

GOVERNING A STATE-WIDE INDUCTION PROGRAM: CHARACTERISTICS AND SUCCESS CONDITIONS OF THE ITALIAN MODEL

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Starting from the EC Handbook conditions issued in 2010 (Conditions for successful induction Programs) and from a critical and in-depth reading of the induction governance model in Italy and its quali-quantitative evaluation, this work will attempt to validate or enrich governance principles to be applied to similar implementation contexts. Starting from the governance conditions, recognized as fundamental to an effective induction programme, one of the goals of this work is to understand how the conditions of success have been implemented in the Italian training model and, above all, how they have been characterized with respect to the design of network governance.

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1 Introduction

In 2010, the EC has devoted particular attention to Induction by presenting a Handbook for policy maker developing coherent and system-wide induction programmes for beginning teachers (European Commission Staff Working Document SEC, 2010), namely a set of guiding principles for the implementation of effective training models to be adopted in the transition towards profession. However, whether the Induction design aspects stand on already mature studies (Mangione *et al.*, 2016; Eurydice, 2016), the analysis of *governance conditions* has not yet obtained a number of evidences in the field.

This work, starting from the EC Handbook conditions issued in 2010 (Conditions for successful induction Programs) and from a critical and in-depth reading of the induction governance model in Italy and its quali-quantitative evaluation, will attempt to validate or enrich governance principles to be applied to similar implementation contexts.

2 Induction in Europe and governance conditions

To achieve the goals of an effective induction programme, five “governance conditions” are recognized in the literature as being fundamental: 1) financial support, 2) clarity of stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities, 3) cooperation among the different elements of the system, 4) a culture that focuses on learning and 5) quality management (EC, 2010).

Induction and other support measures for teachers on trial require investment in terms of adequate time and financial resources. First, a workload revision is recommended not only because preparation of the lesson during the first years of teaching takes much longer time, but also to make it possible for the beginning teachers to participate in all the activities that a newly qualified teachers’ training course proposes. Mentors / Tutors must also be able to rely on sufficient time for them to fulfill their duties; effective mentoring should not be seen as an additional task of the teaching profession. These profiles can be also valued by additional recognitions and incentives.

As far as roles and responsibilities are concerned, which may vary from country to country in cases where schools have a high degree of autonomy over their internal policies, school principals will play also a key role in creating coherent induction programme.

Local authorities can stimulate, support and facilitate school principals involved in developing induction programme, helping them to define appropriate criteria on which to base quality.

In countries where governance is centralized, a coherent induction programme can be established both at a regional and national level. The

ministries in charge of this may use a national agency or universities. In these cases, the involvement of school principals is important to strengthen the size of social support and to ensure that the defined induction programme is adequate for both the school and the reference level.

Induction as part of a professional development path should allow teachers to build continuity between past and future experiences (Kane & Francis, 2013; Rossi *et al.*, 2016). Different systems must form that cross-continuity axis with the in-service training. A common language based on the high quality of teacher figure and school community. Since the induction programme is only one of the phases in the continuing professional development of teachers, it should take into account characteristics of the in-service training system by enhancing and including in continuing training also elements and conditions foreseen in permanent employment.

The school environment within which the teacher makes his/her first entrance should be supportive and consider all their needs. Support for newly employed teachers is a task that not only falls within the tutor duties: other teachers and school principals are also invited to revise and concentrate on their daily activities to make the beginning teacher a change agent and be integrated in the school community. A culture that focuses on the development of professionalism pays attention to cooperation, educational leadership, and the induction vision as a way to make the new recruited teacher a key asset for the school. School principals play a crucial role in creating such a culture.

Quality and effectiveness of induction programme as well as monitoring and evaluation system depend on tutors and school principals' competence. As for the preparation of tutors, especially, its consolidation is necessary and can be done through dedicated training paths. Similarly, the school principals should undergo a dedicated training course so that they can "ensure that the school's policy on supporting new teachers is understood and supported by the staff team".

Finally, regular monitoring of policy and forecasting is essential. A quality criterion for induction is given by the level of commitment shown by all stakeholders aiming to develop an "evidence informed practice" (OECD, 2007).

3 The induction model in Italy and networked governance

The newly qualified teachers path adopted in Italy by the Ministry of Education, University and Research and INDIRE in its recent reformulation dated from the school year 2014/2015 (CM 6768/2015, CM 36167/2015, DM 859/2015, CM 28515/2016), is currently in its fourth year of implementation (2017/2018) and has involved more than 130,000 beginning teachers and about 100,000 welcoming tutors.

The training model is structured in 50 hours and specific activities (Fig. 1).

