NATIONAL REPORT - ITALY

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Training Access

PROJECT INFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

GENERAL INFORMATION – NATIONAL BACKGROUND

The Italian education system for adults is characterised by public education managed by regional institutions and additional courses provided by private associations. Public institutions offer a range of courses which goes from basic literacy to foreign languages and Information Technology. Private associations provide similar kinds of courses to increase what is already offered, in particular, courses for cultural development or especially addressed to deprived people (CEDEFOP 2008).

Taking a look at the Italian situation on literacy, the scenario is encouraging: the illiteracy rate has decreased during the last 10 years, passing from 10.9% average of immigrants and 2.5 % of Italians in 2008 to 2.5% average of immigrants and 1.4% of Italians in 2018. (ISTAT data). Nowadays, when speaking about illiterate people, the common thinking mainly refers to foreign women. This is also what has emerged from the researcher's experience, indeed, all the illiterate/semi-literate people met in class were foreign women (see chap.2). In spite of that, these national and regional statistics show that this idea is not realistic.

	Foreigners			Italians		
	Male	Female	Average	Male	Female	Average
Academic Degree	8.6%	9.4%	9.0%	6.8%	6.1%	6.4%
Postgraduate	2.3%	3.9%	3.1%	0.7%	1.2%	1.0%
High-School Diploma	25.3%	30.2%	27.8%	26.6%	25.1%	25.8%
Middle-School Diploma	34.5%	31.4%	32.9%	33.6%	26.8%	30.1%
Primary School Certificate	13.5%	11.8%	12.6%	23.0%	28.2%	25.7%
Literate Without Qualification	13.4%	10.7%	12.1%	8.3%	10.8%	9.6%
Illiterate	2.4%	2.6%	2.5%	1.0%	1.8%	1.4%

Table 1.1: Resident population over 6 years by citizenship, gender and education level. Source: ISTAT data.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

EXPLORING NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Behind the label "corso di alfabetizzazione in lingua italiana", commonly used by governmental institutions, we can find a wide variety of courses addressed to immigrants who have different mother tongues, bilingualism, different levels of schooling, etc.. The way this label is used in official documents is too generic: it seems to underlie the idea that a person is totally illiterate in a language he/she does not know.

According to this conception language systems are closed and there are no contaminations between languages, multilingual expressions or compensation strategies that the learner can use to communicate. It seems to ignore the fact that language use entails the use of metalinguistic competences, strategies and general knowledge too. For example, according to this classification, in an Italian L2 course of basic level both a graduate and a person who does not know how to read and write would be considered illiterate as both do not know Italian. On the contrary, we can presume that their awareness of language systems, their general knowledge, their study method, their learning strategies and consequently the time they need to learn a new language and/or a new writing system would be considerably different10 .

The term "corso di alfabetizzazione" recalls a first phase of teaching in the Italian education system, carried out until 1997, where literacy classes for immigrants were conducted together with literacy classes for illiterate Italians. These courses aimed at giving the possibility to get a basic instruction to people who had not attended school during childhood and where therefore illiterate or weakly literate.

In 1997, education policies changed thanks to the recognition of the value of lifelong learning after international meetings described in par. 1.3. From that point onwards, adult education started to be not seen merely as a compensation of low schooling in childhood, but as the necessity and opportunity to learn continuously during life. In spite of this, a certain ambiguity still surrounds public discussion on adult literacy. Ministerial documents, although handling specific L2 teaching for social and linguistic inclusion of immigrants, still compare these courses to the literacy ones for Italians, considering scarce knowledge of the L2 like illiteracy in the L1 and not taking much into account the peculiarity of the immigrants' situation (see MIUR 2003). This conception is also made clear by the fact that Italian L2 courses for immigrants in the CTPs are often carried out by teachers qualified to teach Italian to mother tongue learners and there are not specific requirements to select teachers yet.

