

Decentralization tendencies and teacher evaluation policies in European countries

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L'autonomia scolastica e le politiche di valutazione degli insegnanti nei paesi europei

Recent years have seen intensified awareness about teachers' role in promoting student learning and, consequently, an increased emphasis on evaluating teachers and their work. Among many school factors, the teaching quality is a key-parameter of student learning. For these reasons, in many national contexts teacher performance evaluation is one of the elements that draw significant attention, in terms of both international surveys and concrete measures. Starting from the state of the art in several European school systems, our goal is to describe, compare and analyse models adopted to assess teaching quality. We attempt to highlight any differences in perspectives and models agreed by the European systems and to reflect on risks and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses associated with the use of such instruments in the teacher evaluation. The teachers are only one of many factors that influence student achievements, but the evaluation of teachers is necessary because there is an increased awareness of how crucial the teachers are in the achievement of students and in the progress of society.

Keywords: assessment, teacher evaluation, teaching quality, accountability.

Negli ultimi anni si è intensificata la consapevolezza sul ruolo degli insegnanti nel promuovere l'apprendimento degli studenti e, di conseguenza, sono aumentate le indagini sulla valutazione degli insegnanti e sul loro lavoro. Tra i molti fattori scolastici, la qualità dell'insegnamento è un parametro chiave per lo sviluppo degli apprendimenti degli studenti. Per questi motivi, il tema della valutazione della performance degli insegnanti costituisce uno degli elementi su cui si è maggiormente concentrata l'attenzione sia sul piano delle indagini internazionali che delle concrete misure messe a punto all'interno dei diversi contesti nazionali. L'articolo nasce da queste premesse. Partendo dallo stato dell'arte nei diversi sistemi scolastici europei, il nostro obiettivo è quello di analizzare i modelli utilizzati per valutare la qualità dell'insegnamento al fine di mettere in evidenza i punti di forza, i nodi critici e le problematicità.

Parole chiave: valutazione, valutazione dell'insegnamento, qualità dell'insegnamento, accountability.

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Introduction

Nowadays, deep and extensive transformations and a steady acceleration of changes are characterizing our society and constantly altering the knowledge reference framework. For these reasons, European school systems appear to be engaged in a process of redefinition of their identity. Following this, many countries revise curricula and teaching models in order to identify and adopt methods supporting the students, by giving attention to the quality of teaching. This has led to a need to undertake assessment in order to verify the skills of teachers. Assessment is an activity in which people make a judgement about important and significant aspects. The assessment is closely related to the used procedures, methods and tools that may affect the reliability of that judgment. This is a much-debated topic that is not generally agreed by teachers, families and students themselves. The reasons for these disagreements are numerous. There is a widespread difficulty finding excuses and transparency elements in the expressions of their judgments. Evaluating means enhancing, determining the value of a performance, not of a person, in order to promote effective and efficient actions, appropriate to the context, consistent with its objectives, able to produce the desired effects. The assessment must be able to grasp what is positive in a training action. The evaluation allows teachers improving their work in class, in order to increase the quality of their teaching or learning. Hence, the complex issue of the assessment of teachers has increasingly emerged. Ministers from across Europe consider it an indispensable device for the continuous improvement of the training, the primary objective for the success of the strategy developed in Lisbon in 2000 (Lisbon European Council, 2000).

There are two basic models or approaches to teacher evaluation: the balance report within the marked-oriented perspective of the new public management (Croxford, Grek, & Jeelani Shaik, 2009; Hood, 2001) and the professional development approach (Isoré, 2009). The balance report model is based on the rationale of the professional performance of teachers' control, functional to the provision of incentives or sanctions. This approach assumes that the observer and the observed are clearly distinct and separated; it is used when a system intends to proceed to the identification of the best teachers, or to verify and publicize their teaching quality. It meets the contractual requirement, a duty that the school administration must consider the results achieved by the teachers, to reward or punish them: the prizes consist of salary increases and career advancements for particularly competent teachers; the sanctions instead consist of transfers or dismissals for teachers judged as incompetent. According to Koretz (2008), value-added models are a promising improvement, but no one measure can evaluate teacher performance.