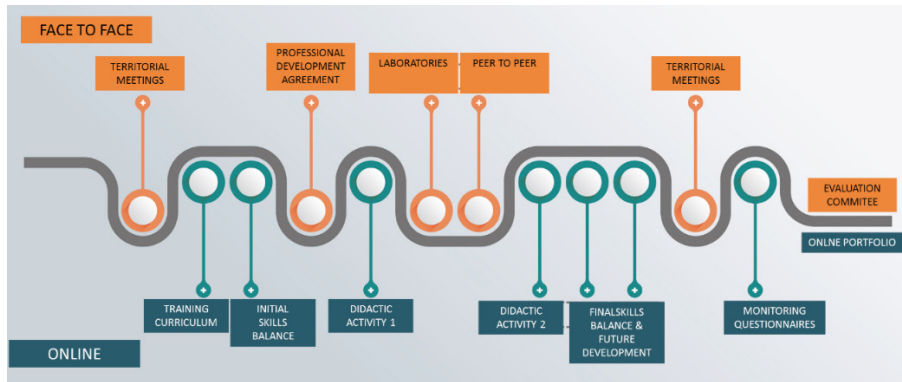


Fig. 1 - Face to face and online activities in the Italian Induction training model

The first three stations (upper line in Fig. 1) translate into a sequence of activities that take place in a face-to-face mode, partially implemented by local reference schools or “Scuole Polo” (initial and final meetings, training laboratories), partly within the school by both school principal and tutor (drafting a professional development agreement), and partly in the teacher’s classroom (mutual observation with tutor, teaching activities to be documented, observation carried out by the school principal). The online environment allows the teachers to carry out a series of activities that integrate with those performed face-to-face, and sometimes guide their action. The activities converge into the online teacher’s formative online portfolio (Fig. 2) (Mangione *et al.*, 2016; Rossi *et al.*, 2016).

The Italian educational context is characterized by a distributed governance approach, a model in which: “the request for collaboration becomes compulsory because of the weak school autonomy and a polycentric administrative system, where school dependence from other subjects is institutionalized through an articulated division of administrative competencies, in which state, regions, local entities and schools participate in different levels of governance and with different functions” (Paletta, 2012).

The recent school reform (Law 105/2015) has, however, leveraged on new policy challenges that required a refocusing on the models and pushed to new governance scenarios characterized by greater collaboration, i.e. to *networked governance models*.

According to recent literature, one speaks of networked governance in education when “the school autonomy is associated to a system of institutional,

national or local rules, which promote systematic collaboration. In this case, the collaboration of schools is a product not only of a spontaneous and autonomous choice, but also as a result of the institutional context that promotes collaborative relationships in various ways” (Paletta, 2012).

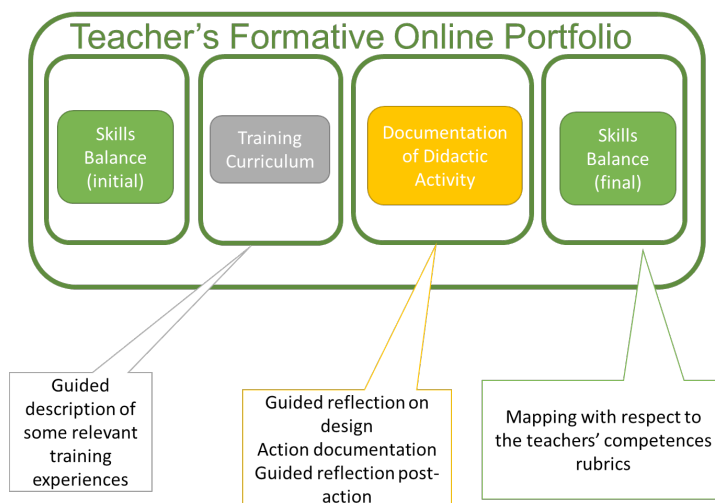


Fig. 2 - Main elements of the teacher's formative online Portfolio

One of the goals of this work is to understand how the governance conditions of success in Induction have been implemented in the Italian training model and, above all, how they have been characterized with respect to the design of network governance.

3.1 Condition 1. financial support

The Ministry of Education (MIUR) allocated for “transition to the teaching profession” for the year 2015/2016, €47 for each teacher, distributed on a regional basis through local reference schools, reference workshops for laboratory training and face-to-face meetings provided for in the plan. In addition, staff resources (around 130 FTEs across the national territory) were employed and university and school research groups (INDIRE and University) involved for the development and validation of the Teacher Portfolio. Investment in the path, also in its online version, has required the of a virtual teaching environment and the allocation of funds dedicated to quantitative and qualitative monitoring of the training outcomes and of the enabling governance, for a total investment of over € 4.5M for about 86,000

teachers in their probation year.

Compared with the elements cited in (EC, 2010) in relation to the financial support, it is important to point out that - in the face of the annual economic investment decided by the Ministry for the training plan - no measures have been taken to date for the reduction of the beginning teachers' workload, without reducing their salaries. Although no specific workload reduction measures have been implemented, the initiative aimed to recognize the role and function of tutor as a merit criterion for bonus awards (salary bonus provided for in Law 107, paragraph 126) started from the bottom (i.e. from the schools and their autonomy).

As a result of the recent entry into force of this legislation, this aspect is not, or has not yet been systematized in general, but is still applied at the discretion of individual schools autonomy, which receive a fund for the promotion of merit of their teaching staff, distributed at a local level and among the educational institutions in proportion to the organic allocation of teachers, also considering factors of complexity of schools and areas subject to higher educational risk (the average funding for each school site is 24,000 euros, for a national total fund of 200 million euros renewed annually as provided for by Law 107, paragraph 126).

