CONTRIBUTO TEORICO

Valutare la formazione degli insegnanti della scuola secondaria. Le opinioni degli insegnanti specializzati alla SSIS dell'Università di Bologna

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ABSTRACT ITALIANO

La valutazione delle competenze in ambito professionale è tema di grande rilievo in molti contesti lavorativi, soprattutto laddove vengono messe in campo professionalità ad alto impatto sociale.
L'insegnamento costituisce, a questo proposito, uno degli ambiti più interessanti e, allo stesso tempo, maggiormente problematici. Si tratta di una professione che vive da decenni – insieme all'intero sistema di istruzione – una profonda crisi dal punto di vista sociale e culturale, soprattutto all'interno del nostro paese; essa tuttavia continua a rappresentare l'elemento cruciale per la promozione e l'innalzamento della qualità della scuola e, proprio per questo motivo, la professione docente necessita di una particolare cura nella costruzione e nell'aggiornamento continuo delle sue competenze.
La progettazione e la realizzazione di seri percorsi di formazione iniziale e formazione in servizio degli insegnanti rappresentano obiettivi imprescindibili all'interno di un paese democratico il cui sistema scolastico voglia vincere la sfida dell'equità e della qualità (OECD, 2006).
In questo articolo, oggi ormai in corsa nella realizzazione della nuova formazione iniziale universitaria degli insegnanti delineata dal DM 249/2010 (con i corsi di laurea magistrale in Scienze della Formazione Primaria e l'attivazione dei Tirocini Formativi Attivi per gli insegnanti secondari), sono stati ripresi i risultati di una ricerca sugli specializzati alla SSIS dell'Ateneo bolognese, i quali riflettono sulle competenze professionali acquisite e la loro idea di buona professionalità docente, mettendo in rilievo punti di forza e di debolezza della formazione ricevuta e suggerendo ipotesi di miglioramento.

ENGLISH ABSTRACT

1. Introduction

In our country, the subject of pre-service teacher training has been widely debated for many years, discussed at political, cultural and mediatic level. Pre-service teacher training is brought up above all when the OECD results are published concerning international teaching indicators (OECD, 2006) or student competencies (OECD-PISA - Program for International Study Assessment, 2006), or again when public opinion and families demand that schools respond to the important social problems through specific programmes and activities.

The cause of the failures and problems of students are attributed above all, if not exclusively, to teachers, who are not recognised as sufficiently skilled in disciplinary, pedagogical and psychological areas and teaching methods and the responsibility for this lack of skills is often laid upon the lack of pre-serving training.

Involving both families, and more generally public opinion, as well as teachers and educational researchers, pre-service teacher training is an issue that is developed on three distinct levels: politics, education and empirical research.

This research project aims to investigate the issue of the professionalism of teachers, not as it is perceived from outside, by families, students and more generally in social terms, but for how it is perceived by the teachers themselves, who have recently completed their pre-service training.

This research paper therefore analyses the experience of the students who have frequented the Scuola di Specializzazione all'Insegnamento Secondario (hereinafter the SSIS[1]), the Secondary Teaching Specialisation School of the University of Bologna, the post-graduate course which provided pre-service training and teaching qualification until two years ago. The research is not limited to the verification of the satisfaction of future teachers in the received training, but has rather sought to see its effects on their professionalism and their positive attitude towards innovation.

2. Theorical framework

The problem lying behind this research concerns pre-service teacher training and its effect on the construction of the teaching profession and the attitudes of young teachers towards innovation and quality in schools and teaching.

The results of empirical research on teachers – which began in the historical-cultural context of 1968 and continues today – outlines the most general theoretical framework (Barbagli, Dei, 1969; Cobalti, Dei, 1979; Cavalli, 1992; 2000; Cavalli, Argentin, 2010) of this research.

More particularly, the investigations carried out in the educational field (Gattullo et al.: 1981; 1990; 1992; Vertecchi, 1996; Benvenuto, Rescalli, Visalberghi, 2000; Galliani, Felisatti, 2000) – aimed to described the variables which define the teaching profession and to analyse the aspects which characterise the practices of teachers, their awareness of their own role and functions in a public, democratic school, their implicit motivations, the obstacles which limit them in the realisation of innovative teaching, the set of repercussions which their pre-service and in-service training has had on their profession – represent the main reference point for this study.

The study of the research available in the international field has, finally, offered an insight into how the relationship between teacher training and renewal in schools cannot in any way be considered direct and unequivocal (Kagan, 1992; Hardgreaves, 1994; Wideen, 1998; Eurydice, 2001; 2002; 2003; OECD, 2005). the complexity of the aspects which govern school systems is great, and establishes the teacher training variable in relation to organisational, management and bureaucratic factors which often hinder innovation and lead teachers to face innovation with resistant attitudes, due more than anything to "implicit" pedagogical convictions rather than ideological or political principles.

In the theorical framework of this research, pre-service teacher training has therefore been interpreted as effective when it is able to link pedagogical and teaching theories with effective teaching practices, establishing conditions, methods and times for constructing a theory which helps the future teacher to reflect on his or her own professional experiences, looking for the reasons behind his/her practices and, at the same time, to directly experiment, in a not only methodological but also theoretical perspective of action research (Corda Costa & Meghnagi, 1990; Marczely, 1999; Beijaard, Verloop, Vermut, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Britzman, 2003).
In this respect, reference was also made to models proposed in adult education theories, an area in which teacher training must be placed as adult training is effective – meaning that it effectively leads to change – only if it affects the considered subject in the individual conditions of his/her daily working life, in order to provoke intellectual stimulation, and a drive towards independent thought about his/her actions (Marczely, 1999).

3. The research hypothesis

The consideration of the hypothesis of the research was developed starting from a hoped-for image of a new teaching professionalism (Altet, Charlier, Paquay, Perrenoud, 2006; Damiano 2004) which led to a focus on dependent macro-variables, studied through the delivery of a questionnaire and further investigated through the exploration of some key issues within a series of focus groups.
The main objective was to understand the attitudes and experiences of the specialist students concerning the teacher profile effectively developed at the SSIS: the opening of the teacher towards teaching innovation, his or her willingness to use the learned educational-pedagogic strategies, the will to continue to learn, attitude towards an idea of a democratic, quality school able to provide each and every pupil with the fundamental life skills of the active citizen in our society.
The variables studied fall into three main areas:
the assessment of the appropriateness of the SSIS curriculum compared to the teaching profession training;
the idea of school, educational attitudes towards it and the attitude towards change;
the conception of the competencies of a "good" teacher.
These three areas are closely interlinked, and connect the problem of pre-service training to the issue of teacher professionalism.
Many questions arise within each variable area, and each of these were debated by the specialist students of the University of Bologna.

To summarise, the questions which oriented the collection of data for each variable are described as follows:
a. the assessment of the appropriateness of the SSIS curriculum for teaching profession training;
what coherence to the specialist students see between the training curriculum used at the SSIS and the model of the ideal teacher?
Do they consider the training received at the SSIS useful and appropriate for exercising their profession?
Do they consider the training received in the specific curricular areas of the SSIS useful and appropriate?
What criticisms do they have if any concerning the SSIS curriculum?

b. Educational attitudes: the idea of school and attitude towards innovation

how far do the specialist students agree with the idea of school for natural talents and how far do they imagine a democratic school, which is able to challenge teaching to promote the learning of fundamental skills in all students in order to provide each one with the indispensable intellectual tools for living as a citizen?
how do they perceive change towards an idea of a better quality school: as something to play a leading role in, which is worth committing one's own professionalism to, or something to be expected, to demand from those governing the institute?

c. The concept of the profession, the "ideal" teacher
On the subject of the ideal teacher, we concentrated our questions on the skills of the teacher concerning, on one hand the teaching processes and on the other the products:
how much importance do the specialist students give to the skills used by the teacher in organisational and teaching processes at school (in joint planning, the management of the teaching-learning relationship, etc.)?
What importance does the product to be achieved hold, in terms of learning results of the pupils and student/family satisfaction?

