existed on a different plane. As recently as the 1970s, when precisely such an agreement appeared to be feasible, the scenario envisaged by at least some of its major protagonists 'was not to obtain a physiological dialectic in Italian democracy, between forces homologated within the system, but, on the contrary, that of building a new society resulting from the encounter between two worlds, the Catholic and the Communist ones' (Scoppola, 1997: 393).

However, what weighed more heavily in the development of Italian democracy, nailing some way or another citizens to their separate allegiances, was the impossibility of alternate government, which has made Italian democracy a 'stalled democracy'.

In fact, with the Yalta agreements in 1945, Italy found itself belonging to the Western bloc, while having at the same time a powerful Communist party – the strongest in the West – which, however, had no real chances to come to power and create a turnover in the government.

Hence, while the country strived to resume its position on the international scene (Italy joined the United Nations in 1955), its sovereignty was hampered by the impossibility of an alternative government, which affected the very nature of democracy.

With the passing of the years, at the beginning of the 1960s, the governing majority was expanded to include the Socialist party; but this did not extend to the entire left. In the mid-1970s the so-called historic compromise between Catholic and left-wing forces was explored, and went as far as granting 'external support' by the Communist Party (PCI) to the government, but the hypothesis of a more direct involvement of

the Communists was not realized. Notwithstanding the consolidated presence of PCI in local governments, the further step of full participation in the government of the country seemed to be still impossible. As, however, a partly cooperative dynamic existed, there came to be a peculiar situation of 'consociate democracy' as it has been sometimes called, in which many agreements could be found, but with no realistic perspective of an alternation in government.

This allowed the country to be governed without forcing those international equilibria that had proved themselves inviolable, but was obviously negative for democratic dialectic. The majority forces did not fear to be unsaddled and be passed on to the opposition; the opposition, in turn, was not actually asked to elaborate a realistic and organic alternative policy at national level. A possibility of alternation was only envisageable when the post-war equilibria changed, as late as the end of the 1980s. Amongst the many consequences of this manifestly distorted situation, many important ones concerned education.

The Role of Education

Immediately after the armistice (1943), the crucial role to be played by education in the reconstruction of the country called the attention and the action of the Allied Control Commission, which, however, never pushed its action too far. Namely, Carleton Washburne committed himself, involving Italian educationalists as well, to the elaboration of curricula for primary school (adopted in 1945) which were based on the notion of a democratic formation of citizens. Later on, at the time of the drafting of the Constitution, the school was assigned a relevant role, but debate in the Constituent Assembly mainly focused on the space that the new Republic should grant to private schools, which in Italy were almost exclusively Catholic. Once again the educational issue revolved around the relations between the State and the Church. After a complex debate (Palomba, 1985; Ambrosoli, 1982) an agreement was reached whereby private citizens and bodies were free to establish schools, but with no right to State aid. 'Organizations and private citizens are entitled to found schools and educational institutions, with no charges for the State' (Article 33 of the Italian Constitution).

After the task of the Constituent Assembly was completed, for almost a decade left-wing opposition parties did not include education among their political priorities (Canestrì & Ricuperati, 1976; Semeraro, 1996; Ventura, 1998). In the 1950s in Italy schools were under the control of the majority party, the Christian Democrats, whose ministers managed them without introducing significant reforms, but rather through constant administrative actions (so-called *leggine*, i.e. by-laws) which aimed at maintaining a certain balance, ensuring control over state schools while granting private ones all the space that could be allowed in compliance with the Constitution.

In that period, the school system developed rapidly. In the decade 1951–1961, the number of students and the rate of participation in lower and upper secondary schools doubled. The growth, notwithstanding all its imbalances, corresponded to a moment of intense and quick development, where the quantitative extension itself brought about an enlargement of the social participation to education, thus showing also a qualitative

improvement. After a period of 15 years, however, the need to plan the development according to a socially more adequate model raised the problem of a more advanced reformism, following the international trend at the beginning of the 1960s.

It was the moment of the so-called left turn, which brought about, in December 1963, the first government including the Socialist Party. The entry of the Socialists in the institutions softened the contrast between the representativeness of the institutions themselves and social reality, while still fully respecting the basic features of the system, that is of a State of liberal structure dealing with the social ethics of a large part of the Catholic forces, and without any direct participation of the Communist party to the government.

