Sociology and Sociological Education in Italy Between Universities and Upper Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Sociology was first introduced to Italy in 1961, when Franco Ferrarotti became the first tenure track professor in 1960 at Rome's Sapienza University. The Institute of Sociology was founded in the 1963/1964 academic year, and in 1962, the first Faculty of Sociology was established at the University of Trento. The process of formation is rather late when considering both the development of sociology as an autonomous science and the historical evolution of the various European universities. Sociology is now widely recognised as a discipline in Italy and is taught at universities as part of both bachelor's and master's degree programmes, as well as in high schools (known as secondary schools of first level) for students aged 14 to 18/19. This work presents the development of sociology in Italy and its formation. Beginning with the development of sociology, it provides a historical analysis of its scientific recognition, role within the social system, and evolution as a science and association. It then explores the disciplin's place in the Italian university educational system, analyzing its changes over the years. Finally, it discusses the formation of sociology within schools.

Keywords Sociology · Education · Sociological education in Italy · Universities · Upper secondary schools

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Sociological Education in Italy: From its Birth to its Emergence as a Discipline

Sociology in Italy has a complex history, with its formation having undergone crucial moments that contributed to its configuration as a discipline very late in its emergence (Mangone & Picarella, 2023; Rinzivillo, 2000; Spirito, 1950). Analysing the history of sociology in Italy and, specifically, its teaching as a discipline both within the university and school systems, we can see how its course is determined by the social and political system of the time (Rutigliano, 1990; Scaglia, 1992). Its academic recognition as a science came about due to the need for cultural and social change (Barbano, 1971; 1985a, b; Lentini, 1988) in Italian society. Sociology began to develop in Italy in the late 1800s with the cultural matrix of both social surveys and positivist thought. The first works that can be considered sociological include: *Suicide. Il suicidio. Saggio di statistica morale comparata* [An essay in comparative moral statistics] in 1879 by Enrico Morselli (1879); *Sociologia* [Sociology] of 1886 by Roberto Ardigò (1886) and *La folla delinquente* [The delinquent crowd] in 1891 by Scipio Sighele (1891) (Jedlowski, 1998). The first sociology course, on the other hand, was instituted in 1874 at the University of Turin, held by Carle (1901), a lecturer in Philosophy of Law. In the academic year 1878–1879, a course in *Theoretical Sociology* was started at the University of Bologna and taught by the pedagogist Siciliani (1871). In 1898, there was the first official recognition of the discipline by the Minister of Public Education of the Kingdom of Italy, Guido Baccelli (Mangini, 1989), which led in 1901 to the awarding of the chair of Sociology to De Marinis (1890, 1896), at the Faculty of Law of the University of Naples (Cipriani, 2010).

In Italy, other courses were also taught that in some ways recalled sociology: in Turin by the political economist Salvatore Cognetti de Martiis; in Siena by the scholar Filippo Virgilii; in Rome by Enrico Ferri; in Catania by Giuseppe Vadalà-Papale; in Messina by Ferdinando Puglia. All were professors belonging to other disciplines such as philosophy, economics or politics (Cipriani, 2010). Finally, the last to be started (before the advent of fascism), in 1925, was the School of Political and Social Sciences at the University of Padua with the chair of sociology held by Filippo Carli, whose lectures were later collected and published in the text, *Le teorie sociologiche* [Sociological theories] (Carli, 1925).

Alongside with the opening of the degree courses, there is the founding of the *Rivista Italiana di Sociologia* [Italian Journal of Sociology] (AA.VV., 1897–1921) in Rome in 1897 by the scholars Salvatore Cognetti de Martiis, Giuseppe Sergi, Augusto Bosco, Vincenzo Tangorra, Guido Cavaglieri and Enrico Tedeschi, with the aim of presenting the fundamental principles of sociology, disseminating the results of sociological investigations and explaining the laws of social evolution (Cognetti de Martiis et al., 1897). The journal had a continuity of publications of different national and international works (231 contributions) until 1921, disseminating critical thinking throughout Italy (Federici, 1988). Despite the ever-increasing growth of fascist ideology, sociology tried to establish itself and spread as a science through recognition in research institutes.

An approach that failed not only due to the sprea of fascism, but also because of Croce and Gentile's theories that presented sociology as a "non-science" and therefore unsuitable for occupying any positions in Italian academia.

A central role was played by Benedetto Croce who, as early as 1898, managed to deny the legitimacy of sociology by calling it an "infirm science" (see Ferrarotti, 2020) to indicate its inability as an empirical science (Rossi, 2003) unlike other social sciences: for example, historiography as the only form of knowledge of reality and political science as the only discipline capable of analysing social phenomena along with law and economics. From those same years, there are the works of the political scientist and jurist Gaetano Mosca (1884, 1896–1923) *Teorica dei governi* [Government theory] in 1884 and *Elementi di scienza politica* [Elements of Political Science] between 1896–1923 that show the centrality of political science as an empirical subject (Rossi, 2003). Gentile (1917) also criticised the theoretical and empirical validity of sociology in his work. Pareto (1899) in his article, *I problemi della* sociologia [Problems of sociology], addresses the doubts and dilemmas about sociology by stating that only through the construction of a sociological process is it possible to consolidate the discipline.

In 1910, the Società Italiana di Sociologia[1] [Italian Sociology Society] was set up in Rome, chaired by the criminologist Garofalo (1897, 1907), who in 1911 organised the eighth Congress of the *Institut International de Sociologie* on the theme *La concezione sociologica del progresso* [The sociological conception of progress], whose papers were published in issue 5 of the Rivista Italiana di Sociologia in 1911 (Cerase & Varotti, 1969) with which an attempt was made to legitimise sociology as a scientifically recognised discipline. The attempt to legitimise sociology did not stop even during the period of fascism, with the Italian tradition of positivistic sociology trying to survive in Rome (Lentini, 1974) with the statistics and demography of Vittorio Castellano and the Catholic-minded sociology of Giuseppe Toniolo and Luigi Sturzo (Cavalli, 2021).

Sociology is not recognised as a science, but is seen as pseudo-conceptual without any empirical and theoretical foundations: a meaningless discipline, defined as the "science of manikins" (Antoni, 1940, 1951), since it does not represent the social system, does not read the real situation, much less propose changes to the social condition. With the second post-war period, which marks the reappropriation of human actions and culture (Crespi, 1985), Italian sociology begins to reconstitute itself and gain strength, so much so that it is configured as the "year zero" of Italian sociology (Cavalli, 2021). With the fall of fascism, a period began that marked the re-appropriation by sociology of its spaces, its theoretical dimension and the configuration of its empirical base (AA.VV., 1995; Burgalassi, 1996): «It cannot be said that the return of sociology to post-war Italy was a gift from the Americans. It was the result of a harsh, even bitter polemic against the prevailing neo-idealism, both Crocian and Gentile, and also of the new knowledge needs of a society that was becoming industrialised and that the traditional intellectual

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[1] The *Società Italiana di Sociologia* [Italian Sociology Society] was later reconstituted in 1937 under the direction of Corrado Gini.

viewpoints—neo-tomistic, legal, historicist—were unable to satisfy» (Cipriani, 2018, p. 295).