Finally, the three variable areas were analysed in relation to:
personal variables connected to the training path of the specialist students,
variables considered as independent, such as:
Motivations for choosing to enter the teaching profession;
The commitment to and active participation in school life and their own in-service training;
Current professional satisfaction.
For reasons of brevity, here an in-depth study is made only of the results relative to the first variable area, concerning the assessment of the appropriateness of the SSIS curriculum compared to teaching profession training. For the other results please refer to the publication (Balduzzi, Vannini, 2008).

4. Methodological choices

In choosing the research tools and procedures, the questions posed by the quality-quantity debate were carefully considered and the double take method was chosen: on one hand, the phenomenon was reduced into variables, to allow comparison and discover significant correlations among the various indicators considered; on the other hand, in-depth exploration was privileged in order to highlight the wealth of experiences and find new ways of interpreting the quantitative data.
Over the past ten-fifteen years, international debate (for example see: Datta, 1994; Reichardt and Rallis, 1994; Tashakkori, Teddlie, 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Mertens, 2005) has increasingly underlined the need to reduce the emphasis placed on the comparison between old and new theoretical paradigms and the practicality of finding possible ways of integrating a quantitative-experimental approach with a phenomenological-qualitative approach.
Also on the Italian front, social and educational research (for example see: Pellerey, 1994; Calvani, 1998), some authors have highlighted the sterility of the opposition and excessive extremism between methodological approaches referring to different theoretical paradigms.
Internationally, in this regard, the possibilities for integration of the two approaches have been supported by several parties, even reaching the theories of the so-called mixed methods and mixed models (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Greene, 2008), based on the so-called paradigm of

pragmatism, the deepest roots of which were traced by Murphy (1990) and Cherryholmes (1992) in Dewey, as well as in C.S. Peirce and W. James. Within this emerging paradigm, the theory of compatibility among quantitative and qualitative approaches is proposed (Brannen, 2005; Tashakorri and Teddlie, 2003; Mertens, 1998; Mason, 2006; Irwin, 2006; Greene, 2008), also supported by the practical acknowledgement that, in fact, there are many researchers who, in their studies, combine different methodological approaches and refer, at different times in a research path, to different epistemological models.
In this research work, it was considered important to consider this far-reaching and complex debate and it was chosen to follow the route of dialogue and research of elements of compatibility among different visions of the world which – although intrinsically distant – very much more often than is realised need each other, mutually, to focus on the main questions that social and educational realities suggest to the human mind and which require the scientific community to face in order to improve knowledge and educational practice.
Therefore this research was built with a physiognomy which has combined in a single, global vision both the quantitative and qualitative approach. In the various phases we have constantly aimed, on one hand, to identify indicators and variables to be analysed in their mutual relations using statistical procedures; on the other hand, to define interpretative categories able to offer an interpretation of the gathered data. From a procedural point of view, a quantitative and a qualitative phase were distinguished: this operation allowed us to respond to the concrete organisational needs of the research and promoted the continuous process of deduction-induction, from the analytical data to the theoretical interpretation and from this to the study of specific relations among variables: all this, built using the constant and continuous comparison among researchers on the results gathered, and later, processed.

4.1 Study by questionnaire and the research sample

The quantitative investigation was carried out by postal questionnaire, sent to all specialist students of the SSIS in Bologna. The questionnaire comprised 21 questions (macro-variables) almost all with closed answers, and mostly proposed with a rating scale with four levels of agreement according to the methodology of the Likert scale (A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes, 1931). The questionnaire was structured in order to gather information concerning:

assigned variables (personal details, education, SSIS year and study course, etc..). Together with these, the variables which distinguish between those students currently employed in schools and those who do not yet have a teaching post;
independent variables (reasons for studying at the SSIS and current reason for teaching, satisfaction and professional commitment);
dependent variables: these were the principle area of study. They are:
a. assessment of the SSIS curriculum,
b. educational attitudes: the idea of school and attitude towards innovation;
c. the concept of the profession, the model of the ideal teacher

The statistical processing of the data was done using the statistics software SPSS/Windows; firstly an analysis was carried out of the frequencies, then applying the technique of factorial analysis to identify the main attitude scales. Concerning the three main variables of the research, the possible influences of the assigned variable and the independent variables were explored, both through cross-referencing and the linear regression technique.

Starting from the session of May-June 2001 up to the session of February-March 2006, the Bologna SSIS saw approximately 1550 specialist teachers; they come from the first five SSIS cycles activated starting from academic year 1999/20002. Of these, we managed to obtain 1302 postal addresses and sent the questionnaire out in September 2006. The receipt of the returned questionnaires ended in January 2007. 384 questionnaires were returned, equal to 29.5% of the total sent.
Concerning the distribution by cycle and by subject, the sample of 384 specialist students from Bologna was very representative (see table 1).

Table 1 – Comparison of Population-Sample by SSIS subject in which the qualification was awarded.

SUBJECT AREA	POPULATION	SAMPLE	POPULATION	SAMPLE
	N	N	%	%
AD (Art and Disign)	109	24	7,0	6,3
FIM (Physics Computing Mathematic)	261	70	16,9	18,2
LL (Literary Language)	600	141	38,8	36,6
LS (Foreign Languages)	138	**43**	8,9	**11,2**
MS (Music and Entertainment)	65	11	4,2	2,9
SM (Movement Sciences)	104	**18**	6,7	**4,7**
SN (Natural Sciences)	136	**48**	8,8	**12,5**
SU (Human Sciences)	132	26	8,5	6,8
T (Technology)	1	0	0,1	0
EG (Economic Law)	1	1	0,1	0.3
Missing	--	2	--	0,5
Total	1547	384	100,0	100,0

4.2 Qualitative survey through focus groups

As far as the qualitative study is concerned, this was carried out continuously alongside the quantitative survey, studying further some aspects that were dealt with in the postal questionnaire.
The focus group was chosen for data collection as it seemed to be the most appropriate tool for receiving an overall assessment of the training path. The group work in fact stimulated the memory of the specialist students and promoted clarification and expression (Zammuner, 2003). For this reason it was decided to form groups with a small number of participants, a maximum of six, and to prefer the Questioning Route to the Topic guide in the management of the group. In fact, some of the advantages offered by the Questioning Route are: - promoting the construction of a confidential climate; - identifying the issues to be discussed clearly and unequivocally. It also promotes the analysis of texts, making the questions fairly standard, particularly when (as in this case) not all the focus groups can be run by the same researcher (Krueger,1997).
To select the focus group participants, we contacted those specialist students who, during their studies at the SSIS, had volunteered as representatives of the various subject groups. The initial list contained 98 names, which we contacted by telephone. Of these, 35 were willing to participate in the research. 4 focus groups were created, each lasting 80 minutes, to which however only 14 privileged witnesses participated, despite the recall for confirmation on the day prior to the meeting for each group.