This shift from a static situation to a more dynamic period of discussion and debate involved many fields – including education – in a ‘reformist’ perspective. This project, however, never quite succeeded in coming into being (CENSIS, 1970).

One of the greater obstacles to the development of authentic reformist action was undoubtedly the difficulty in interpreting univocally the concept of reform itself. In the 1960s and 1970s the ‘meliorist’ hypothesis intertwined with structural reform ones, which were aimed at radical transformations of the system, in order to overcome the bourgeois nature of the State and of its social provisions. So, even if the ‘revolutionary’ perspective as such was no longer on the agenda of the left-wing forces, it was replaced by the call for ‘structural reforms’, which were often burdened ideologically with revolutionary meanings and intentions.

In terms of the political proposals and the cultural orientation of left-wing parties, this translated into a framework of reference in which on the one hand the importance of education for greater social justice emerged, and on the other hand the forms in which education presented itself were rejected. In this perspective, the education reform was seen as a ‘tool to put an end to the class organisation of the existing school’ (Ventura, 1998: 193), and school itself as ‘the major battlefield for a different social and economic development’, as it was stated in an article published in 1972 by *L’Unità*, the official newspaper of the Italian Communist Party (quoted in Chiosso, 1977: 75).

The refusal to recognise the democratic legitimacy of any differentiation – seen as the cause and effect of class-based discrimination – was one of the main reasons for the emergence of the myth of a ‘unified school’, the ‘Holy Grail of the left’ (Polesel, 2006: 550), which affected not only the far left, but also many intellectuals and educationalists, who came to share, for different reasons, the ‘comprehensive approach’, intended, in most cases, as a total lack of diversification.

As is known, the role of education in society was one of the key topics in the sociological debate of those years. As pointed out by Benadusi (1984), a positive image of the social role of education – shared by some sociologists who may be labelled as liberal-functionalist, even if from different (progressive or conservative) perspectives – confronted the image of education upheld by those who emphasised that it was an ideological State apparatus (Althusser) and a tool to reproduce the structures and values of capitalist society (Bourdieu), thus denying the meaningfulness and effectiveness of any reform ‘within the system’. However, amongst those who shared a positive view of education from a ‘progressive’ point of view, the positive attitude was not so much towards the present role of the school, but rather on the ‘school-that-could-be’

(Benadusi, 1984: XI). The debate was very lively in Italy, and was not without influence in the actual policy adopted. In a context in which gradual reformism had very few champions, it ended up merging in the demand for global or ‘structural’ reforms of most non-conservative intellectuals and scholars.

With regard to lower secondary education, a political agreement was reached, which led in December 1962⁷ to the passing of a law that, while confirming the constitutional obligation of an eight-year compulsory school, unified the old academically oriented lower secondary schools with the vocationally oriented *scuole di avviamento al lavoro*.

Scuola media unica (unified lower secondary school) was a fully comprehensive structure, whose purpose was to deliver the common basic education required for every citizen, whether willing to continue studying or not. Throughout the years, this ‘comprehensiveness’ was further improved by doing away with some residual optional elements which could suggest the possibility of a choice or selection: namely, Latin courses in the third year, upon which admission to *liceo classico*⁸ was conditional.

Once the reform passed, it seemed natural to start reorganising upper secondary education as well. However, despite the significant number of bills submitted, several decades were not enough to implement a consistent policy at upper secondary level.

These difficulties show the weakening of social consensus when moving up from basic education. The consensus on some basic elements of ‘education for all’ had developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, almost as a ‘social pact’ on what the basic formation of citizens needed to be. In a way, it could be said, that it was the educational implication of the recognition of human, social, and political rights. As discussed above, the appropriateness of a less differentiated lower secondary education system had been debated in Italy since the early twentieth century. Later on, in 1940, a provision – although a partial one – to unify the system was passed by Giuseppe Bottai. Hence, the ground had already been prepared. Unification at the compulsory level had gained a large and solid social consensus, and the change suggested responded to the actual political and cultural level as well as to the socio-economic development of the country, while also meeting the solidaristic approach shared by the major forces.