"Scuole popolari", the first courses for adults in Italy, were created in 1947 to promote basic literacy. Indeed, until World War II, a large amount of people was still illiterate or weakly literate, especially in southern regions and in rural areas. During the 1970's compulsory schooling for children rose to "scuola media" and evening courses called "corsi 150 ore" were introduced for workers who wanted to further their training or complete their basic educational path. Wider changes took place in 1997, with the birth of the CTP (Centri Territoriali Permanenti- Permanent Territorial Centres). These centres were created to improve and reorganise adult education, giving an answer to the ongoing social and econo

mical changes in Italy, particularly due to the adjustments of the industrial economy and to the growing immigration (EAEA 2011).

The documents issued by the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (Education Department)11 promoted evening courses and asserted the right of adults to have a suitable education and vocational training system for their specific situation. In 2000, an agreement between the government, regions, provinces and mountain communities (Conferenza Unificata del 2 marzo 2000) reorganised and empowered adult education. The agreement was influenced by the results of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education organised by UNESCO in Hamburg (1997), where the member states asserted the growing importance of lifelong learning.

 Gradually, the competences on adult education in Italy have been transferred to regional authorities. The Decreto Ministeriale 25-10-2007 programmed the transformation of the CTPs into CPIAs (Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti - Provincial Centres for Adult Education), in order to reorganise their activity and management. The implementing regulation of CPIAs became effective only in October 2012 with a decree by the President of the Republic (DPR 04-12-2012) and the new system will start working from 2013-201412. However, even in this last modification of laws concerning adult education, people with literacy problems are not mentioned. The decree's vagueness has been criticized by a specialistic magazine for teachers called "Tuttoscuola", which has estimated that in Italy illiterate immigrants are around 200,000 (Tuttoscuola 2012). Also trade unions like FLC-CGIL (2012) and CISL Scuola and boards of teachers like the faculty board of Reggio Emilia CTP13 and the Rete dei CTP Toscana14, have highlighted some critical points both for didactic and organisational aspects in 4th October 2012 Decree. They agree in claiming that foreign adults have the right to attend even courses of levels different from the A2; particular attention should be paid to people who have low literacy, to promote the gradual acquisition of the L2 starting from the lowest levels and the inclusion of these people in society.

After that, even people who already have an educational qualification should be allowed to participate in courses for middle or high school to promote personal cultural development, better integration and competitiveness in the labour market. The educational syllabus should provide a wide range of courses, from literacy to C2. Finally, they ask that, to set the CPIAs operating principles and review the highlighted critical points, institutions should consult the centres involved before starting to enforce the law. Another issue criticized by educational organisations and trade unions is the statement that the fulfilment of the aims has to be reached as far as possible with the current staff and with no additional costs for public administration. This raises doubts about how innovations can take place without any investment by the public authorities.

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SURVEY RESULTS:

The survey has been made and addressed accordingly to 3 different target groups: unemployed people (30), educators (11) and educational centres directors (10).

The most relevant information collected here follows, expressed in percentage or in n/5 if elicited through likert scales.

UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

AGE:

- Average : 38.2 years (min. 19 - max. 62)

SEX:

- Male: 14
- Female : 16

COUNTRY:

- Italy : 100%

EDUCATIVE LEVEL:

- Without education: 2
- Primary school: 3
- Secondary school: 16
- Other: 9

UNEMPLOYED SINCE:

- <6m: 5
- 6-12m: 7
- >12m: 18

2. WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO IMPROVE YOUR BASIC COMPETENCES?

- To earn more money : 63%
- New job opportunities : 60?
- Personal growth : 53%

4. USUALLY, I LEARN MORE WHEN:

- I take something to practice myself : 3.9/5
- I listen to other people : 3.6/5
- I see demonstrations about what I want to learn : 3.7/5

9. WHICH KIND OF TEXTS DO YOU READ?

- Instructional texts (recipes, instructions) : 86,7%
- Instructional texts (recipes, instructions) : 33,3%
- Advertising texts (comparisons, announcements, product review) : 30%

17. WHEN I WRITE TEXTS:

- I don't like writing because it is very difficult : 3.7/5
- I don´t understand some grammatical rules for write correctly : 3,6/5
- I focus my attention on spelling and writing correctly : 3,4/5
- I have problems to understand the meaning of some words : 3,4/5