The conductor of the focus groups gave a short description of the objectives of the whole research project and assured the guarantee of anonymity and aggregated analysis of the data (Krueger, 1997; Zammuner, 2003), then led the discussion following the outline given in figure 1.
All the meetings were recorded using an audio support and derecorded in an integral, literal manner. In addition to the conductor, an observer was present at the meetings who made some field notes (using paper and pencil), later used to integrate the study of data.
The protocols obtained in this way were analysed both in lexical terms, using the T-lab test analysis software, and in hermeneutic terms. At the first level we analysed the repeated segments, the co-occurrences, the characteristic words, the concordances. At the second level the analysis aimed at the interpretation of the protocols in order to make some common and transversal categories emerge.

Figure 1 – Method of leading the focus group.

Opening question: «Could you tell me your Subject Area and your specialization class?»
Introductory stimulus: « Imagine that, at beginning of your SSIS specialisation school that you finished some years ago, you had received an empty bag, the bag of teacher's tools»
Key question 1: «What did you imagine you would have filled your bag with?»
Key question 2: «What have you actually filled your bag with?»
Key question 3: «In your opinion, what qualities should have the ideal teacher? What would it be his/her professional description?»
Key question 4: «Has your bag being filled with some tools through the experience in schools? If so, which ones?»
Final question: «Why did you choose to become a teacher? Would you choose the same today?»

5. Assessment of the SSIS curriculum: main results

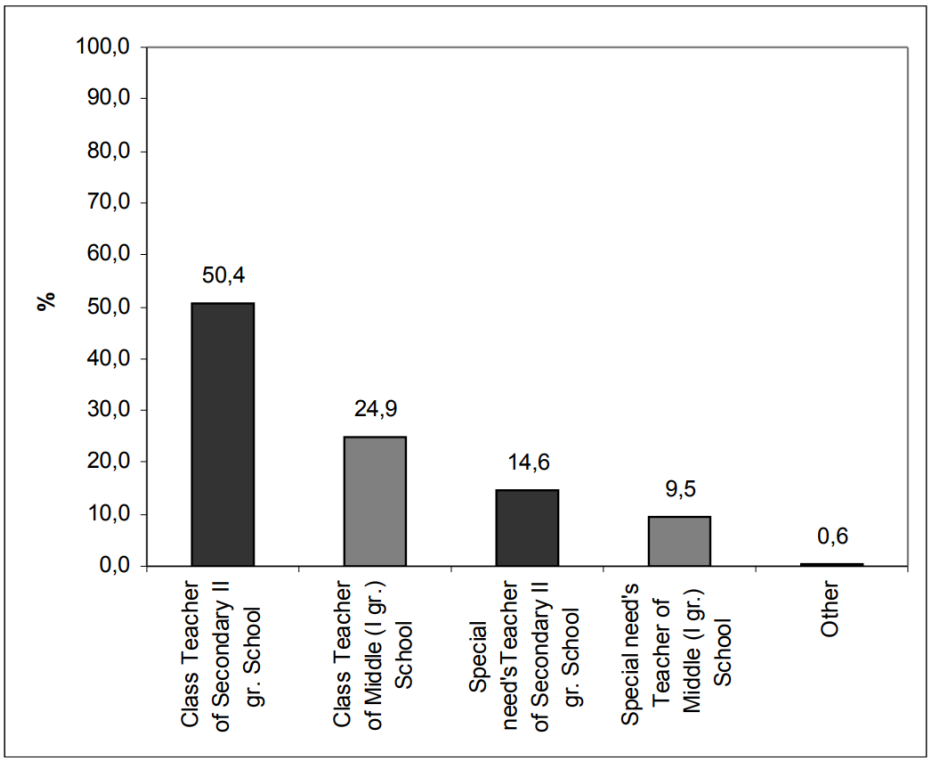
As previously underlined, the two following paragraphs describe the main results concerning the assessments of the specialist students concerning the appropriateness of the SSIS curriculum for teaching profession training. This area of variables is first described in quantitative terms through the findings of the questionnaire; the interpretation hypotheses emerging as a result of the quantitative tool is further explored and studied through the analysis of the answers given by the specialist students during the focus groups.

5.1 Quantitative analysis of the results of the questionnaire

To provide a basic outline of the sample characteristics, the data highlighted that most of the specialist students in the sample (93%) already has a teaching position at school: mostly as class teachers in II grade secondary schools, as shown in graph 1.
The specialist students responding to the survey have an average age of 34, and work mainly in state schools (92%): many of them have yearly supply contracts (63%), only a small part with indeterminate contracts (16%), and the rest with temporary supply contracts. Cross-referencing has highlighted that the stable work contracts increase with age and years of service of the teachers, as well as with the qualification score received.
Compared to their pre-service training path, the specialist students obtained a high degree score (an average of 107.7 out of 110) and an excellent professional qualification score (average 77 out of 80 points).
From the point of view of motivation and professional commitment, the research data highlights

– and here identifies only some basic aspects – two main trends:
- on one hand, the specialist figure emerges – most often female, and more frequently older – who has chosen teaching for reasons linked to the desire to get involved in school and to actively participate in the education field (the motivation category was called dynamicity, innovation, commitment); this figure tends to have a vision of teaching as a social and public function and is generally "involved" in the active participation in school life and the development of their own professional skills. Often they are also satisfied with their own interpersonal experiences in the school they teach in;
- on the other hand, we find a specialist teacher – generally younger – who has chosen teaching according to vocational aims and for the pleasure of teaching, or more often, reason linked to the need for autonomy and low levels of commitment. These view teaching in a more functional manner and value private aspects, of personal pleasure or opportunities for their own family and cultural life. In this case their generally average-low attitude towards active commitment to schools is particularly significant.

Graph 1 – Teaching roles in secondary schools
(percentage distribution of only teachers - N = 357)



Concerning the assessments made by the specialist students of the sample relative to the SSIS curriculum, two kinds of questions were asked: on one hand, the main question of the appropriateness of the university curriculum for the development of the professional profile of the teacher; on the other hand, the question concerning the assessment of the specific curricular areas of the SSIS: the Common Area (with its specific subject modules), the Subject Area (considering the historical-epistemological subjects, teaching subjects and laboratories), the internships and the specialisation thesis.