A further proof that it was possible to find some agreement in order to implement measures concerning the basic levels of education, even on sensitive points, was the creation of a pre-primary State school in 1968, after memorable fights in Parliament.⁹ In fact, until that moment the presence of the State was missing at that educational level, while private religious institutions were largely present, together with a less widespread presence of local authorities. The growth of the public presence was gradual but not slow, promoting a significant improvement and in the end a generalisation of the participation rate (CENSIS). These data concerning childhood education – a subject so rich in cultural and emotional significance – reveal the transformation of Italian habits, attitudes, and behaviours that went together with the social and economic transformations in the second half of the twentieth century.

Conflict arises when dealing with the ways of differentiation within society, the articulation of social classes and types of work, and therefore the corresponding education articulation at the secondary level. In the 1960s and 1970s, the correspondence of the school structure to a social stratification was questioned. There were criticisms

of the sharp differentiations between *licei*, technical institutes, vocational institutes, and teacher-training schools, that were still, basically, the same of the Gentile reform (the 'organ-pipes chart'). However, notwithstanding the great number of bills proposed, the attempt of putting in place a different structure of the secondary school did not succeed.

Agreement was found in the fact that the situation was unsatisfactory, but the only shared answer to the rising criticism was to abolish some of the existing bonds, virtually without adopting 'positive' measures other than experimental ones. This policy was intended to be temporary, but, as the lack of agreement persisted, it was actually long-lasting and brought about profound changes in the secondary school and the university.

In 1969, three separate measures were adopted, which, taken together, caused the abolition of the regulatory framework that previously conditioned the students' educational future according to the choices made after the years of compulsory school. Such measures included: (a) the so-called liberalisation of access to university, according to which it was possible to enrol at all university faculties, for those who had completed a five-year secondary school, irrespective of the kind of school they had followed¹⁰; (b) the law modifying the procedure for the secondary-school-leaving-examination, extending the qualification of 'maturità' to all the secondary school final examinations¹¹; and (c) the law introducing in vocational institutes – until then not considered as proper secondary schools – some experimental courses intended to allow students to get a five-year diploma, called 'maturità' as well,¹² therefore allowing them university access.

All this brought a profound transformation of secondary education. The three measures taken together led to a substantial equivalence between the different study courses, in terms of further educational opportunities, duration of the course and value of the final diploma, thus transforming the prospects resulting from the attendance of a given school, even without a reform of its articulation and contents. It can be observed that, in a way, these measures brought to the highest point the trend towards the abolition of dead-end courses in the school system – with the ensuing effect of de-professionalisation of the system itself – that had periodically been adopted in the history of Italian education policy. As was the case before, it was possible to detect in this action the double intent to meet the aspirations for sociocultural mobility of middle and working classes and to provide ways to absorb jobless secondary-school-leavers.

Admittedly, these were intended to be temporary choices, a 'breach' in the old school system, not meant to last. However, the egalitarian frame was desired, and was intended to indicate the direction to be followed to build a new school: but a positive consensus on this issue was not found – and is still hard to find.

However, even if an 'organic' reform of the upper secondary school was not achieved, innovation, sometimes relevant, was introduced through several partial measures. To quote a perceptive comment by a non-Italian author, 'the political landscape of Italy is such that developments at the margin are often the only kind which can be effected, and, therefore, such changes are often of a significance which may surprise the foreign observer' (Polesel, 2006: 552).

A relevant role has been played by experimental courses that the schools were allowed to create following a law passed in 1974. At the upper secondary level, these

courses offered an opportunity to concretely test many of the emerging reform hypotheses. Actually they have represented permanent innovative features adopted by the schools rather than 'experimentations'.

In the ensuing years their number had grown, also due to rules that were passed in favour of school autonomy. Consequently, in an essentially unaltered structural framework, many initiatives have been blossoming from individual schools (OCSSE-MPI, 1983).