The use of performance assessment procedures associated with the mechanisms of incentives rely on some assumptions connected to positive effects: teachers are expected to be more motivated and as such to produce more. It increases



the consideration of the social status of the teaching profession. A growing attention towards this profession increases the opportunity to hire more skilled and qualified teachers. It improves the overall quality of the action teacher and therefore the learning of students. There are also some negative effects of this approach. It causes an increase of teachers' competitiveness, a decrease of the collaboration among them and generates a climate of tension within the school. Moreover, it increases doubts and scepticisms in the event that the assessment procedures appear inadequate.

The professional development model was inspired by a training logic, functional improvement of the quality of the professional actions of teachers. It comes from the need of the teachers to know the progress of their work to be improved continuously by an appropriate education. The focus shifts on the quality of teaching processes, through qualitative and idiographic careful procedures to the characteristics of the specific school contexts and professional impact on teachers. It follows a focus on forms of self-evaluation and "peer" evaluation supported by counselling and guidance actions (Escamilla, Clarke, & Linn, 2000). By that logic of development, the evaluation activity cannot simply be measured by an external object, but it concerns the understanding and interpretation of phenomena through qualitative tools (Miranda, & Ritrovato, 2015). It tends to understand the situations through interpretations by the actors, to define problems, to encourage a continuous process of learning and improve their professionalism. One of the defects that are attributed to the professional development model, in fact, is that it can be self-referential and not very objective, because it is based mainly on the evaluation forms that come from the interior of the scholastic players. However, this form of self-assessment is an essential prerequisite to any form of external reporting that wants to be considered truly effective (Carnoy, 2003). Indeed, there are not rare cases in which the external evaluation practices have been hampered by internal actors to the school to have glimpsed in the latter a personal threat and a form of little selection respects the principles of equity provided by the educational system. Probably because the teachers, as education professionals, feel they can challenge the experience and methodology of evaluation experts since they feel to be the best "connoisseurs" of what happens in the classroom (Scheerens, 2011).

In recent years, however, more and more frequent are mixed assessment systems, that provide both forms of assessment based on the reporting and aimed at improving and supporting the teachers. The theme of teacher performance evaluation is now one of the elements that has gained much attention both in terms of international surveys and in the educational national policies. The development of such systems is linked to a series of policy objectives to increase the level of accountability expressed by school systems that can be recalled briefly in relation to different levels of the policy system, the school system, the educational institution (Carver, & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). In Italy, the introduction of school autonomy (1997) resulted in the assumption by the educational institutions of specific responsibilities and decision making powers. The assumption is that the decentralization and the sharing of responsibilities improve the quality of service provided by the schools and that the training is effective when the decisions are joined by those directly involved in. Several European countries have not followed this logic (especially Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) and the educational autonomy prevails there. These are just a few examples: we will examine the issue in detail in the next section.



1. The school autonomy in European countries

The autonomy system of the school requires a fundamental rethinking of educational institutions in cultural, professional and organizational terms; it has given rise to new needs and demands, addressed to all school actors that are protagonists and especially to the teachers. The teacher's key role is no longer oriented to increase the socialization of students, making them consistent with a unitary system of rules and stable values, but it is aiming to train them to know how to choose, to navigate the various cultures, for the full realization of their singularity and autonomy. An effective school, in this perspective, encourages the development of reasoning and thought systems that allow building cognitive panoramas useful to give reasons and to assess the veracity and accuracy of statements. In most European educational systems, even in the most centralized, teachers have begun to enjoy greater freedom of action, not only in educational terms (choice of teaching methods, materials, curricula definition), but also in the organization and management.