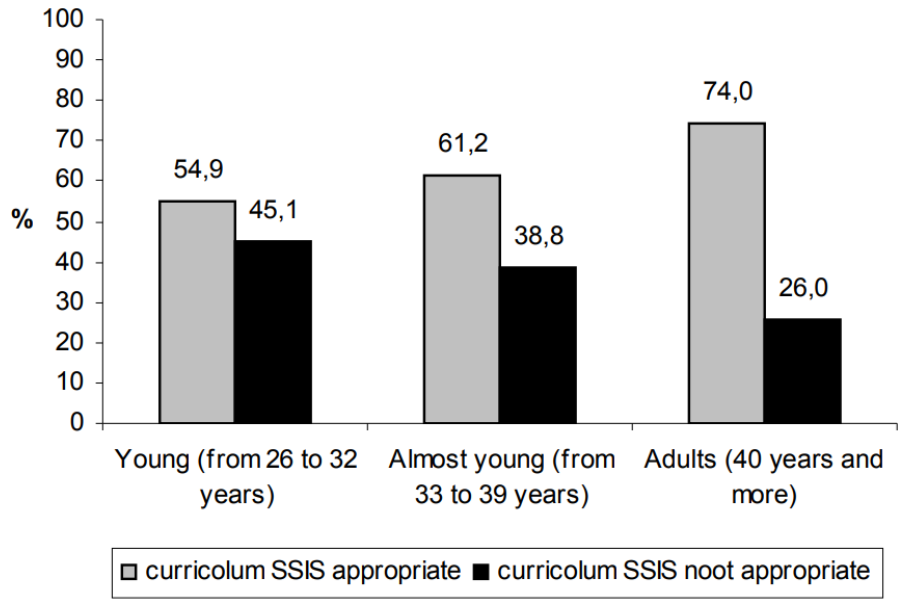
As far as the overall opinion of the SSIS curriculum was concerned, 60% of the specialist students considered the SSIS training programme very or fairly appropriate (see table 2). However, the declarations of appropriateness, as can be seen, tend to be veiled (approx. 53% fairly compared to 7% very); to this we have to add, even if only 7% stated that they were totally unsatisfied (curriculum not at all appropriate) almost 33% highlight some elements of criticality in the training received.

Compared to the attributed variables, the opinions of appropriateness/inappropriateness of the SSIS curriculum depends mainly on the age variable (see graph 2), in that the older specialist students who have spent more time in schools (and who, partly, have more stable work contracts: with differences of up to 15 % between those with an annual or indeterminate contract and those with only temporary contracts) tend to consider the training curriculum they followed more appropriate than the younger ones.

Table 2 – Percentage distribution (and in absolute values) of the answeres concerning the appropriateness of the SSIS curriculum for professional training of teachers in the sample of responding specialist students (N = 380).

Is curriculum SSIS useful for teacher training?	Freq.	%
Very	26	6,8
Fairly	203	53,4
Little	124	32,6
Not at all	27	7,1
Total	380	100,0

Graph 2 –Opinion of the appropriateness of the SSIS curriculum according to the age of the teachers (N=372)



There are no correlations between other personal variables nor with variables concerning the type of school context they work in (state of private school, teaching subject). The only emerging incidence, which is maybe obvious, is that of the variable concerning the score achieved by the teachers on graduation from the SSIS: those with an excellent score consider the SSIS to be much more appropriate to their professional training (69%) compared to those with lower scores (55%).

Concerning the specific curricular areas, the respondents were asked to provide an assessment both from the personal interest point of view that the areas aroused in their being subjects of study, and concerning their effective usefulness on the professional development as teachers (see table 3).

More specifically, we may make two kinds of consideration.
First of all, we can see that there is a league table of the different areas: the most appreciated is the internship, followed by the various activities in the Subject Area, then the psychological subjects of the Common Area, the pedagogic and teaching activities of the Common Area with again less interest, and finally the socio-anthropological subjects. These assessments lead first of all to think about what kind of didactics the SSIS needs in order to motivate the interest of the specialist student towards learning, which first of all underlines the need for practical spheres. We certainly need to consider that the interest for a subject not only depends on its didactic transposition, but also is partly intrinsic to the structure of the subject itself, but this however cannot let us ignore the importance of a commitment by the SSIS teachers to respond to the needs of their students for seeing in practice, for understanding the didactic effects of the theoretic teaching they receive.

Table 3 – Percentage of interest and usefulness (only "very" and "fairly" categories) for the different training activities in the SSIS curriculum.

Training activities	**Very and fairly intersting** (%)	**Very and fairly useful** (%)	**Correlation** (r)
	N min 378 N max 381	N min 372 N max 382	
Pedagogical disciplines Common Area.....	60,4	51,6	0,71
Teaching disciplines Common Area.....	57,6	51,5	0,66
Psychological disciplines Common Area.....	68,8	54,5	0,66
Socio-anthropological disciplines Common Area.....	52,5	35,4	0,68
History-epistemological disciplines Specialisation Area.	70,1	51,1	0,72
Didactis of teaching subjects Specialisation Area.....	74,7	71,7	0,77
Laboratories of Didactis Specialisation Area.....	73,0	71,1	0,73
Internship activities.....	86,1	85,1	0,73
Thesis	73,5	57,3	0,67
Addtional studies of special education..... *(only for those who have attended it)*	72,0 (N=150)	76,2 (N=147)	0,81

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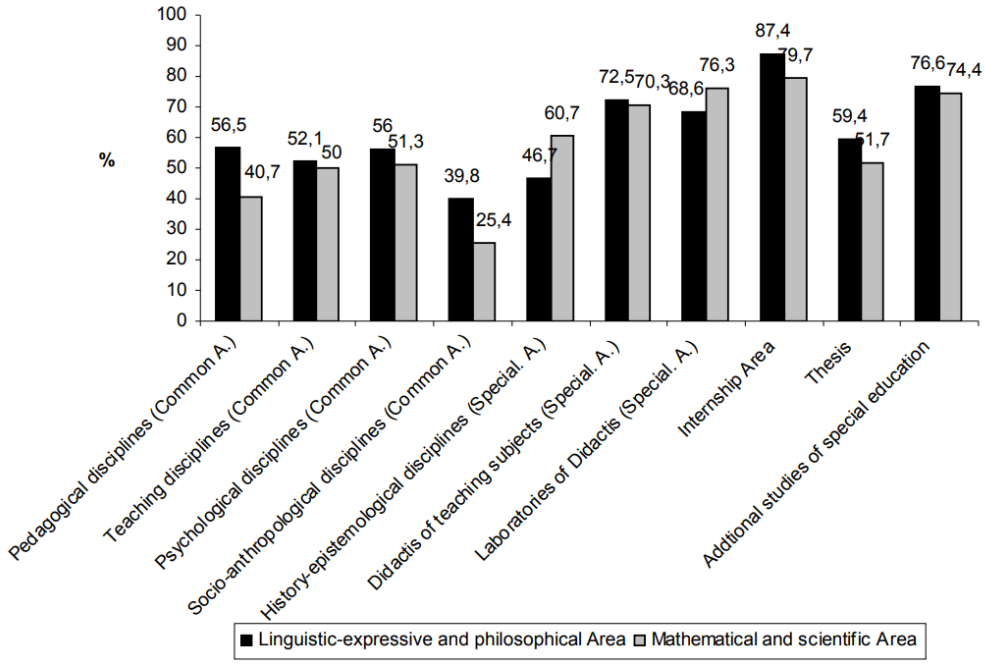
Secondly, we can see how in general, despite the very high and significant correlation values between interest and usefulness – all the training activities are considered more interesting than useful: as far as the methodological, laboratory and practical areas (internship) are concerned, the deviation between interest and usefulness tends to almost disappear; while for the more theoretic activities (including the Common Area didactics) a lower deviation is always noted.
Concerning the variables which can influence the assessment of the specialist students, we were able to verify a certain incidence in the Subject Area, but only if this is considered as containing two large categories: the linguistic – philosophic – expressive subjects, on one hand, and the mathematic – scientific subjects on the other.