An important sign of recognition for the discipline occurred in the 1950s with the establishment of new journals, whose aim was the restoration of sociology and the dissemination of both theoretical and empirical thought. It started in 1951 with the foundation of *Quaderni di Sociologia* [*Sociology Notebooks*], by Nicola Abbagnano and Franco Ferrarotti (1951), which was followed by: *Sociologia* [*Sociology*] by Luigi Sturzo in 1956; *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia* [*Italian Review of Sociology*] founded by Camillo Pellizzi (1960) in 1960; *De Homine* [*De Homine*] by Franco Lombardi in 1962; and *Studi di Sociologia* [*Studies of Sociology*] founded by Francesco Vito in 1963. These were the years in which Italian sociology spread and in which it regained a scientific dimension, also through the diffusion of the works proposed in the different journals that took on a prominent role in the affirmation of the discipline as a science and in the diffusion of its methodology.

The founders of Italian sociology – the so-called "post-war sociologists" (Cavalli, 2021) – had one common goal: the recognition of sociology as a discipline. They did not present a deep theoretical subdivision within themselves (as was to happen in later years). It is difficult to trace a strong theoretical characterisation in those years, we can only note how Marxist sociology afferent to Gramsci was not widespread, but rather the more Catholic sociology of Croce. However, it can be said that those who gave the foundations of Italian sociology its thought expressed themselves through the journals they directed and founded.

Ferrarotti gave sociology a scientific role within Italian universities, as he was the first to be recognised as a sociologist holding a university chair. The first chair of sociology in Italy dates back to 1961, with the 1960 selection at Rome's Sapienza University – in the Piazza Esedra del Magistero seat – which was won by Franco Ferrarotti. In 1962, the Istituto Superiore di Scienze Sociali [Institute of Social Sciences] was founded in Trento, sanctioning the possibility of certifying a degree in sociology and the creation of a new and specific figure: the sociologist. A date that represents a turning point for the discipline and for all the social sciences, giving attention to all those sciences that deal with the subjects of the social system and its everyday life (Pacifico, 1993).

State recognition that officially launched the Istituto Superiore di Scienze Sociali in Trento took place on 8 June 1966 with Law No. 432. This officially marked the start of the formation of sociology in Italy, but also its long, arduous journey, not without obstacles and opposition (Balbo & Chiaretti, 1975). A formation process which was very late, considering both the development of sociology as an autonomous science and the historical evolution of other European universities (Evangelisti, 1960).

In 1970, after eight years, a degree course in Sociology was established at the Faculties of the Magisterium in Rome and Urbino, respectively with Presidential Decrees no. 725 of 14 July and no. 726 of 6 August, followed in 1971 by degree courses in Sociology in Naples and Salerno, at the Faculties of Letters and Philosophy, with Presidential Decrees no. 1356 and no. 1175 (Di Franco, 1993). In 1973, the degree in Sociology was established «conferred by the degree courses set up, on the basis of Presidential Decree No. 725 of 14 July 1970, at the Faculties of Letters and Philosophy and Magisterium of State and Free Universities recognised in

accordance with the provisions in force and at the Free Higher Institute of Social Sciences in Trento, in accordance with Law No. 432 of 8 June 1966, is declared to be equivalent for all purposes to the degree in pedagogy, political science and economics and commerce» (Senato della Repubblica, 1973, p. 2).

With the student protests of 1968, enrolments in the faculty of sociology in Trento were blocked and enrolments in the faculty of sociology in Rome began, which became the new pole of attraction for sociology in Italy, creating a sort of passing of the baton. This handover also entailed a social and cultural change since, while the Trento faculty was part of a project to train an *elite of* professionals who had to be capable of tackling social problems in both the public and private sectors, Rome, on the other hand, represents the massive influx of young people from the different regions of Italy who themselves seek to be and bring about change (Statera, 1980). Finally, 1990 saw the establishment of sociology faculties in Rome and Naples with the new five year degree courses.

It is significant to observe how, even though sociology in Italy had recently settled down, a crisis in its paradigms and methodology began to be spoken of at the Convegno del Centro Studi Metodologici [Conference of the Centre for Methodological Studies], organised in Turin (Barbano, 1985a, b; Rossi, 1972). This crisis is a demonstration of how the spread and expansion of sociology took place before the consolidation of its scientific and methodological criteria: the toolbox used by the professional in sociology. This issue creates a separation and division not only internally, as there is no single, common understanding of the basic elements of the discipline, but also between academic and professional sociologists (Mangone & Picarella, 2023; Martini & Mangone, 2024). This fragmentation strengthened the need on the part of "young sociologists" to establish a single national association of sociologists, which was officially founded on 5 April 1982 with the name Associazione Italiana di Sociologia-AIS[2] [Italian Association of Sociology] (Scaglia, 2007).

The teaching of sociology in Italy, in turn, follows a very long process not only in its establishment but also in the training of sociologists themselves. Looking at the figure of the sociology professor, it is possible to trace and subdivide three different generations of sociologists (Cavalli, 2021):

– the first is that of the founders (post-war – 1960s), who come from different university backgrounds from that of sociology, with many coming from the faculties of literature and philosophy, economics, some from statistics or demogra-

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[2] Statute of the Associazione Italiana di Sociologia-AIS [Italian Association of Sociology], defines individual (ordinary, honorary and supporters) and collective (ordinary and supporters) membership and provides for the division into sections to ensure the development of scientific activity, improve specialist knowledge and stimulate growth (Scaglia, 2007, pp. 29–31). To date there are 14 sections organised with a coordinator, secretary and a scientific council of 7 members. The sections present to date represent a point of reference for theoretical elaboration and research in the specific field: *Imaginary; Methodology; Social Policy; Cultural Processes and Institutions; Sociology of Law; Sociology of Education; Political Sociology; Sociology of Religion; Sociology of Health and Medicine; Sociology of Sport; Sociology of Environment and Territory; Gender Studies; Sociological Theories and Social Transformations; Everyday Life*.

phy, from political science or law degrees. This first generation is made up of exponents who sought to define a theoretical and ideological path of sociology, among them, in addition to those already mentioned above: Achille Ardigò; Sabino Acquaviva; Filippo Barbano; Luciano Cavalli; Franco Crespi; Pietro Crespi; Eugenio Pennati; Luciano Gallino; Franco Leonardi (Cavalli, 2021).