21. WHAT KIND OF THESE CALCULATIONS DO YOU USUALLY USE IN YOUR DAILY ACTIVITIES?

- Sums : 100%
- Subtractions : 83.3%
- Multiplications : 26,7%
- Divisions : 20%

22. WHICH OF THESE SITUATIONS, WHICH INVOLVE MATHEMATICAL OPERATIONS, ARE EASIER FOR YOU TO PERFORM?

- Buy at the supermarket and choose products that fit the budget : 3.4/5
- Compare the price between two products. : 3.3/5
- Plan the monthly budget : 2.9/5

24. HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR DOMAIN OF DIGITAL TOOLS IS?

- Average score : 2,5/5

26. WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITIES DO YOU USUALLY USE THE INTERNET FOR?

- Communicate with others : 3.4/5
- Search and compare products or services : 3.2/5
- To use social networks : 3.1/5

EDUCATORS

COUNTRY:

- Italy: 100%

YERS OF MANAGEMENT/ DIRECTION EXPERIENCE:

- Average: 12.1 years

TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUITION:

- Secondary School: 3
- Further and higher education: 2
- Vocational Education and Training: 3
- Adult education Centre: 3

5. WHICH CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEACHING PROCESS DO YOU THINK HAS MORE INFLUENCE ON THE MOTIVATION OF THE STUDENTS?

- The enthusiasm of the teacher: 4.1/5
- The connection between the teacher and the students: 4.3/5
- The positive evaluations and the achievement of good grades: 4/5
- The active participation of students: 4/5

10. WHAT KIND OF TEACHING TOOLS DO YOU USE USUALLY?

- Expert Panel: 80%
- Gamification activities: 80%
- Role playing: 80%

15. HOW OFTEN YOUR FEEDBACKS, AFTER EVALUATION...

- Call for reflection on the process followed in the realization: 4.7/5
- Call attention to the learning achieved: 4.6/5
- Signal progress although, overall, the work is not well: 4.4/5

18. HOW THE FOLLOWING DIGITAL TOOLS ARE USED IN YOUR TEACHING?

- Webinars: 4.7/5
- Digital-interactive boards: 4.5/5
- Feedback tools and surveys (e.g. Socrative, Mentimeter, clickers): 4.5/5
- Electronic portfolios and learning journals to record and reflect on progress: 4,5/5

DIRECTORS OF EDUCATIONAL CENTRES

COUNTRY:

- Italy: 100%

YERS OF MANAGEMENT/ DIRECTION EXPERIENCE:

- Average: 8.6 years

TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUITION:

- Secondary School: 3
- Further and higher education: 2
- Vocational Education and Training: 2
- Adult education Centre: 3

TYPE OF EDUCATION PROVIDED:

- Formal: 8
- Non-formal: 2

4. WHAT LEVEL OF INFLUENCE DO THE FOLLOWING ITEMS HAVE ON THE DIFFICULTIES OF ACCESS TO THE TRAINING OF DISADVANTAGED GROUPS?

- Not have time for training : 3.9/5
- Not recognize the importance of training : 3.7/5
- Not have money for training : 3.6/5
- Due to foreign language-related problems : 3.6/5

INTERVIEW RESULTS:

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS WITH 5 UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

The respondents from this group of interviewees are from Italy. They are between 21 and 56 years old. The majority is aged between 27 and 32 years; 60% are men and 40% are women. 60% completed primary school and 40% middle school. All of them have been unemployed for more than 12.

All of them have experience with receiving language training (French and/or English), but also IT training and training on job orientation. These interviewee are interested in having more training customer related skills and online marketing aiming at having better job chances or higher salaries.

Regarding the format of the training, respondents prefer to have a blended learning format, a course with face-to-face learning/class attendance and elements of online learning.

They feel that their education is connected to their experience on the labour market. For example, they stated that they would have better jobs if they had more knowledge. They experienced a lack of skills regarding tasks related to IT.

Regarding training courses, 2 of them attended some lessons of a course, but not the whole class.

They think that what they learned at school is enough regarding calculation and literacy in the workplace but 4 of them think that their digital skills training was not adequate. They share the same opinion in matter of what they need to improve for better professional chances: more reading and knowledge in general could improve their level of reading, writing, calculation and digital skills.