In a later period, there was an attempt at the central level to 'promote a systemic innovation in a whole cycle of post-compulsory education, even without a legislative framework of reference' (Niceforo, 1990: 47). An *ad hoc* committee (*Commissione Brocca*, after the name of its President) was established in 1989, with the task of elaborating and proposing new curricula for the first two years of post-compulsory education, aimed at the creation of more flexible learning paths in classical as well as in technical schools. It was once again the administrative way of promoting and managing innovation – and it ended up, if not in a 'systemic' change, in more innovative 'experimental' courses being permanently included in the system.

Besides the thorny question of upper secondary school, however, in the decades here considered several provisions were adopted about different aspects of the school system. One of the main principles inspiring the action was still the egalitarian principle, together with a strong trend towards participation at all levels. To this overall inspiring *motif* corresponded several measures, from the integration of the handicapped in ordinary schooling to the adoption of new evaluation procedures,¹³ from the liberalisation of the university entrance to the enlargement of social participation in the school government.¹⁴

Most of the measures did meet highly sensitive problems. Their main limit lay in the fact that, if on the one hand they addressed concrete questions, on the other, very often they were once again implicitly referring to a school-that-could-be, in a society still-to-be-built, thereby implying a global reform of the educational system which by then was clearly not very realistic. No wonder then if in the end they turned out to be disappointing and fragmentary, being the result of a combination of radical spurs from the bottom and a lack of clear political decisions (Benadusi, 1989).

Still, it has to be considered that, in the Italian context of the 1970s, the illusion – the utopia – of 'another possible world' lingered on, sometimes influencing the institutional policies and generating, in some dramatic moments, subversive hypotheses, which fortunately in the end were always belied by facts. Education has to be seen against this background.

Italy After 1989

In more recent times, the egalitarian approach, tied to a radical idea of education and oriented to 'another-possible-world', was deeply affected by the changes that took place in the 1980s and most of all in the last two decades. During this period, in Italy as elsewhere the keywords have been quality in education and a need for an external evaluation of the effectiveness of education and training, in the context of a European and an international setting which was very demanding in terms of efficiency and competitiveness.

To fully understand the nature and the meaning of the change the Italian society and education had to face, we need once more to go back to consider certain Italian peculiarities in the rapidly evolving international context, particularly regarding the consequences of the fall of communism.

Italy was much more affected by the fall of the Berlin Wall than most of the other western countries; the end of bipolarism shattered its delicate equilibrium of 'frontier' country, which was heavily conditioned in its democratic dialectic. As Lepre noted, 'Italy had been a borderland between the two systems, and at the same time it had been internally cut across by the border itself' (Lepre, 1993: 21).

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union put an end to this situation; it was said that the post-war period was definitively over. Thus Italy had to re-range its political-institutional dynamics according to a radically changed context, where the composition of the governments did not necessarily have to be predetermined.

The first part of the 1990s saw a great turmoil in political life. On the one hand, there was the redefinition of the name and programmes of the Communist Party (PC): it became Partito Democratico della Sinistra (PDS) in 1990 and then Democratici di Sinistra (DS), paying for these shifts with a split on its left, which gave birth to *Rifondazione Comunista* – Communist Refounding Party. On the other hand, there was a fall of those parties that had governed Italy for almost 50 years, above all Christian Democracy and the Socialist Party. The ruling elite of these latter parties was overwhelmed by the corruption scandals linked to political financing but the deep roots of the turmoil are to be found in the crisis of the equilibrium that had run Europe and the world from Yalta on, where Italy, borderland between two blocs, was one of the keystones.

It was necessary to redefine almost everything. Amongst other things, the electoral system was changed, giving way to the so-called second republic. Also, the proportional system was abandoned, to adopt a mechanism close to the majority system, based on two main coalitions, even though it allows the presence of different parties within each alliance.

The fall of the former leading parties seemed to open the way to the left-wing ones, legitimated at last. Actually, the period of waiting was longer than it was expected, as a newly founded moderate party, Forza Italia, came unexpectedly to fill the gap left by the recent changes, and won the general elections of 1994, in alliance with other forces. Yet in a short time the coalition split up, giving way to a 'technical government', and the left-wing coalition assumed power with the elections of 1996.

This coalition completed its five years of government, despite the many difficulties and the changing of several prime ministers. In 2001 the right-wing coalition won again; in 2006 the Left came back into power. Italy seemed to have eventually found its way to alternation in government.