Except some countries, like Finland, these policies for curricular autonomy have developed since the 90s. In Slovenia, for example, the program includes conceptual and procedural knowledge, pupil activities, suggestions about content, teaching recommendations, the evaluation of the learning objectives standard. Lithuania drew up in 1992 the Law on the general concept of Education. This provides that associations of teachers are involved in developing subject content (the curriculum). In Estonia, the national basic education curriculum has been promoted: school heads prepare the curriculum with teachers based on the national curriculum. They detail the content and the teaching objectives that are described only in general in the national document. In other countries, as in Italy, the push towards greater curricular autonomy has been more recent. Only since 2000 (Law 59/1997 and DPR 275, 8 March 1999), the school autonomy was considered. It entered into force from the school year 2000-2001. Based on the principle of subsidiarity, the state has defined not simple detailed programs but national general guidelines aiming at the promotion and the support of innovative processes and at the improvement of the training. Teachers therefore have a greater freedom to convert these objectives into teaching actions by selecting the content to present, deciding their order in teaching and choosing the most appropriate objectives for each school year. They also have more autonomy in relation to the number of hours devoted to the optional activities. They may regulate the time of adapting to the type of studies and disciplines to the learning pace of pupils. They may take time flexibility formulas (for instance, restrict the hours of a given matter at a certain time of year, enable individual educational paths for the integration of disabled students or foreigners, program training courses in coordination with local demands, choose methods and teaching tools in line with the National Plan for education). They can also adjust the school calendar in relation to the needs arising from the National Plan for Education in order to guarantee the number of hours fixed by national directions. The headmaster ensures that the decisions taken by the teachers comply with the legal standards and educational quality criteria. In Luxembourg, the primary segment teachers have a little margin to manoeuvre. In the secondary segment, teachers serve on committees for programs and are responsible for the content of programs and of the compulsory school textbooks. Schools may also have the authorization of the Ministry of Education to implement an innovation project different from the official program. The Czech Republic has provided, since 2004, a two-level curriculum that allowed the development of "school programs" to be implemented by 2007. The Education



Act of 2004 introduced a framework for basic education: institutions establish the programs and in particular the breakdown of the content and the results on the subjects during the study years.

In general, in almost all countries of Europe where the educational system is historically centralized, new lines have been created to guide the content to be taught. They are as flexible as to enable teachers to participate to the creation of teaching content, aimed at developing the human person, adapted to the different contexts, the domestic demand and the specific characteristics of involved people, in order to ensure their educational success. This development process of autonomy has not been promoted by all the countries of Europe; some of them have adopted a different route. The enlargement of tasks for teachers, in fact, is not always tied to a progressive teaching autonomy. Belgium, Netherlands and UK are examples of this as well as Hungary that adopted ambitious policies since the 90s. The three Communities of Belgium have increased the responsibilities assigned to teachers but, simultaneously, have progressively reduced the organizational freedom and the power of the schools by the development of criteria and benchmarks that clearly define the bid. These new references take the form of “ultimate goals” in the Flemish Community since 1991, of “skill levels” in the French Community since 1999 and framework programs in the German-speaking Community since 2008. In the Netherlands, since 1993, the objectives to achieve were established by an order or regulation for primary and secondary education (revised in 2006). The objectives help schools to set minimum performance level that pupils should achieve. They describe in general terms the contents of primary education without clear required results. The teachers, however, have an obligation to do everything possible to ensure that pupils achieve the goals and to explain, if necessary, the reasons for the eventual lack of success. The responsibility is not the individual teacher, but the whole team involved in educational activities within each school. Hungary, since the ‘90s, adopted new measures limiting the curricular autonomy of teachers. Since 2005 it elaborated new teaching tools. These tools represent practical guides for teachers (in the form of educational materials) in order to support them in the planning of their work, preparing their lessons and assessing their pupils. In Denmark, although the freedom of education remains a fundamental principle, an amendment of 2003 provides that the Ministry of Education be in charge of defining the national “common objectives”, while for compulsory subjects the same Ministry may draw up the guidelines that describe in more detail the content to teach. Although it is a kind of simple set of recommendations, this document appears to be very widely followed by municipalities and teachers alike. Sweden, introduced in 1994 a school curriculum based on objectives. However, teachers showed such difficulties in interpreting the teaching objectives, that in the report presented in 2007 on “The objectives and the monitoring of compulsory education”, the emphasis was on the needs to provide teachers with curricular content more concrete and easier to interpret. Thus, in 2011 a new reform was launched with a considerably more detailed curriculum. It should particularly be mentioned that Sweden historically has been one of the most centralised countries as far as education is concerned, but in the beginning of the 90’s turned into one of the most decentralised. Not only the new curricular reform in 2011 can be seen as an answer to the the problems following from the drastic shift, but also the new phenomenon from The Swedish National Authority for Education who provides so-called teaching modules for local teacher teams to study, discuss and implement in their classrooms. In the United Kingdom (England and Wales), the introduction of the National curriculum (1988) defined for the first time a minimum compul-