– the second, in continuity with the first (1960s – late 1970s/80 s), continues the affirmation of sociology as a science. This generation also did not come from a basic sociological background but from related subjects, just like the first, the difference being that they were also trained by the 'founders' of Italian sociology. In addition, some of the exponents of this generation also expanded their training outside the Italian context, in countries where sociology was an established discipline, bringing different theories, methods and techniques back to Italy. Of this generation, just to name a few, we would like to mention: Alessandro Cavalli; Alando Bagnasco; Antonio de Lillo; Guido Martinotti.

– the third (1980s onwards), is the one that was formed in sociology degree courses or in the old magisterium and can be defined as the generation of the plurality of sociologies (Cavalli, 2021) having studied not only subjects related to sociology (economics, political science, anthropology, history, demography, methodology and technique, methodology of sciences, statistics, psychology), but also different sociology subjects. To name a few: Economic Sociology; Political Sociology; Sociology of the Family; Sociology of Knowledge; Urban and Rural Sociology; Sociology of Communication; Sociology of Labour; Industrial Sociology; Sociology of Religion (Di Franco, 1993). This is the generation that experienced the creation of the plurality of sociology in its different directions. At the same time, it is a generation that is increasingly open to internationalisation.

These three generations, as identified by Cavalli (2021), who founded and expanded sociology in Italy both as an academic discipline and as an empirical science, represent the long path of affirmation of Italian sociology. If, on the one hand, it is possible to read the difficulty of recognition as a scientific discipline, on the other, it is possible to observe the difficulty in establishing a scientific community of sociologists (Facchini, 2015; Martini & Mangone, 2024), especially in having a common basis, coming not only from different faculties but having a different approach in reading phenomena.

The difficulty encountered by the first generation was that, despite educational differences, a common theoretical and empirical approach should be sought. The difficulties encountered subsequently – these are visible from the third generation onwards – are the plurality of the discipline and its sub-dimensions. If plurality shows the theoretical and empirical richness of the discipline at the same time it places its fragility at the centre. The problem that plurality poses is the possible inability to communicate, since different tools, techniques, and methodologies are used, leading to a dispersion of the common language allowing other disciplines to take hold of sociology and give it guidelines.

Sociological education, therefore, has followed an articulated path in Italy since the end of the nineteenth century. First, consolidating its role within universities, both with faculties and with individual teachings and degree courses within departments (including non-sociology departments), then strengthening its theoretical and empirical dimension through the recognition of the profession through the various

associations (Martini & Mangone, 2024) that constitute a plurality of groupings representing not only its specificity but also its fragmentation.

In the following paragraphs, it will be possible to observe how sociology has established itself as a discipline within universities,[3] both through the analysis of educational courses and through the regulatory evolution that in 2008 – with the Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito – MIM[4] [Ministry of education and merit] reforms – allowed sociology to officially become a subject of study in *scuola secondarie di secondo grado* [upper secondary school].[5] This development highlights how it is now an established discipline recognised for its theoretical foundations and empirical contributions and, at the same time, how it can support the analysis of social change.

Sociology in the Italian University System's Evolution

In this paragraph, we intend to further investigate the evolution that sociology had in the Italian university, considering the several legislative reforms that over the decades have profoundly transformed the university system, both in terms of educational structure and internal organisation. Changes that have made the university institution increasingly independent, flexible, adapted to society's needs with an increasing attention to the labour market, but also private with technical and scientific managerialism (Di Nicola, 2015). Currently, the educational paths of Italian universities are part of the national tertiary education system,[6] structured according to a common model shared at European and international levels (Tertiary education—ISCED).[7]

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[3] The data on university courses of study, teaching in sociology and the number of students enrolled, presented in paragraph 2—Sociology in the Italian university system's evolution, can be consulted at the *Portale dei dati dell'istruzione superiore* [Higher Education Data Portal] of the Ministero dell'università e della ricercar-MUR [Ministry of university and research] at the link: https://dati-ustat.mur.gov.it.

[4] At the time this article is being written in Italy there are two ministries in charge of education and training: the Ministero dell'istruzione e del Merito-MIM [Ministry of education and merit] and the Ministero dell'università e della ricercar-MUR [Ministry of university and research] are responsible for the general administration of education at national level for the relevant fields. The Ministero dell'istruzione e del Merito-MIM [Ministry of education and merit] has decentralised offices (Uffici scolastici regionali—USRs) that guarantee the application of general provisions and the respect of the minimum performance requirements and of standards in each Region.

[5] The data on upper secondary school presented in Sect. 3—Sociological education in upper secondary school, can be consulted at the Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito – MIM [Ministry of Education and Merit] *Portale unico dati della scuola* [Single School Data Portal] database at the link: https://dati.istruzione.it/opendata/, they refer to 2023 and were extracted in 2024.

[6] The full description of the Italian education system is available on *Ministero dell'istruzione e del merito—MIM* [Ministry of education and merit] website at: https://www.miur.gov.it/sistema-educativo-di-istruzione-e-formazione.

[7] This refers to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), a classification developed by UNESCO and adopted by the General Conference in November 2011. Given the variety of educational systems in different countries around the world, this classification was created to define general criteria valid for assigning educational programmes to levels that can be considered comparable. It should be specified how this model also relates to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) (UNESCO, 2012).

The Italian university system is articulated in three cycles:

– the first corresponding to ISCED level 6 is made up of *Corsi di laurea di primo livello* (L) [bachelor's degree courses], i.e. three-year degree courses, access to which requires possession of a secondary school diploma or an equivalent foreign qualification (ISCED level 3 or 4). This degree gives access to the second-cycle courses.
– the second corresponding to ISCED level 7 includes the *Laurea Magistrale* (LM) [master's degree or equivalent], two-year courses that offer advanced training for highly specialised activities in specific fields. Admission requires a bachelor's degree (L) or a comparable foreign qualification, to which specific requirements established by individual universities may be added. This cycle also includes the *Laurea Magistrale a ciclo-unico* (LMCU), five-year master's degrees.
– the third corresponding to ISCED level 8 (PhD) mainly includes *Dottorato di Ricerca* [PhDs], courses with a minimum duration of three years, focused on advanced scientific research training. Admission requires possession of a master's degree (LM) and successful passing of an open admission exam.

The current structure of university education is, nevertheless, the result of crucial reforms that over time have radically transformed the entire Italian education system, also reflecting the contingent socio-political and cultural changes discussed below.

On the threshold of the 1960s, the Italian education system was still tied to a fascist-era approach and the university was entirely elitist. In 1965, Law No. 2314, known as the *Gui Law*, took the first steps towards a systemic reform. At the end of the 1960s, the achievement of a concrete right to education for all suddenly became a key issue in the public debate. Social and student movements burst onto the public scene to denounce the lack of teaching and research facilities, the unaffordable costs of university courses and academic authoritarianism. For the subject of sociology, the unintended but most persistent effect is the proliferation of sociological teaching in an Italian university that was experiencing the delicate transition from elite to public institution (Cavalli, 2021).