Concerning these groups, as can be seen in graph 3, two fairly constant trends emerge: on one hand we can see that the usefulness of the pedagogic, didactic, psychological, socio-anthropologic subjects of the Common Area are more perceived by the specialists of the linguistic-philosophical -expressive areas than those in the scientific-mathematic areas; on the other hand, the usefulness of the training activities in the Subject Area (only as far as historical – epistemological subjects and the didactic subject laboratories are concerned) are perceived more by the science and maths specialist students.
This is a first element which not only describes a different trend between the answers of the specialist students belonging to different teaching areas, but also identifies aspects of usefulness/ uselessness perceived internally in the two SSIS areas: Common Area and Subject Area. The hypothesis emerging is that the different teachings in the Common Area – despite the greater criticism they received overall concerning their usefulness in training – are more able to speak using the language of those with a humanistic type education linked to the literary, historical, philosophical, artistic fields and less to those with a scientific education. An almost reverse trend can be seen concerning some of the training activities in the Subject Area. However, the teaching subjects deviate from these considerations, both general (in the Common Area) and subject-related (Subject Area), where the differences between the specialist students are much less evident.



Graph 3 – Usefulness of the various curricular activities in the SSIS according to the subject area of the specialist student

It is certainly not easy to interpret this data, however the aforementioned hypothesis may possibly be better specified if we consider the different training activities provided by the SSIS in terms of their familiarity/unfamiliarity with the training received previously by the specialist students of the sample: the pedagogic, psychological and socio-anthropologic subjects use conceptual categories that are certainly closer to those with a humanistic background; the historical – epistemological subjects and subject laboratories are however different, as these insist more on aspects such as method, systematicality, scientific procedure of historical and empirical research.
This interpretation allows us to understand the peculiarity of didactic subjects (both in the Common Area, and the Subject Area) which receive the same level of appreciation, both by specialist students with humanistic education and those with a scientific background.; almost as if these didactic subjects spoke a new language which all categories of specialist students feel a strong need to understand, "how to put the theory into practice", and this need appears to be better responded to by didactic subjects than by general subjects.
To understand the assessment of the specialist students compared to the usefulness of the different areas of the SSIS curriculum, the factorial analysis technique was applied to the sample answers; two fairly well defined factors emerged, covering almost 60% of the variance (59.5%), highlighting the presence of two fairly distinct visions which have felt the usefulness more of the Common Area (factor 1) and those who felt the Subject Area to be more (factor 2) useful.
The saturation coefficients of the two factors are shown in table 4; as can be seen, almost all are very high, with the exception of the internship and the specialisation thesis, which are divided between the two factors, although they area more correlated with the Subject Area.
Table 4 – Matrix of components resulting from the factorial analysis of the items concerning the "usefulness of the SSIS training areas" – Varimax method

	Components	
	F1 - Common Area	F2 – Specialisation Area
Usefulness Pedagogical discipline (Common Area)	,875	
Usefulness Psychological discipline (Common Area)	,831	
Usefulness Socio-anthropological discipline (Common Area)	,764	
Utility Teaching discipline (Common Area)	,751	
Usefulness Laboratories of Didactis (Specialisation Area)		,827
Usefulness Didactis of teaching subjects (Specialisation Area)		,824
Usefulness History-epistemological disciplines (Specialisation Area)		,676
Usefulness Thesis		,573
Usefulness Internship activities		,473

A linear regression analysis was applied to the two factors to verify the correlation of each one with the variables considered independent.
The most significant regression model identified describes a situation for which those who feel the Common Area subjects to be most useful are also those who have a teaching-linked motivation of dynamicity, innovation and commitment; they also specialised at a later age and often belong to the linguistic-expressive-philosophic subject field.
The second factor, "Usefulness of the Subject Area", did not highlight any clear correlations with any variables and no regression model offers a significant interpretation. This therefore appears to be a transversal factor; as if the usefulness of the Subject Area (obviously together with the internship), for the high percentage of agreements obtained, represented more than anything a transversal element for all categories of specialist students.

In conclusion, and very briefly, the assessments of the SSIS curriculum highlight, by the vast majority of subjects in the sample, a strong interest firstly for the internship activities and, then, for practical and application-based knowledge correlated to their own subject area, acquired during the subject didactics and easily spendable in the school context. Within this more general view, a

group of specialist students can be identified who most appreciated the value of the conceptual and methodological categories offered in the Common Area; these are older specialists (in terms of age and, therefore also teaching experience in schools) and with an educational background closed to the humanist field and who went into teaching with a motivation more open to change and commitment.

These considerations led to a critical reflection in particular on who teaching is done in the Common Area and the reasons why it seems to affect only a part of the specialist students.
In international debate, the skills that the Common Area sets out to develop (knowing how to place the educational processes within a scientifically based pedagogic framework; knowing how to trace the purpose of school within an historical, pedagogic and sociological perspective of education; knowing how to read the training needs of adolescents and their learning strategies from the viewpoint of the psychology of development and learning; knowing how to critically use their own theoretical knowledge to interpret phenomena such as interculturality, disability, gender diversity,…; knowing how to interpret the teaching function in a perspective of professionalism and competency; implementing different didactic methodologies and placing them within the specific perspectives of theoretical reference; understanding the meaning and the methods of design, assessment, teamwork within the school) are considered essential for the construction of a professional teacher profile, capable of critical thought, competent and autonomous in identifying the purposes, objectives and methodologies, able to self-assess and think about their own actions.
So why has this Area of the SSIS curriculum been hindered in being fully accepted by the young teachers in training.
One reason concerns the fact that the curricular organisation of the SSIS Common Area has been drastically fragmented in terms of knowledge, distributed over various teaching modules and a joint design which has not always aimed to integrate the different modules; this has possibly contributed to creating an image for the specialist students of a rather disorganic curricular area, the effects of which on the professionalism of teaching are not perceived.
However, trying to follow the statistical correlations highlighted by the data analysis, a further hypothetical path leads us to connect the criticalities highlighted by the specialist students in the teachings of the Common Area to the language used by the educational science teachers to communicate – through words and attitudes – with the young teachers they are training. In other words, we think it may be important to investigate the image of the specialist student targeted by the Common Area. As we can see, they are most commonly graduates in humanistic subjects, who can more easily share the language and theoretical-philosophical references of educational science, ready to understand its specific scientific value. And again: they are more frequently mature teachers and therefore probably more aware of their own professional choices and with a well-defined motivation for teaching, well thought out and which can be traced to an idea of the teacher as a professional, aware of their own public function and the importance their own teaching activities can have in the renewal of the school.
Following this hypothesis, the risk which unfolds is that of a Common Area which is able to communicate only with some specialist students, taking for granted the characteristics which the others do not have, or do not have yet.
The thought this triggers, and which was also explored in the focus groups, is that of the need to rethink the teaching processes of the Common Area (but also in the other areas), starting from the characteristics and main training needs highlighted by the young teachers, without taking anything for granted and defining the competent and professional teacher figure as the target to be

reached rather than a starting point. The specialist students – now in school – still highlight basic needs, such as clarity and security over the function of the teacher in the secondary school, what their institutional tasks are, the obligatory markers and areas of autonomy, what are the main practical problems they will face when they first enter the school. Pre-service training therefore requires a language that is as clear as possible, referring to concrete examples, open to dialogue, discussion, able to help them to define their professional choice and gradually face pedagogical, psychological, sociological and anthropologic questions in a critical and problematic manner, but also able to communicate important assurances over the choices that every teacher must and can make in the classroom and in the schools, despite the climate of disorientation and insecurity which is inherent in schools and the teacher figure today.

5.2 Qualitative analysis of the results of the focus group

For reasons of brevity, here below we have offered only a hermeneutical analysis of the data concerning the assessment of the curriculum delivered compared to that expected.