sory curriculum. The central authorities that are responsible for the curriculum and the assessment, defined the minimum compulsory curriculum, the content of teaching, the objectives to be achieved and the methods of assessment. In 2008, a new less prescriptive curriculum has been introduced; it gives teachers greater flexibility in the local definition of curricula.

The school autonomy processes, in any case, even with the described differences, have gradually initiated a number of actions aimed at monitoring and evaluation of teaching quality. The evaluation of teachers, in fact, is indispensable to guarantee the effectiveness of national systems of education and to organize a relevant education policy. The biggest problem, in all these cases, is the definition of a reliable method for evaluating the teaching and, in certain cases, for identifying good teachers. Criteria and procedures, in European countries, are different; in the next section, we will examine them in detail.

2. The evaluation of teachers: the European context



In an environment characterized by ever-higher spaces of freedom granted to schools, it has become essential to initiate evaluation processes that allow pursuing the dynamics of development and continuous improvement of the training, starting from the individual schools. As an inevitable reflection, this progressive autonomy of schools started processes for ensuring responsibility, transparency and the need for “accountability”. The disappointing results of the national and international standard assessments, in addition, helped to initiate or accelerate research on the teaching quality.

The issue of teacher evaluation has become the object of attention in European countries especially with the “Work program on the future objectives of education and training 2010” (European Commission). The teachers have been recognized as the key players in any strategies targeted at stimulating the development of the economic society. In March 2000, in Lisbon, the European Council adopted the strategic objective of becoming “the most competitive and dynamic economic system in the world, based on the knowledge and capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”. On that occasion, the Heads of State and Government recognized the vital role of education and training, considered an essential prerequisite for the development of the potentialities of each country in terms of excellence, innovation and competitiveness. The Council of Education report of 2001 fixed the concrete future objectives of education and training systems. Among these, a very prominent place was given to the training of teachers and trainers. The common objectives are supposed to be increasing the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union, the accessibility to education and training systems, the opening to the wider world of education and training systems. The realization of the first objective especially involves teachers. Teachers have an important role to motivate learners and to their success in school (Darling-Hammond, & Bransford 2005; Hattie, 2012); for this reason, it is essential that their formation is likely to meet the future challenges of the global society (McKenzie, Santiago, Sliwka, & Hiroyuki, 2005). It is facilitating the updating of teachers currently in service that have left the school or the university for at least two decades. Regarding the second objective all recognize that education and training systems must encourage learning that lasts throughout life. Meeting this challenge involves the recognition that

it is necessary to change the way in which education and training is organized. In reference to the third goal, while the Council believes that teachers should be the beneficiaries of international exchange programs, with the aim of improving the knowledge of foreign languages, comparing and disseminating good teaching practices (The *Comenius Program* is particularly attractive for teachers: international exchanges, training courses abroad, study visits and preparatory of other initiatives for in-service teachers).