Shortly afterwards, Faculties of Sociology and then many degree courses were created (see § 1), spread throughout the country with a vast expansion of teaching and therefore of university chairs (Cavalli, 2021). It was also thanks to university mobilisation that Law No. 910, known as the *Codignola Law*, was approved in 1969, whose effects primarily concerned the enlargement of enrolments with a significant increase in demand for higher education.

It is important to remember how the university degree represents in this historical period, a real, or rather concrete, chance of social advancement. This is also one of the reasons why many new students poured into universities in the main Italian cities. In the 1970s, the Italian university changed radically, it was no longer an exclusive institution: the presence of lower classes, student-workers and the female component increased.

Regarding its internal organisation, at the end of the 1980s (Benozzo et al., 2017), the university in Italy is a typical example of traditional continental model,

characterised by the centralisation of decisions at ministerial level, a low autonomy of the universities, and a high power of the academic oligarchies (Morzenti Pellegrini et al., 2015). This system was then radically transformed through a series of subsequent legislative measures that can be summarised in three main phases (Carbone, 2021).

The first phase defined as 'autonomy and market orientation' took place in the first part of the 1990s. After the approval of Law no. 168 of 1989, the statutory and administrative autonomy of the universities began, with subsequent measures also modifying the university funding system. In these years, a primary reform of the educational system was carried out with the *Decreto Ministeriale* (D.M.) [Ministerial Decree] 6 February 1991, today known as the 'old system', in order to centralise and standardise university courses to a national model in which students still had autonomy of choice, but more limited than in the later evolution of the university system. Sociology courses were also substantially uniform. For all degree courses in Sociology, 22 exams and in addition 2 foreign language tests were established. According to the new programme, the course was divided into two two-year periods, the first of which was propaedeutic with 12 compulsory teaching subjects, while the second was characterising and structured in such a way as to ensure the internal differentiation of the discipline into areas and the corresponding orientation towards possible professional career opportunities (Catanzaro et al., 1996). The planned specialisation curricula were the same for all the degree courses in Sociology: institutional politics, organisational economic labour, territory and environment, communication and mass media, social planning, socio-anthropology, and development. The difference between universities consisted only in the number of specialisations curricula activated.

The second phase mainly concerns a radical 'didactic reorganisation' involving universities but in general the entire national education system and took place between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s with the *Berlinguer Reform*, so called from the then Minister of Education's surname.[8] It represents an attempt to build a degree market, widening the offer, segmenting it through institutional ratings and differentiating student fees (Freschi, 2009). In this framework, D.M. [Ministerial Decree] no. 509 of 3 November 1999 is of particular interest, which lays down the implementing rules for the educational reform. The new organisation of Italian schools and universities is characterised by two main aspects. The first concerns the uniformity of the national requirements framework thanks to which degrees awarded by different universities have an identical formal value that can then be spent in the labour market. The second concerns the great autonomy left to universities to

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[8] The *Berlinguer Reform* reflects contemporary sentiment and culture, as at that time Italy was during the pro-European momentum generated by the then imminent introduction of the euro. The reference is to the Bologna Process started in 1999 as an intergovernmental agreement for cooperation in the field of higher education. The initiative was launched with the Bologna Conference at the conference of European higher education ministers signed in Bologna in June 1999 and inspired by the earlier meeting of ministers from France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom in 1998 (Sorbonne Declaration 1998). The aim was precisely to build a European Higher Education Area based on principles and criteria shared by the signatory countries.

enhance their resources, specificities, and local vocations. What appears relevant is not only the new systemic structure, but the fact that each university has the possibility of autonomously defining its own educational offer (Benadusi, 2007).

Specifically, the main innovations introduced by the *Berlinguer Reform* are:

– The division, for the first time, of university education into two distinct levels, that of three-year degrees and that of two-year specialist degrees, which will still make this reform known today as the '3 + 2' formula. A new model of higher education that follows the Anglo-Saxon one, at the time particularly popular and already in force in other European countries (Fasanella, 2007).

– Teaching programmes are no longer defined based on study subjects but on *Settori scientifico-disciplinari* (SSD) [Scientific-disciplinary fields], clustering different specialisation fields.[9] Sociology is not exempt from this development but rather institutionalises its increasing internal pluralisation. As well described by Cavalli (2021), in the long term the development of faculties and degree courses in sociology had also the effect of fostering a trend towards the proliferation of 'sociologies' in the plural meaning. Between virtuous and perverse effects, in the case of sociology, however, this increasing emphasis on specialisations and specific languages also brings with it the risk of discipline fragmentation.

– The introduction of the *Crediti universitari* (CFU) [University credits system][10] in the teaching obligations required of students for obtaining the final degree, which replace the number of examinations (semester and annual) of the previous system. This changes how the commitment required to obtain the degree is calculated and allows each university to offer curricula with even more diversified subjects according to its own vocation and resources.

In terms of the didactic system, the main consequence has been an increasing heterogeneity that pervades so many aspects of Italian university education, such

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[9] In Italy, the disciplinary affiliation of university professors, i.e. the scientific position that each professor assumes in the university system, is divided into disciplinary groupings. Pursuant to Article 15 of Law 240, 2010, the structure of these groupings is divided into three levels from the general to the most specific, represented respectively by: *Macro Settori Concorsuali* (MSC) [Macro Competitive Sectors] (86 in total); i *Settori Concorsuali* (SC) [Competitive Sectors] (190 in total); i *Settori scientifico-disciplinari* (SSD) [Scientific-disciplinary fields] (383 in total). Disciplinary aggregations are relevant because they are at the basis of many organisational aspects of Italian universities, from the articulation of the didactic curricula to the characterisation of university departments, to academic staff recruitment procedures. Specifically, the MSC 14/C in Sociology corresponds to: the SC 14/C1—General Sociology with the related SSD SPS/07—General Sociology; the SC 14/C2—Sociology of Culture and Communication with the SSD in SPS/08—Sociology of Culture and Communication; the SC 14/C3—Political sociology, sociology of law with the SSD SPS/11—Political sociology and SPS/12—Sociology of Law, Deviance and Social Change. The MSC 14/D in Applied Sociology corresponds to SC 14/D1—Economic sociology, sociology of work, urban and Environmental sociology with SSD SPS/09—Economic sociology and sociology of work and organisations and SPS/10—Urban and environmental sociology (M.D. 855/2015).