New learning technologies (video tutorials, serious videogames, etc.) are seen as interesting because are considered user-friendly and helpful in developing new skills.

All respondents have experience with tests or evaluations of learning, but they did not feel confident in them, as they had made them nervous.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS WITH 2 EDUCATORS

From educator interviews emerged that the most motivated learners are the ones that invest their our own finances in education, aiming at better job chances and higher salary.

They used several teaching techniques and approaches, bound to the curriculum detailing what and when to use what tool and approach but with a certain tolerance, adapting their activity to the learner needs.

Skills' training is mostly considered as fixed but with little openness/ flexibility allowed other than related to class environment and learners needs, seen as crucial in fostering motivation and interest.

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Educators behaviour during class, especially during curricular activities, could limit motivation and interest in topics; for this reason interviewees believe in a more . Extra-curricular activities for motivation could be limited but were found of importance and were recommended to learners. New technology implementation was seen to be one of the extra-curricular activities helping learners to some extend; however, interviewees were critical regarding to impact. Since many of their learners were women, they suggested activities related to their daily life like shopping, cooking preparations, social benefits and use of job ads and online tools like CV and self-assessment tools for maths and reading/ writing skills' improvement.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS WITH 2 EDUCATIONAL CENTRE DIRECTORS

The two respondents from this group are managers of small private educational centres. For the respondents, low-educated adults, due to their past experiences and school background, are frequently driven to new bad experiences, as well as negative or unrealistic expectations.

On the question regarding challenges and possibilities of the educational policy, respondents indicated that a possibility of the educational policy would be to put more emphasis on non-formal learning, although it is not well supported in Italy.

The most difficult challenge education institutions, and their leaders, have to face are related to financial issues and with the lack of public investments in the field of counselling and training programmes.

They indicated that the instruction offered in their institution does not motivate learners to continue their education abroad. (Not making it possible due to social benefit limitations.)

The most effective ways of influencing educational policy – if at all possible by research – was through educational research to show results, and figures and demonstrate good practices, also from abroad.

In Italy basic skills training courses are usually suggested to migrants to foster their integration. Sometimes, they are included as part of language and communication courses. CMC learning would be the approach by which training would be improved for the next years, including it in more traditional courses.

The organisations the respondents work for do not depend on public funding, allowing them to manage their educative programmes without limitations. To motivate adult learners continue their educational process, the managers' organisations use tailored activities such as counselling, training, coaching, job-search assistance and career guidance. According to their expertise, cooperation with companies for traineeships or internships is helpful in improving the synergy between education and the labour market.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW WITH POLICY MAKER

The interviewee is an assessor, responsible of a Department of Culture at local level. According to the interviewee's opinion, the use of digital resources needs to be enhanced in Italian educational system. Adult education policy should be crucial in fostering an improvement of national economic situation.

Inclusive programmes are important in facing social barriers but sometimes these are considered just situational activities instead of best practices already fixed in the Italian educational ecosystem.

Educational institutions, moreover if private, offer several courses focused on basic skills in relation with job counselling activities. An increasement of efforts in terms of investment and research on education will be the way to pursue better condition for those people that want to improve their chances of success and for the whole society.

CONCLUSION

UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

Unemployed people involved in the survey are mainly interested in attending a course for benefits related to their personal financial situation (higher salaries, more independence and opportunities), whereas a low level of training makes it difficult for them to access employment, but they are not always allowed to attend classes due to several difficulties.

Practical situations, especially those related to their everyday life highlight issues in facing simple tasks related to reading, writing and calculating skills; Although digital skills seems to be assessable, these are not consistent, being mostly representative of an unaware use of digital technologies.

EDUCATORS – EDUCATIONAL CENTRES DIRECTORS

They use and offer several teaching techniques and approaches, bound to the curriculum detailing what and when to use what tool and approach but with a certain tolerance, adapting their activity to the learner needs.

From educator interviews emerged that the most motivated learners are the ones that invest their our own finances in education, aiming at better job chances and higher salary.

The survey highlighted the importance of a friendly environment, good relationship between educators and students, and the majority of them usually gives personal feedbacks and explanations.