3.2 Condition 2. Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders

The governance model of Induction exemplified in fig. 3 seeks to create a virtuous balance between central and peripheral instances of the Administration in order to develop an inherently social system, where the social attribute belongs to multi-community layers including schools, territorial offices (Regional and Provincial), region and state governments (DM 850/2015).

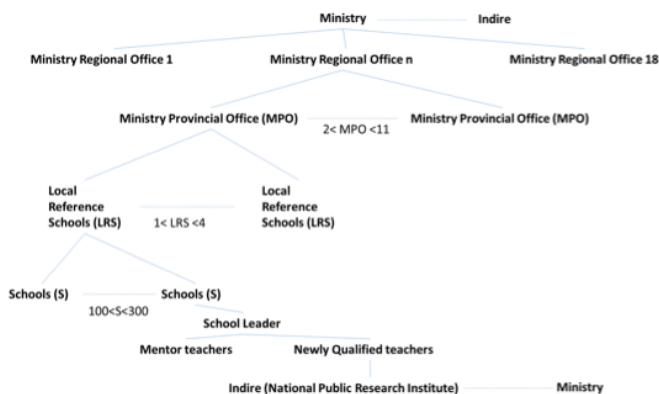


Fig. 3 - Italian Induction model: involved stakeholders and their main relations

The MIUR - Directorate General for School Staff (DGPER) is the subject that defines the general guidelines for the training plan activation, allocates the necessary resources for its implementation and publishes an annual report on its progress. MIUR coordinates the whole national plan, defines quality standards for the path, and collects overall monitoring outcomes. It is the task of INDIRE to create and manage the online platform, enabling the teachers to draft their training portfolio and compile monitoring questionnaires. The Ministry Regional School Offices through the identification of a regional staff coordinate training initiatives at a regional level, i.e. initial and final meetings and the 4 training laboratories, which, together with peer- to-peer observation, represent the “face-to-face” side of the training path.

In particular, they acquire, by public notice, all applications by the local reference Schools for the realization of training paths (a school per each province or more schools per metropolitan area) and collect administrative and didactic reports on the activities carried out, to be issued to DGPER.

These reference Schools collect teachers’ training needs, organize and implement training laboratories on the network. The MIUR territorial offices provide support to the reference schools through specific training initiatives (e.g. tutors), carrying out regional monitoring.

As for what planning and management of face-to-face training activities and laboratory subject matter, the DM 850/2015 indicates that the choice should privilege staff internal to the school; However, the choice is left to the decision of Regional School Offices, Ministry Provincial Offices and Local Reference Schools depending on the institution organizing the training.

The roles of these institutional bodies are complemented by the work of school leaders and tutors of the newly recruited teachers in the actual school of service

In accordance with this plan, the teacher who is completing the probation year is therefore included in a complex system of relationships among the subjects involved in the implementation of training, which thing can make his/her experience complicated, but also enriched, opening it to the entire local and national school community.

3.3 Condition 3. Co-operation between different parts of the system

Up a few years ago, Italy was characterized by a significant discontinuity between the various professional developmental stages of teachers: Initial Teacher Education (ITE), Induction (Newly qualified teachers’ Training), CPD (Continuous Professional Development). The recent reforms in the teacher training, from DM 850/2015 focusing on the induction training, to Law 107/2015 for School Reform, and the National Teacher Training Plan (DM

797/2016) have had an impact on some of the major aspects of weakness and on criticality factors that undermined the continuity in training by introducing important elements of renewal as regards:

- Promotion of a teacher's identity culture as a professional: from becoming to being and growing as a teaching professional.
- Supportive structures at the various stages of the continuum: initial training; tutoring and mentoring; 'compulsory, permanent and structured' continuous education; promotion of observation and study of teaching practices in their execution; collaborative partnerships; technological environments with a high self-training and peer training value.
- Definition of "national standards" for the teacher's skills/competences: reference frameworks, levels and benchmarks, specific / transversal skills; tools for the skills capitalization and recognition (self-assessment and evaluation; certifications; portfolio; technological supports).
- Strengthening of roles and functions of schools and territory acting in concert with the national authorities as environments for teaching and professionalism practice: shared responsibilities; professional learning communities; integration of professional learning within the profession practice; professional dialogue with stakeholders; individual and collective professional development.
- Structure of teacher's work: prerequisites and structure of initial preparation; induction; working conditions; possible career paths and specializations; evaluation and merit award.

3.4 Condition 4. A culture that is focused on learning

A culture that is focused on learning by both beginning teachers and experienced teachers includes a focus on collaboration, leadership of learning, promotion of a learning environment conducive to learning as well as looking at beginning teachers as an asset to schools (Carver *et al.*, 2009).

School leaders play a crucial role in creating such a culture (Zeichener & Gore, 1990; Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 1999). Specific prerogatives attributed to the school principal in Italy also concern: the preparation in combination with the beginning teacher of the Training Agreement, in which, on the basis of the initial skills balance sheet, to define all training choices for the probation year; the possibility of programming a higher number of hours than those indicated in the model that the novice teacher will devote to the observation of experienced teachers; the convening of the Evaluation Committee; the drafting of a report for each newly qualified teacher; a documented evaluation of newly qualified teachers' probation year; the issuance of a formal appointment order confirming

a permanent position or the request for an inspection visit.