[10] *Crediti formativi universitari CFU* [University credits] corresponding to the European Credit Transfer System-ECTS are also a simplification for the recognition of examinations that are taken at other Italian or foreign universities.

as: the universities' educational offerings, which are tied to very general ministerial indications; the different denominations of the courses belonging to the same ministerial code; the fact that the same course is taught by different faculties. Although at a national level, the three-year and specialised courses are identified with the same ministerial code, at a local level each university may propose a different teaching programme. With reference to sociology, if the previous order in force represented an institutional bulwark against different didactic thrusts and training aims that were compromising the development of a specific physiognomy of sociological competence through which to also identify the social responsibility of sociological knowledge and know-how (Agnoli, 2007), the wide margins of planning autonomy defined by D.M. [Ministerial Decree] 509/99 brought the situation back to the previous panorama that had characterised sociological education in Italy for 20 years, further accentuating its internal differentiation. This has led to the creation of degree courses in Sociology within faculties in which they did not previously appear, but also to the birth of non-sociological degree courses within the faculties of Sociology or Social Sciences (Agnoli, 2007).

At this stage, the degree (DL) in Sociology as established in the previous system to Ministerial Decree no. 509/1999 is equated with the *Laurea Specialistica* [two-year specialist degrees] in Sociology 89/S. A new *Laurea Specialisitica* [two-year specialist degrees] in Methods for Empirical Research in the Social Sciences 49/S and a *Laurea Triennale* [three-year degree] in Sociological Sciences 36/S are also created. Compared to the faculties that existed before the ministerial decree came into force, the Faculty of Sociology set up at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan and the Faculty of Social Sciences set up at the University of Chieti and Pescara were subsequently integrated. Furthermore, in addition to the several faculties of Political Science in which sociological teachings were already included, other faculties such as that of Education Sciences were also added (Agnoli, 2007).

This new classification of degree courses will be changed as early as 2004 with D.M. [Ministerial Decree] No. 270. In this case, however, the reform was much less radical than the previous one and the change compared to the previous system concerned mainly the study courses' denominations and degrees awarded at the end of them. Specifically, the three-year degree is now named *Corsi di laurea di primo livello* (L) [Bachelor's degree courses]; the two-year specialisation degree, on the other hand, has been renamed *Laurea Magistrale* (LM) [Master's degree]. The adaptation process to the new university system started in the academic year 2008–2009 and was completed in 2011. As a result, the three-year degree in Sociological Sciences (36) is renamed bachelor's degree in Sociology L-40, while the two specialised degrees Sociology 89/S and Methods for Empirical Research in the Social Sciences 49/S are unified in the master's degree Sociology and Social Research LM-88 as clarified in the *Decreto Interministeriale* [Inter-ministerial Decree] 9 July 2009.

The third phase of the Italian university system's reform opens with Law 230/2005, the so-called *Moratti Reform*,[11] named by the then Minister of Education and Universities, which started the revision process of university professors' recruitment and careers, and ends with Law 240/2010, known as the *Gelmini Reform*,[12] named by the then Minister of Education, Universities and Research, which profoundly affected the internal university organisation.

After 2010, the Italian academic system experienced further changes, such as the introduction of vocationally oriented degrees; the possibility of simultaneous enrolment in several university courses; and the introduction of qualifying degrees. Over the years, up to the present day, further reforms have taken place, the most recent of which have not been fully completed (Law No. 79/2022). Their effect, however, was much less than the previous ones and did not entail radical changes to the university system. Given this complex evolutionary process of university in Italy, it is possible to observe after many years what impact these reforms have had on sociological university courses.

From a quantitative point of view, the *Berlinguer Reform* was a historical divide that saw a rapid proliferation, in the two levels set up (three-year degree and two-year specialisation degree), of courses on offer, not only in the sociology field (Facchini & Pennisi, 2021). Looking at the time series in the database (see footnote no. 3) of the *Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca* MUR [Ministry of university and research], in the academic year 2001/2002, there were in all 23 active three-year courses in

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[11] Law 230/2005 started the revision process of university professor recruitment and careers. Among the law's most significant innovations is the introduction of the researcher on fixed-term contracts and the provision of a national scientific eligibility procedure for access to the roles of associate and full professor. The Moratti reform thus causes two new principles in academic careers: precariousness and the evaluation of scientific results based on standardised parameters. To this must be added another important new element: the institutionalisation, which took place with decree-law no. 262 of 3 October 2006, of the *Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione dell'Università e della Ricerca-ANVUR* [Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes] to which was delegated, among other things, the task of defining the performance evaluation criteria for universities and teaching staff.

[12] Law 240/10 is part of changes that, in the past decades, have affected many European countries, not only Italy (Carbone, 2021). Universities and research institutions have changed some of the self-regulation forms that had characterised them in the past (Henkel, 2009), to be increasingly governed by principles compatible with New Public Management-NPM management forms (Gunter et al., 2016). It is possible to track two common elements that, transversally, have accompanied the instances of reform in the various European countries: on the one hand, the objective of bringing education systems closer to the market demands and, on the other, the inescapable need to introduce a market logic within the university (Capano, 2015). The first objective implied an opening up of the university field to that of production with the establishment of governance practices between universities and businesses in relation to training processes and research activities. The second objective implied, on the other hand, the initiation of a competitive process between universities, also on an international scale, to succeed in winning ever larger shares of the training demand and of public and private research funding. The main changes introduced are: the faculties abolition and the creation of departments in Universities; the abolition of the permanent researcher and the university assistant positions; the introduction of a periodic evaluation of the research and third mission activities of universities and research bodies called *Valutazione della Qualità della Ricerca -VQR* [Research Quality Assessment]; a new recruitment system for full and associate professors that involves a national procedure aimed at verifying the possession of the necessary requisites to perform the functions of university professor, the *Abilitazione Scientifica Nazionale (*ASN) [National Scientific Qualification].

Sociological Sciences (36), distributed into eight universities in the north, six in the centre and four in the south, for a total of 18 universities. Despite the possibility of naming courses under the same ministerial code differently, almost all universities and above all the 'historical' ones in which sociology had matured its academic status (Trento, Sapienza in Rome, Naples Federico II, Salerno, Urbino), retain the name *Corso di Laurea in Sociologia* [three-year course in Sociology], confirming it in many cases to the present day.

In universities that offered more degrees in class 36, characterising denominations began to emerge. See for example the courses in *Operatore della Sicurezza e del Controllo Sociale* [Security and Social Control Operator] and in *Sociologia per il Terziario Avanzato* [Sociology for the Advanced Tertiary Sector] at the University of Bologna; the course in *Politiche Sociali e del Territorio* [Social and Territorial Policies] and in *Servizi alle Imprese e alle Organizzazioni* [Services to Businesses and Organisations] at the Piemonte Orientale University, the course in *Scienze Sociali per il Governo, l'Organizzazione e le Risorse Umane* [Social Sciences for Governance, Organisation and Human Resources] at Rome La Sapienza or the course in *Società, Politica e Istituzioni Europee* [Society, Politics and European Institutions] at the University of Trento. Until the 2008/2009 academic year (the year in which the process of adaptation to the D.M. 270/2004 reform began), the number of courses in Sociological Sciences (class 36) did not see any major numerical changes. Each university will reduce (e.g. Bologna University went from 3 to 2 active courses, while Sassari University completely cancel this course) or expand its offer (e.g. the Universities of RomaTre, Trieste, Catania and Perugia). What is changing considerably, however, are the course denominations, which in an increasingly competitive and managerial perspective encompass very specific fields of study or potential professions.