5.2.1 Becoming a teacher: training expectations.

The answers given to the first key question highlight the different types of expectations expressed by the specialist students: bureaucratic and educational.

The bureaucratic expectations are those expressed by those who acknowledged the fact that the SSIS had become the only channel for accessing teaching and therefore signed up in this spirit of someone following the umpteenth bureaucratic procedure.

‹‹Erano appena finiti i concorsi quindi l'unica strada che avevamo per entrare in graduatoria e abilitarci era fare il corso quindi… punto. Non l'abbiamo fatto per dire "ah chissà che cosa ci darà!", ci siamo iscritti perché era l'unica strada per arrivare ad insegnare….›› (2, F2)

‹‹Mi sono iscritta un po' così, perché anch'io mi sono iscritta un po' così perché bisognava farlo, perché era un percorso che portava all'abilitazione… …››(3, F4)

Analysing the answers given by the specialist students expressing training expectations, three large areas of skill and ability the students expected to acquire during the specialisation course emerged.

The first area is that which we have called instrumental competencies and which pools together all those skills which allow a teacher to use frameworks of activity which are pertinent to the needs of the context and therefore to carry it his/her job. These competencies substantially coincide with those defined in the "expert-artisan" teacher (Altet et al.; P Paquay and Wagner, 1996errenoud, 2002); they can be acquired through the analysis of expert systems.

‹‹Quello che mi sarei aspettato, prima di arrivare alla SSIS, era disporre di una serie di strumenti che mi insegnassero a insegnare e (a farlo) diversamente rispetto a chi non aveva frequentato la SSIS, almeno una forma di distinzione da chi aveva fatto solo il concorso››. (1,F1)

‹‹Direi, strategie di insegnamento, come gestire la classe, come insegnare al meglio in maniera efficace perché gli studenti ascoltino e apprendano, proprio in termini pratici, come predisporre la lezione in modo più efficace possibile e indubbiamente come programmare l'anno scolastico. ›› (2, F1)

‹‹Mi aspettavo…, io insegnavo già, mi aspettavo di riuscire ad avere degli strumenti in più, vedere nuove strategie e a altre cose per variare le lezioni, mi aspettavo molto di più di come organizzare un tempo, il tempo della lezione, come variarla rispetto agli argomenti. ›› (4, F2)

This group also covers competencies relative to being able to programme teaching activities, the choice and organisation of learning objectives, the selection and organisation of contents, the identification of the most effective methods and the most pertinent verification and assessment tools. In structuring their teaching activities, some specialist students underline the centrality of subject contents, others rather place the focus on the definition of purposes and objectives. In the responses, often teaching objectives were placed in relation to the needs of the pupils. From this we can see the specialist students' wider educational vision than that which emerges when focusing on the subject. Starting from pupil needs seems to be linked not only to what is learned but above all how it is learned, offering student-teaching strategy axis which almost overlaps with that of the teacher-subject content.

‹‹ Io invece, piuttosto che le emozioni, la disciplina, il cosa insegnare, era il come insegnare. Io avevo l'attesa di potermi arricchire di strumenti didattici dove la didattica ti aiutava proprio nella comunicazione, nel dare motivazioni, nel capire che cosa volevano i ragazzi nel momento in cui, magari, quell'argomento non li interessa. ›› (4, F3)

The second area is that we have called relational competencies. These are linked to the need to manage very heterogeneous classes in terms of student age, sex and above all ethnic and cultural background and the presence, judged by the specialist students as increasing, of cases of psychological problems and problems linked to the students' poor learning capacity and attention . On key word emerges more than any other in this area: motivate. The specialist students underline the need to learn to motivate the students to learn, above all the more difficult ones, and identify the capacity to motivate within the relationship with the students, and knowing how to communicate with them in an authentic, empathic manner.

‹‹Nei momenti critici, dove ti rendi conti che i contenuti non sono sempre fruibili, o comunque per come sono proposti non solo fruibili dai ragazzi, una lezione si può fare con qualsiasi cosa però, ecco, le chiavi per aprile le porte della motivazione, se dobbiamo cercare qualcosa da mettere nella borsa…›› (1, F2)

‹‹ Come interessare, cioè come motivare, come giocare alla motivazione, la chiave per accendere la motivazione e la motivazione-attenzione. Quindi l'idea è: riempirò questa borsa con delle capacità, delle chiavi di apertura …›› (2, F4).

The third area of competence the specialist students expected to learn is that which we have called bureaucratic competencies. This heading covers many aspects, from the way of filling in registers to the preparation of applications to request human resources and materials, to the ability to manage the statutory tasks and responsibilities linked to the teacher's legal status.

‹‹ Non so come dirlo, come affrontare burocraticamente la scuola, cioè le cose da compilare, tipo i registri, i progetti, ma anche le cose più semplici, i moduli per le uscite piuttosto che un permes-

so…›› (1, F2)

‹‹ …la mia aspettativa era proprio che mi insegnassero tutta la parte legislativa, tutta la parte burocratica, tutta la parte proprio molto diversa da me quindi: quali sono gli obiettivi di un collegio docenti, di un consiglio di circolo, di un consiglio di classe;, i rapporti fra adulti, tra i colleghi, la varia piramide (vice preside, vicario, queste cose qui) e tutta la legge sulla scuola, tutti gli orientamenti, perché e percome…›› (2, F3)

One issue that was transversal to all the answers given by the specialist students is the idea that being a student at the SSIS, even when this is seen as a burden and heavy going obligation compared to the previous recruiting procedures, represents an opportunity to be a new and innovative teacher, able to be different from the traditional teacher model, who teaches above all in a transmissive manner privileging class-front lessons.

5.2.2 Becoming a teacher: implementing the training path.

Asked for an overall assessment of the skills acquired at the SSIS, the answers produced highlight some dissatisfaction over the path followed.
The element perceived as particularly dissatisfying in the proposed curriculum is linked to what was perceived as an excessively theoretical dimension of the delivered training. Many specialist students highlight the need to reduce the space dedicated to lessons and to increase that destined for the practical dimension of learning: laboratory work and internship. The excessively abstract nature and a didactic method described as “too academic” are defects attributed both to the Common Area and Subject Area teachers.
The element perceived as the greatest strength of the SSIS curriculum is the discovery of the relational and historicised dimension of teaching, above all by those specialist students who had not followed any specific teacher training courses during their degree courses. The importance of the group dimension was attributed to both the work of the students but above all that of the teachers who, in addition to belonging to a subject area, understand the need to share the basic steps of activity planning. The practical internship experience is recognised by almost all the privileged witnesses as the strength of the SSIS, its fulcrum, the moment in which they really learn how a teacher works, more so than in a university learning environment or even in a laboratory.
The element indicated by almost all the privileged witnesses as central to the SSIS experience is the possibility given by experiencing the school reality first-hand.
The criticism aimed at the SSIS, above all that of excessive abstraction, also appear congruent with the expectations expressed by the specialist students: at the time of signing up at the school, they generally expected to learn to become teaching professionals, therefore hopes to learn a career, and in that sense, to acquire technical and methodological tools rather than conceptual categories. Furthermore, for some specialist students, learning “how to do” translated into the idea of finding a kind of “handbook” , particularly for the didactic subjects, to be used to solve the problems they expected to meet in school, partly through direct experience, partly from experiences given by others. The specialist students complain that the subjects and the teachers they met offered them not so much the stereotypical resolution of some types of problems but rather turned them into different problems, placing the questions, once again, more on a theoretical level than an operative one.