However, the transformation of the political forces is still going on. New aggregations and new coalition parties, both Left and Right, are constantly being formed.

Concerning school policies, some relevant points can be pinpointed. The most important one is the renewed need for a wide action of reform, maybe not to build a new society as before, but because it is felt that such a changed society needs to reorganise many of its aspects, including education. Therefore, some reformist features can be discerned, not aiming to bring about a less violent revolution, but trying to fulfil the need to reorganise the educational system to face a changed and continuously evolving society.

The need for major changes in the education system has been invoked virtually everywhere in the last years. The point about Italy is that the country is once again at a crucial moment of state formation. From this perspective, the question of the 'formation of the citizen' comes up again, with all the difficulties stemming from the previous and the recent history.

In this dynamic, the European unification plays a most relevant role. 'Conforming to Europe' becomes a sort of password. The reference to Europe is used as a strong argument to support reformist measures that are felt to be necessary but which jeopardised well-established equilibriums. 'Europe' therefore can help to find a common framework of reference, inside which the 'new' Italian identity can take shape.

The Italian School System in the Last Decade

In 1996, for the first time a left-wing coalition came to power that included the Democratic Left Party (*Partito democratico della Sinistra*, born from the transformation of the Communist Party) and with the external support of the Communist Refounding Party. The Minister of Education, Luigi Berlinguer, symbolised this change. He is the cousin of Enrico, who was the Secretary of the Communist Party in the crucial 1970s.

Luigi Berlinguer undertook great interventions in every aspect of the educational system, from school to university, from teachers' training to the Ministry's structure, from the relations between public and private schools—which came at last to a legislative regulation after more than 50 years from the Constitution—to 'maturità' examination, from school autonomy to the territorial reorganisation, and the reform of regional institutes for educational research (Niceforo, 2001; Berlinguer, 2001). Most measures were implemented: some of them remained in force, even, if with some modifications, during the years in which the political Right governed, while others were abrogated.

What the left-wing did not succeed to implement was a real reform of the school structure. The law for school reform (Law n.30, February 2000) was approved on the eve of the termination of the legislature's terms of office. During the electoral campaign the opposition explicitly promised that in case of victory they would first abrogate that law and propose a new and different reform. And so it happened. In spring 2001 the right-wing won the elections, the law's application was immediately suspended and two years later (April 2003) the new government approved a *delega-law*¹⁵ to rearrange the whole school and training system, whose first decrees, concerning compulsory school, were approved in the first months of 2004, while the decrees concerning secondary school were passed in 2005. But these measures in turn did not enjoy a long life, being suspended by a Ministerial Decree of the new left-wing government in May 2006.

The present situation is therefore complex, and not easy to describe, as the concrete school reality is an inextricable interlacing and overlapping of measures kept but modified, cancelled reforms, new reforms, some already approved and gradually coming into force, others still to be defined in detail—all this of course interacting with the pre-existing general features of the system.¹⁶ Irrespective of any judgement about the content of the proposed measures, this process clashes with the typical difficulties of a

substantial reformist action, having to deal with many previous situations, overlapping sets of rules and well-established interests, all problems that, to be overcome, need at the same time decision, consensus-building, political will, and competence.

But above all, the dynamics that have been described show how, in the alternation, the 'separate belongings' are still strong, or, to be more accurate, are felt and perceived as such. Especially the first leftist government was tempted to use structural reforms in such a harsh way that it recalled the revolutionary spirit of the previous decades, in method if not in content, reforming at the same time all the sectors of the educational system with what has been called a sort of Jacobin approach. Then, as described just above, each further change in government produced an allegedly global upheaval. Actually, the contents of the different measures are far less distant than declared (once again the most difficult issue being upper secondary school) – but still the idea that the alternation is not so much between two 'homologated forces within the system' as between different – perhaps even mutually exclusive – conceptions of society is still alive. At least it still cannot be denied altogether even by the most realistic of political forces, which cannot disregard the lingering of attitudes shaped in so many years of 'stalled democracy'.