Between the academic year 2008/2009 and 2010/2011, the transitional period for the implementation of D.M. [Ministerial Decree] No. 270 2004 reform ends. In all universities, the three-year degree in Sociological Sciences (36)—D.M. 509/1999, will become a bachelor's degree in Sociology L-40, but a gradual reduction in the offer can be observed. Whereas in 2008, there were 24 courses in classes 36 and L-40, in 2022 there will be 19. In between, some are cancelled, while the new ones are offered by telematic universities such as Roma Unicusano. Despite the changes that have taken place over the decades, in the 'historical' university locations for the discipline, Sociology courses started at the end of the last century remain.

The specialisation degree courses first, and the master's degree courses later, on the other hand, have a different evolution. In this case, in the MUR historical series, the data are available from the 2002/2003 academic year, when there are 10 courses in the 89/S specialisation degree class in Sociology and 2 in the neo-class in Methods for empirical research in the social sciences 49/S, for a total of 12 courses, distributed mostly in the centre-north universities, which will however become 27 in the 2007/2008 academic year. This considerable increase is denoted by the increase in university locations and the variety of denominations, especially considering the specialisation aim of the two-year course. Again, from 2008 to 2011, as indicated in Ministerial Decree 270/2004, the specialisation degrees will become master's degrees, and classes 89/S and 49/S are also unified in the LM-88 master's degree

in Sociology and Social Research, which in the 2023/2024 academic year counts 23 courses, distributed geographically more evenly than in 2002. The 'historical' location of Urbino University is no longer represented.

This wide proliferation of degree courses in the field of sociology with increasingly specific and characterising or 'catchy' denominations has, however, had dispersive and confusing effects on the student population, confirmed by the studies that in the last decade have investigated the impact of the most important university reforms of 1999 and 2004 (Piga, 2015), revealing a widespread concern within the scientific community of reference. Since 2008, the year in which the implementation of Ministerial Decree No. 270/2004 reform was gradually initiated in Italian universities, the number of students enrolled in three-year/bachelor's degrees and master's/specialist degrees in sociology has shown a significant decrease.

Regarding three-year/bachelor's degrees, enrolled students will rise from 6,522 (2001/2002) to 15,152 (2007/2008) and then begin a slow decline. There will be 14,131 in the 2008/2009 academic year until they reach the minimum number of 9,964 enrolled in the 2016/2017 academic year. This decrease affects the discipline of sociology more than the total number of three-year degrees. In the last five years, however, a slow recovery can be observed, with 11,004 students enrolled in the 2021/2022 academic year. This trend is also confirmed by statistics that specifically regard L-40 enrolments, which increased from 2,742 in the 2016/2017 academic year to 2,848 in the 2022/2023 academic year.

For master's/specialist degrees, the historical series shows a more articulated trend, since the drop in the number of enrolments will only occur after 2011. A trend that, when put in relation to the contingent proliferation of the educational offer, shows how this has perhaps given a positive impulse to enrolments (from 167 in the 2002/2003 academic year, they will become 3,213 in the 2008/2009 academic year and 3,550 in the 2010/2011 academic year).

Subsequently, there is also a gradual decline for specialisation/master's degrees up to the 2,317 enrolled in the 2016/2017 academic year. A negative trend which, however, the most recent statistics show to be positively evolving (in the academic year 2021/2022 the number of enrolled students is 2,872).[13]

Regarding the presence of the discipline also in the other three-year and master's degree courses, compared to those already presented, as highlighted by Borrelli et al. (2021) in 2020 the total number of sociology courses in the three-year degree courses is 2,490 and in the master's degree courses 1,746. In both cases, most of the courses belong to the scientific disciplines (SSD) SPS/07—General Sociology and SPS/08—Sociology of Culture and Communication, while the contribution of the sectors SPS/09—Economic sociology and sociology of work and organisations, SPS/10—Urban and environmental sociology, SPS/11—Political sociology and SPS/12—Sociology of Law, Deviance and Social Change is more contained.

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[13] The data discussed follows the evolution of the more general scenario, considering total university enrolments. Here too, the peak will be reached in the academic year 2008/2009 (1,814,344), then registering the minimum in the academic year 2016/2017 (1,668,415) and a recent recovery (1,909,3602 in the academic year 2022/2023).

It is also interesting to note that 43% of the sociology courses taught in three-year degrees and 50% of those taught in master's degrees are included in courses that do not belong to the political and social sciences area.

Sociological Education in Upper Secondary School

Sociology as a discipline has links with the university institution but also with schools. Not only does it study and research training and school education, but it is also taught in high schools. Sociological research has analysed the educational and training paths of school and its role as an agency of socialisation in the social system since its origins (Dewey, 1923a, b; Durkheim, 1922). More specifically, Italian sociology has also questioned and examined school contexts as well as the role of the teacher as a professional figure (Baglioni & Cesareo, 1964; Besozzi, 1981; Cesareo, 1969, 1976; Ribolzi, 1981).

The aim of these studies is to analyse, especially in secondary schools, the crisis of the professionalisation of teachers, the insecurity of their role also with respect to changes in society (Besozzi, 1981). Even to this day, we continue to study the educational context by focusing on the role of the educator and his competences (Fischer, 2003; Salmieri, 2018). Consequently, education has become a concept of sociological analyses, while sociology represents an integral part of the educational process, both as a teaching subject as well as in the role of the sociologist as a teacher.

Here, we analyse the presence of sociology as a taught subject and, at the same time, the path to the introduction of teachers of this discipline in the secondary school, taking into consideration the access determined to the different competition classes[14] by the type of degree. The aim, therefore, is to observe the school environment from two different points of view: the first, sociology as a taught and study subject; the second, the sociologist's access to the school in the role of teacher.

Upper secondary school,[15] commonly referred to in Italy as "scuola superiore" [High School], is part of the second cycle of studies, provides for the education of young people between the ages of 14 and 18/19.

It is divided into two main pathways, respectively, General and Vocation upper secondary education (Scuole Secondarie di Secondo Grado) and Vocational

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[14] Classes are defined by the Italian Ministero della Scuola e del Merito-MIM [Ministry of Education and Merit] and are codes with which the different subjects taught in secondary and high schools are identified. Each subject has a code consisting of the letter A or B, followed by a number. The competition classes were changed in 2017—by Ministerial Decree 259 of 2017—which modified the names of the various classes and changed the entry requirement. Some competition classes were merged, reducing the number from 168 to 114.