In line with conceptualizations expressed by (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004; Day *et al.*, 2005) the Italian induction model support” agreement for professional development”, a document that defines the reciprocal commitments that link the newly qualified teacher and community membership and stimulates to assume an “attitude of research and innovation propensity”(Cerini,& Spinosi, 2016). It is important to note that the agreement structure has not received any guidance at a regulatory level, but can find an alternative representation in the various educational communities and refers to the different areas of didactic, organizational and training competence in coherence with indicators and dimensions of the skills balance sheet.

3.5 Condition 5. Focus on quality management

In accordance with the conditions for ensuring the quality and effectiveness of induction programmes, the Italian model adopts various quality management elements in agreement and in connection with the multi-level aspects that characterize governance:

The competence of tutors/mentors

Since one of the pillars of the induction-training model is the peer-to-peer dimension, that is, novice teacher’s working together with a tutor, it is of utmost importance to ensure the qualities and competence of all the tutors.

During the three years of experimentation, greater attention has been paid to the selection of tutors according to rigorous criteria (such as knowledge about the learning of beginning teachers and inter-personal relationship skills). Special tutor training actions have also been put in place - now experimentally and on a regional basis and initiative - to provide the necessary scaffolding to perform that function (Magnoler, 2017)

The competence of school leaders

With the awareness that the competences and commitment of school leaders are important for creating a coherent induction system supportive measures have been implemented, namely:

- Organization of national training days addressed to school leaders of the local reference Schools;
- Reference models and tools for the implementation of training agreement and classroom observation.

Within this framework, however, there is also the increased need for the School Leaders to be accompanied by appropriate training to promote the

professional development of teachers, to bet on the human factor as a key resource for school improvement (Cerini, 2016).

Process Documentation

The training model is actually centred on the creation of documents by the teacher in order to support that critical reflexivity that enhances a professional development. Quality elements are therefore rooted in the construction of guided paths, making use of video for reflection on action and developing skills of professional vision, and fostering the work of tutors in mentoring and peer-to-peer processes (Mangione & Rosa, 2017; Mangione *et al.*, 2017).

Other elements of quality management relate to the various levels of the national monitoring conducted by Indire, which annually finds its specialization aimed at deepening some elements, and to inform about the decisions for the reopening of the subsequent year (through monitoring questionnaires compiled by newly qualified teachers and their tutors, and addressed to the school leaders; interviews; focus groups and round tables with representative of teachers, tutors and referents of the Regional School Offices; automatic and semi-automatic analysis of selected parts from the digital portfolio content)(Mangione *et al.*, 2016; Mangione & Pettenati, 2017, Mangione, Della Gala e Pettenati, 2017).

From the online platform viewpoint, data collection and the processing of interaction data with the environment are implemented, such as access statistics, assistance ticket reports managed by the help desk system, updating of a dashboard (from 2016/2017) also aimed at building a culture of collaboration and at focusing on specific issues through the realization of thematic “Special Issues” providing timely update on the training plan during its development,

4 Research question and methodology

Let's also assume that the Italian model of induction can help to decline and to point out the five governance conditions identified at a European level (Handbook) (1. financial support; 2. role and responsibilities of stakeholders; 3. cooperation between different parts of the system; 4. culture focused on learning; 5. quality management), so that the model can be repeated effectively in complex, heterogeneous contexts and with the involvement of a large number of teachers and actors in the training system.

To check these hypotheses and get useful recommendations to implement all corrections to the networked governance model launched in 2014 and developed in the following three-year period, and currently at the start of his fourth deployment for the 2017/2018 year, a scientific study has been conducted, based on tools for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Specifically, 1) the quantitative analysis relies on data collected through a questionnaire created by

INDIRE and addressed to a sample of School Leaders from NQT (newly qualified teacher) schools for year 2015-2016. In this respect, the results of the survey involving 114 school leaders from all over Italy were analyzed. The sample of school leaders involved was as follows: 68.8% from upper secondary schools, 28.3% from unified school districts and less than 3% from education departments, lower secondary schools and Provincial Adult Education Centres (CPIA); 2) A survey promoted by the DGPER of the Ministry of Education and Research, addressed to Regional School Offices across the national territory in order to have a feedback on the training of newly qualified teachers, in terms of strengths and weaknesses, in the academic year 2015-2016.

Moreover, 3) use of some of the tools for qualitative analysis (focus groups and interviews) and the experiences of a sample of “privileged witnesses”, being main nodes of the network of actors involved in the implementation of the training action

The survey involved 2 types of interlocutors and different data collection methods (Fig.4):

- During the three days of presentation of the new training year in Milan, Rome and Naples in November 2016, it was possible to organize three round tables with representatives from the Regional School Offices to form the same number of *focus groups*, mediated by a conductor. In these meetings, participants were asked to retrace their experience and identify positive elements and criticalities detected in the *governance* model.
- On the same occasions, other *mini-focus groups* were carried out with the School Principals from the Reference Schools and the Local Offices, to gather their perception on the model set up for Induction in Italy.