The European Commission has given much consideration to the professional role of the teacher and the pursuit of a common European education system, with the aim of making it as the leader in the world in terms of quality of its education and training subsystems. The *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* highlighted the important role that teachers take part in the realization of European objectives: “Teachers play a crucial role in supporting the learning experience of young people and adults learners. [...] Their profession, which is inspired by values of inclusiveness and the need to nurture the potential of all learners, has a strong influence on society and plays a vital role in advancing human potential and shaping future generations” (European Commission DG Education and Culture, 2005). They are the actors of change processes, they determine the evolution and the means of implementation of the reforms that can make the EU the best knowledge-driven economy. Teachers are an integral part of the social dimension of Europe, because they transmit values of solidarity, equal opportunities and social participation, by producing positive effects on health, crime, environment, democratization and the general quality of life. In this regard, Schratz (2014, pp.18-20) analysed the specific traits that make up the profile of the future *European teacher*. From the political point of view, according to the author, the issues relating to the teaching profession on which to focus the international debate are related to the following dimensions:

- a) European identity. The future European teachers will possess both a specific national identity of a transnational knowledge that will provide them with a developed ‘European way’ and a consequent opening to the world in general (to be achieved by means of exchange programs, scholarships and other transnational initiatives);
- b) European knowledge. The European teachers should have a fairly good knowledge of other European education systems, in order to relate themselves to others and understand the mutual influences;
- c) European multiculturalism. The European teachers must have an active relationship with their own culture and prove open to the other, facing multicultural challenges of the knowledge society and working with heterogeneous groups, which will respect and promote the differences;
- d) European language competence. The European teachers must be able to speak more than one European language with different levels of expertise, as well as to teach subjects in languages other than their own (facilitated by trips abroad);
- e) European professionalism. The education of European teachers will allow them teaching in any EU country by addressing any issues from a transnational and multi-disciplinary perspective, by exchanging curricular content and methodologies with colleagues from other countries.

In the spring of 2004, the Commission of Experts on “Improving the Education of Teachers and Trainers” addresses the issue of the development of appropriate indicators to measure improvements in teacher training and their continuing pro-



fessional development. In particular, it highlighted the opportunity to develop specific systems for the evaluation, accreditation of initial training and in-service teacher. The main objective is opening a dialogue on the evaluation of the quality of teaching and related indicators. This should exploit the diversity and the richness of existing approaches focusing on a fruitful exchange of information so as to lead all countries towards a high quality of education. It is in this context that the survey to locate a teacher evaluation model begins. In 2006, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (Programme Eurydice), studied the existing provisions on evaluating training in the different countries of the European Union. In their documents, they showed a very diverse situation within Europe, as there is no consistency in the models, or a prevailing model of teacher evaluation. The different countries variously adjusted and realized the evaluation approaches (external, internal or self-evaluation) by considering one or an integration of them. These different ways of evaluation intertwined each other by creating real internal and external networks of individual and collective evaluation. For this reason, it becomes increasingly difficult to sketch one teacher evaluation system. The need to standardize training programs and evaluation criteria for teachers has prompted the Commission to gather information on the state of affairs in the member countries. Based on the Eurydice report they noted that during the 90s the collective assessment of the teacher group gradually replaced the appraisal of individual teachers.

Starting from Eurydice document (2006), it is possible to group the different types of assessment of teachers in five models:

1. individual assessment carried out by inspectors;
2. individual assessment carried out by inspectors and school head;
3. individual assessment carried out by the school head;
4. self-assessment and individual assessment school that incorporates the overall assessment of its teaching staff;
5. evaluation of schools and individual teachers by a plurality of subjects.

The individual assessment carried out by inspectors is an external evaluation model based on the analysis of data, information and evidences relating to individual institutions or programs. It aims to make an impartial judgment on the quality of the training offered by a particular institution. This is typically carried out by a team of experts, peers or inspectors. Inspectorates may depend on the regional authorities as in France, or be under the protection of the regional authorities as in Spain and Germany. In Spain, for example, the education authorities of the individual Autonomous Communities are responsible for the creation of plans for the evaluation of teaching in the public sector. These plans contain objectives and evaluation criteria, as well as the ways in which teachers, the school community and the same educational authorities are involved in the evaluation process. Education authorities also promote the evaluation of teachers on a voluntary basis and are responsible for defining the modalities of the evaluation. In France, the inspectors are primarily responsible for the evaluation of teachers. Although teachers are regularly evaluated, they can still submit their application for the evaluation to qualify, if appropriate, their promotion in grade. The assessment carried out by the inspectors is primarily based on the observation of the teacher in the classroom. Sometimes the external evaluation, carried out by inspectors, is also integrated by an internal evaluation, carried out by the school head. In France, the teachers are evaluated every 6-7 years. In order to reduce the time between the