[15] The Italian education system is organised, as can be seen on the website of the Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito [Ministry of education and merit], in levels and in cycles: Integrated system from 0–6 years) which includes the crèche, the spring section and the pre-school (these are non-compulsory paths). The first cycle of education consists of: Primary school, lasting five years for pupils aged 6 to 10/11 (compulsory) and secondary school lasting three years, for pupils aged 11 to 14 (compulsory). These are followed by the second cycle – upper secondary school – for pupils aged 14 to 18/19. More information can be found on the website of the Ministry of Education under Education and Training System.

Education and Training Courses [Istruzione e Formazione Professionale]. The first group includes: Licei [General high schools], Istituti tecnici [Technical institutes], Istituti professionali [Professional institutes] with a five-year duration with a five-year duration and regulated at a national level.

The second group consists of: Istituti di istruzione e formazione professionale-IeFP [Professional education and training institutes] of regional competence that provide for a three- or four-year duration. Finally, with the new reform of the Ministry, will be activated in the 2024/2025 school years, a new Technological and Professional training pathway (Filiera formativa tecnologico-professionale) with a 4 + 2 year duration, it will provide four years of school plus two years of apprenticeship, to give direct access to the world of work.

Students can enter upper secondary school after the conclusion of the first cycle of studies and specifically from 10/11 to 13 years of age.[16]

Access of teachers to upper secondary school occurs through the evaluation of the various selection classes. More precisely, for sociology graduates, it is possible to be admitted with either a degree in Sociology defined as the "Old Order Degree" corresponding to Ministerial Decree 39 of 1998, or with the master's degree in Sociology and Social Research defined as LM88, corresponding to Ministerial Decree 270/2004 (ref. § 2). This distinction in the types of degrees allows to understand the different access to the type of school. The tables[17] drawn up by the Italian Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito [Ministry of Education and Merit] clearly show the change defined by the new regulation[18] of the public school: selection classes and schools pertaining to them. The selection classes for the Master's Degree in Sociology and Social Research (LM88) are: *Philosophy and Human Sciences* (A-18, formerly A036) and *Theory and Techniques of Communication* (A-65). While the degree classes for the Sociology degree are the following: *Philosophy and Human Sciences* (A-18, formerly A036), *Legal-Economic Sciences* (A-46, formerly A019) and *Applied Mathematical Sciences* (A-47, formerly A048, A049).

In order to be eligible to teach, it is necessary to be included in a ranking list at the various upper secondary school institutes. To be qualified to teach sociology, according to the current ministerial reform, an aspiring teacher must either have

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[16] In Italy there is compulsory schooling regulated by state law. As can be read on the website of the Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito: [Ministry of education and merit] "Compulsory education lasts 10 years, from 6 to 16 years of age, and includes the eight years of the first cycle of education and the first two years of the second cycle (Law 296 of 2006), which can be attended at secondary school—state school—or at regional vocational education and training courses. Moreover, the right/duty to education and training applies to all young people for at least 12 years or, in any case, until the attainment of a three-year vocational qualification by the age of eighteen, in accordance with the provisions of Law no. 53/2003".

[17] Ministerial tables are made public by the Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito [Ministry of Education and Merit], drawn up and modified according to the course codes of the university. There must always be a correspondence between the degree courses and the same wording as the entry qualifications for teaching in upper secondary schools.

[18] Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca-MIUR [Ministry of Education, Universities and Research] (old name) with Ministerial Decree 259 of 2017 establishes the selection classes for teaching on the basis of the degree held. Only those who obtained their degree by 23 February 2016 can access the rankings for upper secondary schools.

obtained 24 university training credits (CFU) in the pedagogical areas. whereas, according to the future reform, 60 CFU[19] will give direct entry into the ranking list. In Italian State Schools, a permanent teaching position can be obtained only through a public selection procedure, at a regional level, according to qualifications and exams aimed at recruiting teaching staff. The situation is different for private schools where recruitment can take place through a direct call (selection by the school headmaster).

Teaching Sociology in upper secondary schools initially took place with the decrees Law no. 112 of 25 July 2008 and Law no. 133 of 6 August 2008 in which the different sociological subjects were included in vocational institutes. These were followed by decrees No. 87, No. 88 and No. 89 of 15 March 2010, which definitively established the teaching of sociology in the different courses of study.

Today, the schools where sociology is taught for the greatest number of hours are the Liceo delle Scienze umane [Human Sciences High School], and those with the O*pzione economico-sociale* [Socio-Economic Option High school]. Likewise, those who have a degree in sociology can teach, given the different classes, subjects related to sociology such as economics, law, methodology or social economics at Liceo Sportivo [Sports High School], in the different Technical and Professional Institutes, which specifically have the following course of studies: graphics and communication; agriculture; Services, Industrial, Handicrafts; Economics; Social and Health Services.

In *Human Sciences* and *Socio-Economic Option* High Schools, there is not a specific teaching position for sociology, as it is part of the *Scienze Umane* [Human Sciences] curriculum, which includes subjects such as psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, anthropology and sociology. This characteristic does not allow a disaggregation of the individual discipline to understand its weight within the same teaching. The *Socio-Economic Option high school* includes Methodology of Research and both *Human Sciences* and *Socio-Economic* high schools include sociology as a teaching subject, whereas in other high school curricula sociology-related subjects are also taught by teachers with a degree in sociology. Nevertheless, it is not possible to go into detail due to a lack of data, determined by their unavailability and veracity.

On the website of the Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito [Ministry of Education and Merit], it is stated that *Human Sciences* is a multidisciplinary subject and involves the interaction between the various disciplines, so as to give the learners a mastery of educational, social and relational processes, as well as acquiring the skills necessary to understand the dynamics of social reality, with attention to educational phenomena and formal educational processes, personal services, the world of work, intercultural phenomena and the contexts of coexistence and the construction of citizenship. All this makes it possible to train people who are aware of their own culture and of the different cultural dynamics. In the Socio-Economic Option, there is an in-depth study of research methodology as well as the more economic and political aspects. What varies in the teaching of sociology is the number of hours.

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[19] Law No. 79 of 29 June 2022 constitutes 60 CFU instead of 24 CFU for access to teaching. Until 31 December 2024, it will still be possible to use the old 24 CFU.

More specifically, the study of sociology for both paths takes place in the second two-year period (second year) and in the fifth year. In the first case, students learn the basics of the discipline, general concepts, theoretical foundations and through the reading of classics such as: Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Pareto, Parsons. During the fifth year, students analyse the essentials of sociological investigation, the analysis of the Welfare State and its constitution and explore some fundamental elements of sociology such as, institutions, socialisation, deviance, social mobility, communication, and mass media. In the *Socio-Economic Option High School*, however, the focus is on the more political and economic dimension, so students examine the dynamics of the welfare state, the socio-political and economic transformations induced by the phenomenon of globalisation, multiculturalism and the third sector with all its characteristics. Methodology of research is studied in the *Socio-Economic Option High school* in the first, second and fifth years. The attempt is to provide a competence in the statistical analysis and methodological processes used in sociological research and data analysis and processing.