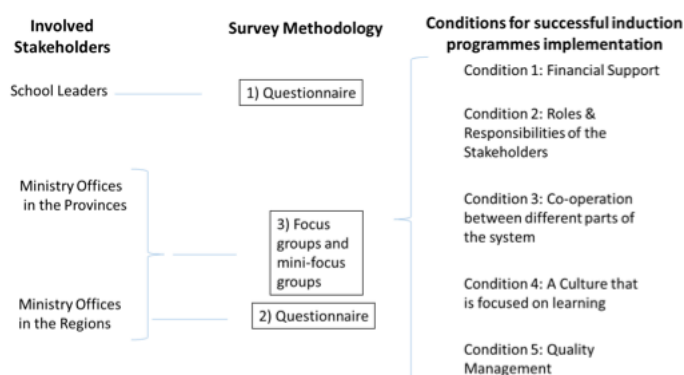


Fig.4 - Research methodology

An accurate analysis for the two types of privileged actors was supposed to allow for the identification of constituent and key elements of the training model, as well as improvements to be made to overcome the detected criticalities. Since this methodology implies to take into account the influence of factors that are internal or external to the group (Bovine, 1998), discussion groups were repeated throughout the country with different people until the obtained information resulted redundant (normally three or four groups for each subset of surveyed population are sufficient). It can be defined as a conversation caused by the interviewer, addressed to subjects chosen on the basis of a survey plan and in a substantial number, for a cognitive purpose.

Data analysis is centred on the subjects and its results are presented in a narrative perspective. Summaries and generalizations have taken the form of classifications and types, and have been used to return to the Ministry prospects for future improvement resulting from an evidence based research approach (Eurydice, 2017) In fact, as shown in (OECD,2007) ‘effective long-term policies must be based on solid evidence. For Member States to fully understand and monitor what is happening in their systems, they need channels for producing and accessing relevant research, a statistical infrastructure capable of collecting the necessary data, and mechanisms to assess progress as policies are implemented’ (p.2). Data and evidence resulting from this investigation will be included to justify the legislation process about Induction in Italy.

5 Reading governance characteristics from the quantitative survey

School leaders were asked questions about the choice of tutors and supportive elements for workload management, observation and accompaniment for beginning teachers and possible improvements to be introduced.

(Condition 5) Tutor selection was not systematically accompanied by a training and workload management path. To the question: “Were the tutors designated to assist the teachers in your school generally: [trained through appropriate training paths]? 34% of school leaders answered “Sometimes”, 27.4% “Never”, 16% “Always” while 22.6% did not answer.

(Condition 5) To the question: “Were the tutors designated to assist the teachers in your school generally: [supported by appropriate tools, including at least one orientation meeting]? 74.5% of school leaders answered “Always”, 14.2% “Sometimes”, 0.9% “Never” and 10.4% did not answer.

(Condition 4) School leaders confirm that they conducted observation visits in their newly qualified teachers’ classrooms but in different modes: 62.3% of SLs conducted their observations using appropriate analytical tools, 57.5% declare they completed a visit per each new teacher, 44.3% continued their visits with in-depth and discussion meetings, 35.8% participated in several

classroom visits per each beginning teacher.

(Condition 3) (Condition 4) (Condition 2) In the definition and stipulation of the “training agreement”, 80.2% of SLs linked this action with the initial budget provided for the skills balance sheet, 75.5% based on a reference model by customizing it to the individual teacher’s needs, 46.2% preceded all the other stages of face-to-face training, while 27.4% conducted this action in connection with the Training Curriculum.

The school leader has therefore strengthened the commitment required by the agreement not only by valorizing individual teachers’ past experiences (through references to their online training curriculum) but, above all, by virtuously taking into account the result of their initial skills balance sheet, and making it a guidance tool for an agreement that the teacher underwrites with the whole educational community.

(Condition 5) In the light of the continuous monitoring carried out during the probation year, school leaders were asked to point out some strengths and weaknesses of the training model, thereby addressing its improvement. Around 83% considers the territorial laboratories to be a strength point, though not enough to allow teachers to bring about a significant approximation to the laboratory methodology, while 75.5% considers as strengths “the professional monitoring of the newly qualified teachers, as aiming at the formulation of the training agreement and the mutual observation in the classroom”. Finally, 51.9% refers to the “online training aimed at building the Portfolio, including the two Skills Balance Sheets (initial and final), the Training Curriculum, and the design, documentation and reflection on two teaching activities”.

(Condition 4) (Condition 5) School Leaders were also asked if there were improvements introduced in comparison with the past training edition and therefore with respect to the cultural model to promote. Specifically, 52.8% indicated an improvement over a “Better co-ordination of the activities of welcoming tutors and / or greater attention to their training”, 40.6% a “Greater link between peer-to-peer activities and the drafting of both Training Agreement and Skills Balance Sheet. 34 percent indicated improvements in “Arrangement of shared tools for peer-to-peer observation and / or tools such as diaries, documentation templates, etc.”; 1% in “An increased involvement of the school community in a coordinated and synergistic reception of newly qualified teachers”, and 26.4% in “An enhancement of teaching activities, planned and documented during training through the construction of a freely accessible storage space”.