‹‹Tra le cose che mi aspettavo quella che mi è mancata è stata l’ultima parte, cioè il fatto che non

sono state legate all'insegnamento della mia materia, della disciplina, ma mi è mancato l'aspetto relazionale, non so come dirlo, nel senso abbiamo fatto un percorso, un percorso molto astratto, quello che non ho trovato è stato proprio, anche nel periodo del tirocinio ad esempio, avere una visione completa, toccare con mano le dinamiche all'interno di una classe a livello relazionale, perché penso che l'insegnamento parta da quello per poi arrivare alle discipline. Cioè, anche i casi visti e immaginati erano troppo astratti rispetto a quelli che ho trovato nella realtà in cui mi sono trovata..›› (4, F1)

‹‹Secondo me, io sono stata, mi ricordo che negli anni in cui ho fatto la SSIS ero molto critica, mi aspettavo cose diverse, secondo me è mancato in quell'epoca il coordinamento tra vari settori, forse perché eravamo ancora al II ciclo, e poi anche il fatto che le persone che insegnavano avevano provenienze molto diverse, quindi alcuni erano insegnanti di secondaria di II grado, quindi davano delle indicazioni più pratiche, altri erano docenti universitari a cui veniva chiesto di punto in bianco di fare corsi per la SSIS, quindi necessariamente di dare un tipo di insegnamento di tipo più astratto teorico, più da università. .›› (2, F1)

From the words of the specialist students, what we feel is an interesting difficulty emerges: it would appear that many doubts and problems met with and expressed, both in the questionnaire and the focus group, concentrate on the impossibility, above all for those following the SSIS course with no prior teaching experience, to imagine themselves in a specific working context, which was translated into great difficulties when the then-specialist students or neo-specialist students faced their internships or first school posts. These mixed feelings of fear and insecurity emerge, although in different ways and strengths, in many protocols: more than one witness expressed the unsatisfied need for stories, narration, true stories which would have allowed them to imagine – and imagine themselves in future operative situations, working on the field.

‹‹A me sono proprio mancati magari i racconti di come è la scuola, cioè, io l'ho vista al tirocinio ma la sto imparando ora nel senso che… in un certo senso l'ho comunque dovuta imparare sul campo perché certe cose ho sbagliato, le sto sbagliando magari ancora e imparo e le raddrizzo a seconda dell'esperienza rispetto a quello che mi aspettavo e a quello che ho avuto dalla SSIS. Io non posso dire di essere stata contenta perché a me sono mancate tante cose ›› (1, F2)

These comments seem emblematic and particularly significant in terms of the above, as it leads to a two-fold interpretation: on one hand, in fact, we can accept the particularly critical and disappointed view of the teacher who made the comment, and assure the excessive abstraction of the path as a negative feature. On the other hand, however, we believe that the words used are also an index of the meta-cognitive process which, however partially aware, valorises the methodological, reflective and hermeneutical dimension offered by some SSIS teachings (precisely the "abstract" and excessively "university-style" ones) both in terms of pedagogic theorisation and in terms of educational and teaching planning. The criticism made of the training path concentrates on the fact that abstract competencies are acquired, categories through which it is possible to interpret a reality which, during the course, was known little if not at all. However, when we enter the world of work and finally come into contact with "real school", it is precisely these so strongly criticised categories and theoretical elements which become slowly necessary to read and interpret the material and relational context and try to respond to the problems in operative terms. The real "hunger" for practical learning finds confirmation in the fact that internship is the modu-

le which received most confirmation and appreciation: not only do the specialist students define it as the most significant experience in their training path but many ask for it to be increased in terms of both hours and number of contexts, and in terms of organisation.

‹‹Il tirocinio è la parte migliore di tutti i due anni: ottimo Tutor ed ancora meglio il supervisore: un supervisore eccezionale che faceva lezione solo per noi, ulteriori oltre a quelle che dovevamo fare; le cose che ho imparato le devo a questa professoressa, molto molto brava, a cui devo moltissimo…›› (3, F4)

The first hand experience of the school world is so important that the specialist students hypothesise the expansion of the internship to allows them to come into contact with different grades and subjects, experimenting both 1st and 2nd grade secondary schools, lyceums, technical and professional institutes, and being able to observe more teachers at work.

‹‹2 – La possibilità di vedere più insegnanti all'opera, più metodi, di entrare di più nelle classi:, qui c'è questo problema lo abbiamo affrontato così, qui c'è quest'altro problema, non sappiamo risolverlo
3 – forse perché pensavano di fare cosa buona e giusta, i tirocinanti sono stati indirizzati in classi in situazioni, diciamo, tranquille, se vogliamo chiamarle, in situazioni dove non c'era eterogeneità, in situazioni facili, tra virgolette… indubbiamente lei ha ragione, perché io mi metto nei suoi panni, la cosa più importante è vedere più situazioni, più metodi, perché ognuno sostiene il suo insegnamento, ognuno dà delle soluzioni diverse dei problemi, perché non è che abbiamo la bacchetta magica…›› (2 & 3, F3)

‹‹1 – Poi devo dire un'altra cosa sul tirocinio, che appunto, come dicevo prima, mi ha lasciato molto; se potessi proporre un perfezionamento sarebbe il fatto che, magari non a discapito ma anche rimodellando un po' tutta la parte teorica, venisse potenziato, e ci fosse la possibilità di vedere, anche facendo un solo progetto, però di poter stare insieme a più di un docente. Direi neanche due, tre, perché due si conferma polarità tre no e sicuramente sarebbe utile indipendentemente dalla qualità del docente perché indubbiamente vedere anche un cattivo insegnante può essere di esempio…
2 – anch'io concordo sul tirocinio e aggiungerei, al di là delle difficoltà oggettive, io proporrei anche tipi di scuole diverse, perché la mia tutor era molto brava, mi ha insegnato molte cose, però lavorando sul liceo linguistico con classi piccole di studenti molto motivati, cioè non ho avuto modo di toccare con mano le difficoltà oggettive che ci sono invece in altri tipi di scuole, e secondo me sarebbe importantissimo averne consapevolezza. ›› (1 e 2, F1)

‹‹Però una cosa seria, di un anno in cui io riesco a vedere tutti gli aspetti della scuola, cioè io dentro la classe, ma io in aula insegnanti con i colleghi, io al collegio docenti, io al consiglio di classe, io in segreteria, io con i bidelli, che sono almeno nella mia scuola, al vertice, subito dopo la preside se non al pari della preside…›› (1, F3)
The majority ask and propose to increase the practical dimension and experience in the field, even to the detriment of theoretical studies in both the subject and common areas.
To justify and support the need for more room for experimenting their own teaching skills directly in the field, several protocols refer to the pedagogical principle of the need to contextualise and identify forms of teaching to suit the needs of each class, of each student. They refer to the

discovery of the need to pay attention to the dimension of individualisation as a innovative and unexpected element offered to them in the SSIS path.

5.2.3 Innovations that make the difference: attention to others and the teamwork dimension

One piece of data we consider particularly significant is the recognition by the SSIS specialist students of the fact that the training path has made them "different teachers" from previous ones.
In fact, in the protocols often the specialist students talk of themselves in the plural, they identify themselves in a "we" which groups all the SSIS trained teachers together, and this "we" contrasts to the "them" used to identify teachers who were not trained at the SSIS.
Compared to "them", the specialist students describe themselves as:
more open to change and innovation;
more attentive to relational skills and empathy;
more attentive to group skills and multi- or inter-disciplinary work.