There are approximately 878 *Human Sciences High school* throughout the country, according to data from the Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito-MIM [Ministry of education and merit]. In addition, 419 are the state schools that have activated the *Socio-Economic Option High school*. According to Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito-MIM [Ministry of education and merit] data, the annual number of hours devoted to the *Scienze Umane* [Human Sciences] in these high schools is 132 h for the two years (first and second year), 165 h for the three years (third, fourth and fifth year). While in the human sciences high school with the economic and social option, the annual number of hours devoted to the *Scienze Umane* [Human Sciences] it is 99 h for all five years.

Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of places in state schools of teachers for the *Philosophy and Human Sciences* selection class. Analysing the data from the 2015/2016 school year to the 2021/2022 school year, it can be observed that from 4.187 they have increased to 4.435. However, it is remarkable to note that sociology is not a subject in its own right, but that it is part of the *Human Sciences* curriculum. Sociology at school, unlike at university, does not have its own identity as a discipline. This is because teaching sociology is part of a broader educational process that aims to provide not only knowledge and awareness of the theories of the different subjects, but also the appropriate tools to be able to analyse the social system from a philosophical, pedagogical, anthropological, and sociological point of view. At the same time, it guarantees the possibility of access to university studies (Wieczorkievicz et al., 2021).

The professor with a degree in sociology who teaches humanities subjects follows methodological connotations determined by the discipline itself.

The study of sociology and its theories, such as those observed in the Human Sciences High school's ministerial curriculum, enables learners to become aware of social reality and the social context itself (Cavalli, 1992). The teacher is a transformer and collaborator of the society in which he or she is embedded (Durkheim, 1922), and sociology can help foster both the educational process and social inclusion and socialisation. Teaching, but above all studying sociology and sociological theories in upper secondary school, allows to carry out an analysis of

the real context, to conceive the basis of social and cultural change, and to understand the social facts that manifest themselves in everyday life by also wearing different interpretative lenses (Kant, 1781). These considerations, however, call for a clarification: it is different to teach sociology at school and to be a sociologist who teaches at school.

For the first question, it is possible to examine how it may be different for that discipline – as well as for the others – to be taught by an expert in the subject or by a teacher who has been trained to teach that subject; the way of analysing and dealing with the topics is different: a sociologist observes the social context, the cultural and educational dimension in a different way than the vision given by graduates in other disciplines. Moreover, each discipline, besides having its own toolbox, has a different theoretical, cultural and analytical sedimentation.

As for the second issue, it can be observed that sociologists work at school in the role of *Human Sciences* teachers and not sociologists. They fulfil the role of educators and trainers (Crescenzi, 1992). This does not mean that they are no longer sociologists, but that their role has changed. Their task is to educate learners through the knowledges of human sciences, make them aware of the real condition they live in (Argentin, 2018), and train them to be citizens (Milani, 1965; Scuola di Barbiana, 1967). School is a social system in which "knowledge of knowledge" (Morin, 1986) is examined, in which the real dimension is placed at the centre.

The establishment of new courses, such as *Social Sciences*, implies, on the part of the school system, an awareness of the need to introduce different professional figures, and this promotes the "professionalism" of teachers and expands knowledge on social research (Ribolzi, 1981). In other European countries – as shown by an analysis by Cavalli and Pagani (2003) – the teaching of social sciences is widespread, even if not that of sociology, but civic, political, economic, historical and sociological knowledge is central. In countries such as France, Germany and Sweden, for example, theoretical knowledge of these subjects is also considered important to access to university.

As previously observed, in Italy sociology is one of subjects studied both at school and university, with it representing a tool for reading, analysing and culturally understanding trends in the social system (Mills, 1959). This element can also be found in sociology textbooks (Bruni & Magaudda, 2020; Clemente & Danieli, 2016, 2020) which, through the analysis of current social phenomena (e.g. Covid-19 health emergency; disability; diseases) and the help of diagrams, videos, interactive elements, specify which tools of theoretical and empirical analysis can be used.

Sociology, lacking its own clearly defined identity, is experiencing a fragmented dimension in which various connotations and different theoretical, empirical, and methodological dimensions overlap. This inevitable interaction with other disciplines in the school curriculum leads to a continuous evolution of sociology as a teaching subject. In addition, the figure of the sociologist is configured as a teacher and educator acquiring pedagogical skills, knowledge, and methodologies (Jinkings, 2013) that are useful for him to be able to teach within the school.

Conclusions

Sociology in Italy was recognised very late as a scientific discipline, compared to the European context. The analysis of its development and role allows to trace an articulated historical process that starts from the theoretical and empirical definition of the discipline. Sociological thought began to spread in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, but its expansion was hindered, in the first half of the twentieth century, both by fascist ideology and by the prejudices spread by Croce and Gentile on its scientific validity within the entire academic community. With the end of the Second World War, the discipline began its restoration phase, starting with the definition of both its theoretical and empirical framework. Its recognition comes not only through the academic sphere but also through its inclusion in the educational institution, the foundation of sociological journals and associations. These have both an educational purpose but also the intention of safeguarding, consolidating, and disseminating the discipline. Tracing the complex evolution of sociology in the university system (Rossi, 1973) and then its subsequent inclusion in the curricula of secondary schools allows to understand the development and knowledge of the discipline, while also considering the socio-political contexts that have influenced it.

In Italian universities, through the several legislative reforms that have taken place since the 1990s, sociology has been transformed, passing from the definition of a single course of study sought by the discipline's founders – who, as has been observed, have matured a formative path in related disciplines – to the constitution of the Faculty of Sociology, as formal recognition of sociology as a science, and finally to its increasing diffusion in university departments and courses of study, even those not pertaining to the political and social sciences area. Analysing sociology's evolution in Italy, we see not only a multiplication of 'sociologies', but also the fragmentation of the discipline, partly conditioning its academic cohesion. From sociology's development, however, emerges not the need to perceive the discipline as unique but rather as plural, recognising, both theoretically and methodologically, its different areas of study. A complex process thanks to which sociology increasingly dialogues with the other social sciences and more.

The panorama of sociological education in Italy today is characterised by considerable diversification in planning and organisation. A further demonstration of this is provided by the secondary school, both by the inclusion of Sociology as a taught subject, but also by the recognition of a sociology degree as an access qualification for teaching. In addition, *SOcietà Italiana di Sociologia* (SOIS) [Italian Society of Sociology] has recently put forward a proposal to include the sociologist in schools as a professional figure (Perino & Savonardo, 2015) capable of dealing with the most topical social issues and providing young people with the tools to face them.[20]

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[20] See the SOIS website at the link: http://www.societaitalianasociologia.it/2022/ (The Professional Figure of the Sociologist).

Declarations

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