(Condition 5) Finally, they were asked to give a priority order for the points on which to intervene in order to further improve the training experience of the newly qualified teachers. Their answers indicated as their first choice, for 21.7% “Organizing opportunities and spaces for interaction and confrontation between

novice teachers and experienced teachers”; 15.1% “More opportunities to observe experienced teachers” and “Diversifying and customizing the content of training”, while 11.3% “Providing formative and self-assessment tools that facilitate evaluation of practice”.

The SLs are in favor of a training covering the entire school year and then starting in September with the beginning of the school activities. Secondly, they report a need to review the structure of laboratory, and a need for a higher degree of school autonomy in the management of experienced teachers selected by the Provincial Offices.

A number of 18 Regional Offices in the Italian Regions were also interviewed through a questionnaire given by the Directorate General of school staff (MIUR) at the end of the training year 2015/2016.

The monitoring was to investigate the satisfaction and the opinion expressed by these offices on the many aspects of the training plan, which we only comment on those items that are closely related to the governance conditions that are the subject of this work. The questionnaire (essay questions), investigated various issues by asking for strengths and weaknesses.

The strengths that the Regional School Offices highlighted in terms of management (Condition 2) have been identified by all 18 regions in the overall governance levels of the network formed by MIUR, Regional and Provincial offices and Reference School, with the support of INDIRE. The main weakness expressed on this front was about the ability to ensure a structured relationship with newly qualified teachers’ school precisely for issues related to management.

Two regional offices also pointed out the importance of a better governance in a regional online environment, having developed it, which complemented the national one in support of the teacher training. For two regions where instead this environment was not developed, its presence was also underlined as a potential contribution to improvement (Condition 5).

Adequacy, sorted by number and localization (see figure 5), with respect to the need for a distribution layout of the local training poles network in the territory, had controversial evaluations, since judged appropriate by some regions and inappropriate by others. This variability can be ascribed to a large regional variety, in terms of both extension and of practicability of the territory (for example, there are regions - while not very wide - that due to their geographical conformation and / or characteristics of their public transport system, present more difficulties of moving within their areas than larger but better interconnected regions).



Fig. 5 - Distribution of Regional, Provincial Offices and Local Reference School

Critical elements were instead highlighted with respect to the experts training activity in training laboratories, and the difficulties in selecting trainers with appropriate skills (Condition 5).

To confirm the positive feedback obtained by the Regional School Offices, it is interesting to point out that possible improvements resulting from the proposals made through the quality monitoring, have mainly had a positive impact on the instructional model (tutor training, expert selection, etc.) and had not been only limited to aspects of governance. Where such requests concerned this kind of aspects, they were linked to issues such as required standardized forms (Condition 5) need to adapt a suitable number of local training poles to the number of trainees (Condition 2), opportunity to work in favour of streamlining bureaucratic procedures (Condition 5), need to proceed with timely allocation (Condition 1, Condition 5) and to bring about a simplification in operations of financial reporting (Condition 5) (Condition 2).

6 Reading governance characteristics from the qualitative survey

To complement the above-mentioned quantitative results, the qualitative analysis was aimed at analyzing the effectiveness of governance with respect to the collaboration among different roles of the system, training culture and quality of the actions implemented in order to target improvement efforts and to return items that could revise policies and ministerial circulars.

6.1 Focus groups with representatives of the Ministry regional offices

The regional round tables, in the North, Central and South Italy, organized in conjunction with start-up meetings of the training year 2016/2017, hosted representatives of the Regional School Offices of 16 regions over the national

territory. The round table had two priority cognitive objectives, formulated as constituent questions of the interview:

Q1. In consideration of the experience gained in the school year 2015/2016, what were the strengths of the model and what original elements that you put into it, let you assume they are worth being transferred and contaminated with all other regions (colleagues from Local training Poles and provincial offices)?

Q2. What suggestions would you make to MIUR and Indire to improve the path?

These introductory questions allowed the participants to reflect on the discussion topic. The results, expressed anonymously, were presented in accordance with directions given by Morgan (1988), following a qualitative or ethnographic approach, with a report ordered by themes, and supported by verbalizations made by the group (Ricolfi, 2001).

6.2 Strengths and original replicable elements

Focus group narrative reading, conducted with the help of Regional School Officers of a good number of Italian regions, facilitates the identification of value-added elements that can be systematized. Therefore, its synthesis and possible generalizations assume the form of classifications and types of intervention considered optimal:

- build a strong alliance between Central Administration, Regional Administration and Schools, which serve as a function of support and management of incoming and in-service training activities (link between Local Training Poles for newly qualified teachers and territorial schools), giving the former ones greater autonomy within the local training action; (Condition 2 and Condition 5)
- implement a positive (of relationship and networking) cascade training circuit: local events shared via streaming allowing service managers of the various school sites to plan opportunities for content reuse to reinforce awareness of key concepts and for sustaining teachers and tutors training (Condition 4, Condition 5);
- design a laboratory training model that enables working with small groups (bonsai lab model) instead of teacher-led discussions (Condition 5);
- prepare a laboratory planning, stemming from needs analyses (Condition 2, Condition 4) collected from data that teachers previously entered into special online forms and with an eye to the priorities of the in-service