evaluations a further evaluation is carried out by the regional pedagogical inspectors (Inspecteurs Pédagogiques Régionaux). The inspection takes place on the field: it presupposes the observation of a teaching sequence (while the teacher gives a lecture) followed by an individual interview with the teacher. Although it is diversified for teachers of different school levels, the evaluation process, in France, focuses mainly on a balance report approach that is oriented to the control. Teachers can access a career advancement only after being evaluated. However, there are some elements of educational nature, such as post-observation meetings, where teachers receive a feedback on their observed performance. Even in Germany, teachers are evaluated every five years by school inspectors of the Land (*Schulaufsichtsbeamten*) and by the school head. The evaluation must be based on interviews with the teacher, reports on its performance prepared by the school head, inspections during class by the school head and the school inspectors, evaluation of the results of the students. The object of analysis is the “efficiency” and the “capability” of the teacher. As for performance, this is evaluated through forms of interview: the teacher is asked to discuss matters such as setting a class, the class results, availability and support to students and collaboration between colleagues. The teacher’s ability concerns the knowledge of the subject, the ability to evaluate students, the availability to the update and the organizational skills. Initially, the general assessment is expressed by the Head of the Institute and includes both the performance evaluation and the ability evaluation. Later, an inspector carries out a further assessment through interviews with the teacher, the analysis of the reports on the teacher’s performance produced by the school head, inspections during class and measurements of student achievement. The evaluation of teachers in Germany follows a natural formative approach; the suitable procedures have as their objective the improvement of the performance of teachers and the development of missing or deficient skills. Teachers can request a salary increase based on the scores obtained in the evaluation and on the opinion on the performance.

In some European countries, the evaluation of teachers is carried out entirely by the school head who takes full responsibility of the evaluation process. In Poland for example, for all levels of education, the school head makes the evaluation of the professional performance of teachers. This process takes place at the initiative of the head teacher or teacher’s request, the regional education authority, the school board or the council of parents. During this evaluation, the school head, if necessary, may request the opinion of the internal representation of the students. The period between two consecutive evaluations (including evaluation for promotion) cannot be less than one year. The school head is obliged to evaluate the performance of teachers within 3 months from the date of the request. This is a descriptive assessment that concludes with a general evaluation (Excellent, Good, Negative). The head teacher uses various tools for performance assessment: observation of lessons, observation of other activities such as meetings of teachers with parents, analysis of student achievement on the documentation analysis in continuing professional development or discussions with the teacher. The assessment will cover the following aspects: the sound operation of the class (curricular content and methodology); the efforts to motivate students; the behaviour and the appropriate language; the professional engagement (involvement in extracurricular school activities and teamwork between teachers, interest in pupils and their environment, collaboration with parents); the participation in continuing professional development activities; the organization of work (punctuality, full use of the hours in the classroom, documentation preserved adequately). In the Netherlands, the system evaluation is primarily concerned with the quality of the school,



rather than the professional quality of individual teachers. The inspectorate evaluates teachers but the results of these inspections are used to derive information about the overall quality of the school in which they work. Schools enjoy a high degree of autonomy and teachers are appointed by the school council that is responsible for the staff and for the recruitment, training and assessment of its educational staff. In this case, the assessment authorities of the teachers are the same schools. In practice, then the Head of the Institute, as a representative of the school, to take care of teacher evaluation. The evaluation takes place through a series of talks on the professional performance of teachers (generally carried out every two years). During this process, the teachers discuss their performance with their school heads and consider their job prospects for the future; on performance assessment (once a year). The Dutch evaluation process decides how to use the results and provides the consequences of the assessment. The criteria used for the evaluation of teaching staff include the ability to relate with colleagues and the professional development. School heads often have indicators to measure the performance of individual teachers and the entire teaching staff as a whole. The results of the evaluation may determine the continuation of the contract or the transformation of the same indefinitely if employees are hired on temporary contracts. Instead, with regard to in-service teachers, as they are identified showing weaknesses in some area of expertise, some interventions are applied such as coaching of a tutor or transferring to other employment. The entire evaluation process is not linked to salary increases, although this theme is currently at the centre of a heated debate in the Netherlands. A crucial role is mainly attributed to the identification of specific development and training paths co-designed by managers and teachers and personalized for each teacher.