More than anything else, this shows the determining influence that Italy's peculiar position between the two blocs has had over the Italian political and institutional life, and it is curious to see how the awareness of this influence is lacking in most international and comparative studies on education. Yet one of the last walls between 'east' and 'west' fell 15 years after the Berlin Wall; it was the wall that until recently divided Gorizia, in Italy, from Nova Gorica, in Slovenia. Only the entry of Slovenia in the EU allowed this wall to fall, while still keeping the division of the city in two different states. This can symbolically represent the particular relevance for our country – not always fully perceived – of the transformation of the international set-up.

Notes

1. Decree by which the Holy See on 10 September 1874 gave a negative answer about the possible participation of Italian Catholics in the elections and in general in the political life of the State. The prohibition was attenuated in 1905, and abolished in 1919.
2. The gap was such that in 1866, Cesare Correnti denounced Italy's 'unusual record' in terms of number of secondary schools and students compared to other countries, while it ranked last in terms of number of popular and primary schools, despite its highest rate of increase in the demand for these schools (Barbagli, 1974: 69).
3. The original text of *I Miei Ricordi* by Massimo d'Azeleglio was only brought back to light in the years after the Second World War. That historical and philological episode cannot be dwelt upon herein, but see Soldani and Turi (1993: 17) with particular reference to the sentence quoted above.
4. Rather than one text, it was actually a set of provisions – passed between the end of 1922 and the middle of 1924 – which, however, responded to a consistent design and are usually considered as a whole as the 'Gentile's Reform'. The reform is normally dated 1923, the year when most of its provisions were passed.
5. Upper secondary school with an emphasis on science subjects.
6. When the Fascist regime showed its nature more clearly, however, many intellectuals who had first supported it moved away from it – like Lombardo Radice himself.
7. Law 31.XII.1962, n.1859.
8. Law 16.VI.1977, n.348, 'Liceo classico': upper secondary school with an emphasis on humanities.
9. Law 18.IV.1968, n.444.

10. Law 11.XII.1969, n.910.
11. Law 5.IV.1969, n.119.
12. Law 27.X.1969, n.754.
13. Law 4.X.1977, n.517.
14. DPR 31.V.1974, n.416.
15. A delega-law is a law that defines the general criteria, delegating the government to emanate specific measures for their practical application.
16. In this situation, it does not seem worthwhile to try giving a description of the system at the moment of writing, which would certainly be more than obsolete when the text will be published. The best reference is to Eurydice data, especially the accurate and frequently updated National Summary sheets.

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SOCIAL CHANGE AND CONFIGURATIONS OF RHETORIC: SCHOOLING AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION-INCLUSION IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN CONTEMPORARY SPAIN

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History and Politics in the Educational Policy Formation of Contemporary Spain

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, Spanish education experienced a full historical cycle closely related to the profound political change that the country experienced during that period of time. The 1970s witnessed the decline and definitive disappearance of the General Franco dictatorship. Immediately after his death in 1975 a process of political transition commenced that was complete but peaceful and based on the accord of the most relevant political parties and social groups. The first fruit of this process was a new Constitution, which was approved by universal suffrage in 1978. This Constitution established a new political regime that is a parliamentary monarchy, similar to those of some other European countries. Accordingly, in 1986 Spain was admitted as a full member of the European Union. For the first time in the history of the country, an ambitious project was undertaken to decentralize the national territory, which resulted in its division into autonomous communities with a significant degree of self-governance (see Judt, 2006, 516-523, for a brief but effective historical narrative of the events of this period).

To these and other political changes, one must also factor in a process of rapid and relatively successful modernization that had just begun in the late 1950s, after the most authoritarian years of the regime, in which Spain began a new era with its "economic stabilization plan" of 1959 supervised by the World Bank, and during the 1960s through the so-called Economic and Social Development Plans (created following the French model of "indicative" economic planning of the postwar era, and technocratically accomplished by a leading elite of high-level civil servants linked to the Opus Dei) (Balfour, 2000). With the advent of democracy after General Franco's death, the modernization processes accelerated, after the signing of the so-called Social Pact of La Moncloa by the political parties and trade unions of workers and entrepreneurs, with significant consequences for all aspects of the social life of the country. During the 1990s Spain succeeded in situating itself among the most developed countries of the world, experiencing excellent economic indicators and a significant transformation of