- Teachers National Development Plan¹;
- identify a standard template for experienced teachers selection announcements, ensuring a minimum level of quality common to all teachers participating in training (Condition 5);
 - rethink the school administration role, which must provide guidance, be present, ensure uniformity, quality and upward standardization (Condition 2);
 - build a framework that is not only regulatory, but also pedagogical - didactic around the new model: through *vademecum*, alphabets / glossaries, scientific references and through a “narrative” accompaniment, made by using service notes for the various targets (Condition 5, Condition 4);
 - provide a space for sharing and updating work materials (Condition 5);
 - flexibly chose the appropriate training mode - but intended for personalization of the path – non-localized, but capable of organizing specific targeting in which to foresee trainer rotation over the national territory, according to groups that are formed in the various school sites (Condition 2).

6.3 Criticalities and improvements

The Regional School Officers were asked to express, during the local focus groups held in Milan, Rome and Naples, all criticalities that emerged during the training experience in order to suggest improvement paths:

- recognizing the role of local training poles that should also be representatives for the Area networks provided by the in-service Teachers National Development Plan (Condition 3 e Condition 2);
- leveraging on actions of collegiality, participation and communication (Condition 4);
- fostering continuity and synergy with in-service Teachers National Development Plan actions (Condition 3);
- supporting the teacher in understanding the shift from teaching responsibility to a teaching action that must also be responsible for learning and functioning of the system (Condition 4);
- focusing on the figure of “teacher-researcher” who assumes a responsibility over the community they belong to (Condition 2);
- aligning the direction of all regional *staff* for the training and probation year and try to meet the need to work on the basis of documents and modeling, which schools can draw on to improve their access to good project proposals and effective working tools (Condition 5);

¹ http://www.istruzione.it/piano_docenti/

- taking into account the lack of uniformity in the tutor training. In order to appreciate the weight and substance of this figure, it would be necessary to design propaedeutic moments of investment and preparation for cultural innovation promoted by the path (Condition 5);
- providing dedicated labs to the different levels of school to accommodate a new competence-based didactics (Condition 5);
- taking care of the formation of in-service school sites of both the school leaders and secretary offices for the creation of a model that is functional to the professional development of the entire school community (Condition 5).

6.4 Mini-focus groups with representatives of the Ministry provincial offices and with Local Training Poles School Leaders or their representatives

The mini focus group tool was chosen to engage a particularly difficult target to be obtained, but above all because the survey, in continuity with the focus groups proposed to the regional representatives, was meant to deepen similar topics.

The risk of having a narrow range of ideas and opinions (ascribed to this work methodology) was overcome by replicating events on three provincial contexts in the North, Central and South Italy, whose returns have been merged by key questions.

Once obtained the peripheral Administration's opinion, asked to develop a series of activities related to the coordination, training, supervision, and communication with the Ministry, it seemed important to better understand the interaction with the local training poles for the management of training. The questions addressed to the representatives of Ministry Provincial Offices and the Local Training Poles school leaders were the following: institutional relations management (Q1), Organization management (Q2) and finally promotion of cultural content (Q3).

The dimensions of the in-depth study were addressed through the construction of constituent questions (opening or introductory) of the interview, and each question was in turn divided into Transition Questions (TQs) and Key Questions (KQs).

Q1) What type of relationship has arisen among school administration, USR (regional school office) and USP (provincial school office)?

1. Which between regional office and provincial office, was the center of gravity of the relationship? (TQ)
2. How have these relationships been maintained? Through conferences, meetings, or guidelines, circulars, documents? (KQ)

3. Did you feel accompanied or assisted during this experience as regards logistical and organizational aspects, such as registrations, timing of administrative procedures? (TQ)
4. Were you able to make a contribution in qualitative terms, helping to secure an organization on the local territory? (KQ):

Q2) How were organization, logistics and management of training activities structured?

1. How does arrangement of training activities take place? (TQ)
2. Do you rely on other school/training hubs and therefore create a further dimension of support to schools? (KQ)
3. How well have you been able to maintain the quality standard of the laboratory activity? (KQ)
4. Has there been a School Leader's renewed interest in the training themes? (KQ)
5. How well did you handle the relationship with tutor-trainers, that is, with the help of experts for conducting laboratory activities? (KQ)

Q3) How was it possible to ensure a minimum retention on cultural content?

1. Was a unique environment for sharing updating and retrieving of materials available?
2. Did you use a platform that all the teachers and tutors working in the labs could access? (KQ)
3. How did you act to convey the attendees' attention also to resources provided by Indire? (KQ)
4. How can quality elements of cultural content be ensured? (KQ)

The introductory questions allowed the participants to reflect on the discussion topic, while their articulation into key questions allows them to go deeper into specific themes, thus requiring an even more active participation by the single conductor and allowing for a substantial narrative return, full of suggestions for improvement.