In some northern European countries, there are no formalized assessment systems for in-service teachers, mainly because the quality of teachers is verified at the hiring time by the municipality or the school itself. Later, schools provide teachers of the tasks to be undertaken to improve their work, and finally report its findings to the municipalities, and, in turn, to the state. The municipalities are responsible for assessing the effectiveness of their provision and have total autonomy for the organization of the evaluation procedures and the definition of objectives. Finland abolished the inspectorate (1991) and any other inspection institution where teachers are evaluated. However, schools have a quality system that provides for annual talks between teachers and school heads to assess the achievement of the targets set in the previous year, the objectives of the educational staff and the individual needs for the following year. In Sweden, the evaluation of teachers is not formally regulated by laws. School staff hold individual interviews with the school head. Even the salaries are set individually and on the basis of the rules dictated by the labour market. In addition, a recently introduced first teacher (*förstelärare*) reform can be noticed, and if teachers are approved of promotion they get a salary raise of 5000 SEK. Headmasters or the similar are themselves free to set the criteria but there is a requisite that “*förstelärare* must be certified and have a minimum of 4 years of documented excellence in teaching” (Alvunger, 2015, p. 56) Also to be mentioned is the fact that Sweden got a new authority in 2008, *The School's Inspectorate*, which evaluates at a school level. Reports and worrying results from these evaluations are frequently found in the local newspapers, causing a shame and blame situation for schools, and for teachers. England implemented different methods of teaching evaluation. Currently, in fact, there is no single body responsible for the education system evaluation. The educational service is framed within a solid framework of accountability where students, families,

communities and government are involved. The system of inspections play a fundamental role as well as the publication of data on the performance of pupils in all schools. Those in charge for teacher evaluation are: the school head, an external consultant appointed by the school governing body and 2 or 3 members of the latter. Moreover, the teacher's team leader together with the school head carry out the review of performance. The teacher's team leader is a teacher with managerial responsibilities, whose task is to supervise the work of his colleagues. The management process of teacher performance is based on professional standards that define the tasks, teachers' knowledge and skills at each stage of their career. The legislation provides that the assessment must be conducted annually. Schools are required to develop a management policy of salaries and performance that determines what are the expected results and how they should be measured. Furthermore, each school must publicize how the provisions of the school to the teachers' performance management are related to those for school improvement, self-evaluation and development plan. At the beginning of each assessment cycle a meeting must be planned? and? the reviewee, between the evaluators and the teacher. Topics to be addressed at this meeting are the learning goals for the teacher (Capuano et al., 2013), how his/her performance in class is observed and judged, how he/she may receive support to meet the performance criteria and any need for training and professional development. Subsequently, within five days, an evaluation plan is prepared. The first part of the assessment cycle must end by the end of October of each year. At the end of each cycle an evaluation meeting (review meeting) is held in order to assess a teacher's performance during that cycle with respect to the criteria specified in the evaluation plan. The balance report logic plays a central role in the assessment of the English teachers. Since 2007, a revision of the regulations has been implemented. It provides a more direct relationship between evaluation and remuneration, with the aim to select and reward the best teachers. Teachers can achieve three different levels of salary advancement: expert teachers (after at least six years of service, a verification from the Head of the Institute on their teaching skills and an acceptance by an external examiner); excellent teachers (after an external evaluation); advanced skills teachers (after a competition conducted by external evaluators based on national regulatory standards).

In summary, these different types of assessment of teachers identify five main models able to give answers to the following questions: "why evaluate the teaching?", "what evaluate?", "who evaluates and how?"

Conclusions

There are several conclusions to be drawn from the overview. First, it can be noticed that the educational restructuring in the beginning of the 90s and its favouring of accountability has caused turbulent conditions for schools and teachers. Almost everywhere in Europe, schools must simultaneously respond to a series of problems no longer purely pedagogical but also in administrative areas ranging from programming and? orientation to the financial management of the school. Another conclusion is whether there is a need for assessing teachers at all. One answer could be 'no'. Teachers are already under pressure. The increase of teachers' responsibilities are partly related to an expansion of the social functions of the school. The teachers are being asked to adopt more collaborative and constructive setting, to establish relations with the sense starting from the classes, which are numerous and composed of students from different cultural and social contexts,



having different attitudes to studies and different intentions. These qualities are closely related to the transformation of the school systems in turn dependent on the transformation of society over the last twenty years.

The same increase of teachers' responsibilities that requires more duties of teachers as well as changes in their working conditions and their status could also be the reason for the opposite, i. e. *for* assessment. Another reason is that teachers' associations have always struggled for an objective assessment of teachers' work. In any case, if the object of evaluation is the advanced vocational training, the improve of enhanced possibilities for pupils, all teachers are entitled to a fair and objective assessment of their performance. At the same time, the elements that characterize the so-called teacher quality remain obscure, although the quality of the recruitment of future teachers is the central lever in this process (Wayne, & Youngs, 2003; Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2006). For these reasons, in many national contexts, the teacher performance evaluation is one of the elements that draws more attention, in terms of both international surveys and concrete measures. These different evaluation methods are increasingly tending to intersect each other and, in some countries, they are creating internal and external, individual and collective networks of evaluations (Eurydice, 2006; 2008). In other words, it is essential to find ways, procedures and timelines for assessing whether teaching has, or has not, produced learning. Due to the absence of mapping methods, the educational processes lose the determining paradigm of intentional activities aimed at one purpose: without mapping, we cannot to know where we are going.

Teaching and learning methods evolve as well as the knowledge. With respect to these mutations, the action of the schools should tend to promote the harmonious and synergic development of all the abilities and the personality features of the students by improving services to provide them. In this perspective, an effective school should promote the development of reasoning modalities and thought systems that allow building useful information overview to argue our one's statements and evaluate those of others. In some European countries, as in England, it was possible to introduce a valid evaluation method for all the teachers. In other countries, such as in Italy, it has not been possible to agree on setting up evaluation objective procedures. To assess the teaching profession as a whole we should adopt general indicators, perhaps grouped into categories of reference, such as the possession and updating of disciplinary knowledge, social skills, methodology of teaching and assessment (Fenstermacher, & Richardson, 2005). The evaluation of teachers is necessary because it allows creating a mapping of the situation. This is essential to raise the skills of teachers, to prepare targeted events, to adapt the in-service training, to set up an ad hoc support to teachers and schools. The checks are fundamental because they allow intervening both on the learning process of the pupils and on the teacher's actions (Lampert, 2010). The upgrading of skills of teachers also arises from a change of required actions from educational institutions.

The must is, therefore, working to promote a sound evaluation culture and showing to teachers the potentialities and the opportunities for professional development given by the evaluative practice (Darling-Hammond, & Youngs, 2002). We are also aware of the OECD's observation (McKenzie, Santiago, Sliwka, & Hiroyuki, 2005) that teaching profession is in a long-term decline, yet there is increased awareness of how crucial teachers can be in the achievement of students and in the progress of society (Snook, O'Neill, Birks, Church, & Rawlins, 2013).

The European evaluation systems provide, along with the traditional balance report model, the formative function that is expressed especially in the collaboration between teachers and school head in the shared design-review-monitoring



process. This process takes place within individual institutions and the use of an observation system that permits categorization of the aspects observed in order to provide feedback to teachers in relation to the improvement of their practices. The main goal of this perspective is to build an evaluation system for teachers to improve education processes. “*The purpose of evaluation is not to prove, but to improve*” (Stufflebeam, & Shinkfield, 1985, p. 60) and, in any case, in our opinion, such a perspective does not exclude the identification of individual incentive mechanisms to reward recognized merit shared within school communities, rather than stated as a result of external controls.

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