Mini focus groups narrative reading, conducted with the provincial office school representatives, provides some indications for improvement concerning the dimensions being analysed. In particular, model sustainability should be based on:

- a different articulation of face-to-face encounters (less teacher-led type and more motivating / in support of the path); (Condition 4)
- a balancing of roles between Regional and Provincial Offices and Local Training Poles; (Condition 2)
- a better management of territorial/provincial laboratories in order

- to respond to an active teaching and homogeneous working groups (Condition 5)
- a laboratory training offer able to meet the training needs actually detected; (Condition 5)
 - a tutors and teachers' specific motivation and training action helping them in the observation and documentation (multimedia) of teaching practices and reflection on these latter; (Condition 5, Condition 4)
 - an active role of Indire in the preparation of kits, tutorials, guides and materials to support a process of systematization of good work practices (Condition 5).

Conclusions

The Italian approach deals with an intervention of remarkable organizational complexity and cultural innovation that aims to harmonize rules, processes and technologies within a unique 'training system' (D'Amico, 2017), relying on the four-year experimentation of a new training model introduced in 2014/2015 for the induction phase, and involving over 140,000 newly qualified teachers, about 100,000 teaching staff who have played the role of tutor / mentor, over 6000 school leaders, more than 6500 experienced trainers in addition to staff from Ministry regional and provincial offices in the area, about 130 researchers and technical assistants from INDIRE - the national public research institute that assists the Ministry in the realization of the plan arrangement.

A selected reading of some of the results of the 2015/2016 training plan, has highlighted some of the aspects characterizing the governance conditions for successful induction programmes in the Italian model, in terms of both model strengths and of system improvement.

Regarding Condition 1 (Financial Support), the Ministry dedicates to the Italian national induction plan an annual budget allocated in proportion to the number of teachers each year included in the training and probation path. Some of the funding goes to the Reference School and are accounted by them back to the Ministry. Another part of the funding is dedicated to the centralized online environment run by INDIRE. The items highlighted in relation to this condition by stakeholders of the system governance, are primarily referred to the need to provide for funding on a yearly basis and the importance of developing more agile financial reporting methods.

Regarding Condition 2 (Roles and Responsibility of Stakeholders) the importance and the development of mechanisms for a wider communication towards the terminal nodes of the training plan, namely beginning teachers school sites, taking particular attention and care of School Leaders of such schools and their administrative secretary offices, which must be properly

trained to fulfill, even more consciously and effectively, the needs of peripheral management-administrative structure in support of the plan (e.g. collecting and analyzing training needs, managing the relationship between novice teacher and tutor, organization of evaluation committees, etc.).

Concerning Condition 3 (Co-operation among different parts of the system) it should be noted that the awareness of roles and functions of each stakeholder and the need to further clarify becomes pressing, also due to the recent introduction of the National in-service Teachers Training Plan for in-service teachers to whom the induction actors are called to connect. In this regard, the importance of the educational leadership of the School Leader emerges clearly, since he/she holds an training agreement with the teacher who being employed in his/her school, has an inherent potential to go beyond the probation year. On the other hand, the local training poles that have worked in the induction context, are naturally eligible to be territorial training centres, and also authoritative for the teachers training plan, as bearers of such experience to share in terms of good practices, and as a trigger for a good training continuum between induction and CPD.

Concerning Condition 4 (A culture that is focused on learning), we can state that this three-year period has leveraged autonomy, encouraging collaboration and alliance aiming to foster awareness of all stakeholders with respect to their role, and to contribute to the effectiveness of the general plan.

This has happened for individual teachers who have been experimenting with a new form of professional collaboration in the teacher-novice role with the teacher-tutor in peer-to-peer activity; for school leaders of the new teachers school sites, who were required to interact with the teacher to be expressed through classroom observations and by underwriting a professional agreement; for the representatives of the local training poles, who in concert with the Ministerial Offices in the area - were in charge of collecting training needs, selecting experts and organizing training laboratories; for local offices, as for their key role of scaffolding for the penetration of the cultural approach to support schools.

In continuity with Condition 4, which in the Italian model has also been characterized by the awareness about direct benefits of teacher training related to some founding pillars of the training plan (training laboratories conducted by experts, peer-to-peer, use of online portfolio), Condition 5 (Quality Management) is characterized by processes that guarantee the system to withstand. Tutors' selection and training - which is still lacking in Italian models - was certainly the most addressed issue by all the stakeholders in the training, as well as experts' selection and training for training laboratories over the national territory. Online management aspects at a regional level and the identification and sharing of good local practice at a national level to become

standard and reference models (e.g. format of Training Laboratories, experts selection announcement, classroom observation tools etc.) have also been mentioned as factors on which to work for the improvement of the plan.

It is important to note that, although not detectable by monitoring outcomes we have discussed in this work - and being today at the end of the third year of experimentation, the systematic processes put in place to ensure conditions of shared culture (Condition 4) and quality (Condition 5) are supported by the fact that the primary relationships are supplemented by networked relationships among the stakeholders.

The Italian induction model, in the perspective of an evidence-based policy maker, has certainly laid the cultural and operational foundation for enabling the transition to the National Training Plan for teachers, which let them overcome an often fragmented training, and open up to a system centred on professional development, allows to convey incoming and in-service training into a single process that follows all teacher's training needs throughout their career.

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