‹‹Io lavoro con la maggior parte dei miei colleghi sono usciti dalla SSIS per cui c'è un rapporto di conoscenza e di collaborazione, sicuramente un'impronta diversa rispetto ad un insegnante che è più grande di noi, che ha quindi una visione molto tradizionale dell'insegnamento, per cui fa il suo programma, fa la sua lezione indipendentemente dal gruppo classe che ha davanti...›› (2,F1)

We find these results particularly significant and in line with the objectives set by the school.
The specialist students confirm the acquisition and consolidation, or at least state so, of the fact that the educational and teaching planning cannot and must not be considered with no reference to the specific context of implementation and intervention, and that each teaching unit planned must be constructed with a precise hic et nunc set of students and teachers, flesh and blood, material limits and resources, cultural and territorial claims.

‹‹(ho riempito la borsa) con la capacità di guardare gli altri. Adesso tu dirai che è troppo astratta ma quando sono entrata, alla fine, in una classe penso che, veramente, la cosa fondamentale che mi ha dato (la SSIS) è il fatto che io, in una classe,(gli alunni) li devo guardare, sia singolarmente che insieme, e io sono guardata da loro; non devo entrare e fare, devo entrare e cogliere chi ho davanti e tenere l'attenzione su di loro, nel senso che… è la cosa che all'inizio mi stancava di più; a parte il fatto che dopo due settimane ero senza voce, però il fatto dell'attenzione, di dovergli dedicare attenzione a tutti e tutti singolarmente; questo forse non l'avrei mai pensato …›› (3, F4)
This data could be related to the specialist students' demand for practical knowledge and not well-worn but rather first-hand testimonials on what school is, or even better, how many more possible images and tales of schools, in the plural, it is possible to gather. Basically, if the educational and teaching intervention is to be formulated around every specific context, the more situations and problems I have faced, the more methods and techniques I know, the easier it will be for me to translate and detail the general plan into a specific path.
In our opinion, however, an ambiguity and, to a certain extent, a contradiction in the specialist students words emerge. In fact, if on one hand they state that they have accepted dynamicity and complexity as keystone categories of teaching professionalism and the consequent didactic attitude of being in the situation, on the other hand they expect to find such a varied instrument in the pre-service training and internship activities that responds to every or almost every problematic situation they may find themselves having to deal with. The internship, simulations and case studies should have this precise function: to present them such a rich and complex overview of pro-

blems and solutions to assure that the future teachers never have to face an unexpected situation they cannot handle (Iori,1994; Armellini,1994) and always to respond in an appropriate and effective manner to the emerging needs; in other words they should in fact, and paradoxically, be able to foresee every possible unforeseeable situation. The inevitable feeling of dissatisfaction compared to one's expectations over this aspect of pre-service training is therefore understandable.

One last aspect to consider as particularly interesting concerns the construction, through the SSIS course, of a series of human and professional relationships: the students who get to know each other during lessons, who have shared a sufficiently long training path rich in opportunities for debate and formal discussion (laboratories, exercise, …) as well as informal occasions have developed a network of cooperation which is particularly useful when entering the world of work. This on two levels: on one hand, having experimented teamwork and collaboration as a method of study and training has led to the development of a more open mentality, a "spirit" willing to collaborate and confer, on the other hand as the proposed curriculum, and in particular that in the Common Area, has created a common interdisciplinary language and style which allows and improves the dialogue between teachers of different subjects.

‹‹1 – Poi, dal punto di vista umano, uno dei grandi lasciti della SSIS è una serie di amicizie fra persone che poi sono diventati miei colleghi, anche se io adesso non insegno, però penso sia una cosa molto positiva, nel senso che si crea uno spirito di unione e collaborazione, propriamente si spera e si auspica sia così, e questo non può essere che positivo per la scuola, magari un insegnante di altro tipo, vecchia formazione, lavora in maniera indipendente anche perché è sempre stata indipendente la loro formazione.››

Conduttore: quindi sta dicendo che ci si riconosce in un percorso formativo comune che si è vissuto insieme?
‹‹1 – in qualche maniera sì, e che è più facile dialogare e comunicare con persone non solo della stessa classe di concorso, perché comunque sia frequentando l'area comune si entra in contatto anche con persone di altre classi di concorso, io questo me lo sono ritrovato…›› (1 F1)

Despite the strong criticisms raised over the predominance of a theoretical dimension and an imprint that is too faithful to the university didactic model, the SSIS has contributed to the construction of some features of a professional group identity. Whatever the difference the specialist students attribute to the various cycles, they recognise and define themselves as new teachers, different from and more innovative than those who have not followed the same training path, which they call tradition, using negative and critical senses of the term. And it is precisely the teaching delivered and the learning acquired at the SSIS which makes the difference, in both theoretical and practical spheres. The SSIS, offering a meeting place for students from different subject areas, with several reference figures (university lecturers in the common area, subject teachers but also and above all supervisors and tutors from secondary schools), above all when there is sufficient time for confrontation and debate, creates the community of thought but also of practices which was planned to be a fundamental feature of pre-service teacher training.
We believe that we need to reflect upon this above all now, in view of the proposed redefinition of the forms and places of pre-service training for primary and secondary school teachers.
This does not mean that the assessment of the SSIS experience must be considered exclusively in positive terms, far from it. The words of the specialist students are often harsh, condemning wi-

thout appeal teaching styles that are too formal and not always calibrated to suit the purposes of the SSIS, the low congruity between the expressed pedagogical principles and the applied methodological choices, the non-reproducibility in real school contexts of paths structured in subject and laboratory settings due to their excessive specialisation, the difficulty of dialogue and inclusion in some internship situations,…

As literature on the subject of innovation in the teaching field has shown on several occasions, the fact remains that there exists a real difficulty in making a long-lasting impact on the identity and practices of teachers, which is a necessary step in bringing significant change into schools. The words of the specialist students highlight the driving force of the SSIS in this direction, not only for its curriculum but also its very configuration as a hermeneutical community of practices. And we feel that thought in this area needs to be made in future, trying to understand how to make the most of and maintain the value created in this case by the presence of teachers of different subject groups also, if possible, following specialisation, as a continuous and meaningful thread running through in-service training, in some way combining Stenhouse's teacher-researcher (1977) with modern supervision. This possibility was also considered important to some of our interviewees:

‹‹ … io ho bisogno di essere accudita… sì questa cosa dell'università, dello studio, ricerca quindi continuare a studiare ma facendo ricerca e anche i problemi dello studio io ne voglio fare uno sportello… i problemi io ne voglio parlare, non condividerli. Sì, questo sì, cioè non vorrei uscire solo perché ho avuto una specializzazione e amen… vorrei avere la possibilità di continuare …›› (3, FOCUS 2)

6. Some reflections on the research data

The data gathered during our research leads us to make some generalisations concerning pre-service training for secondary school teachers, starting from the short-lived experience of the SSIS in Bologna and its curricular structure.

Firstly, it confirms the importance of assuring fairly long periods of internships in schools, possibly in different realities.

The need is however seen for practical knowledge acquired during the direct experience to be strongly linked to the theoretical and epistemological dimension of educational science and teaching subjects.

The TFA has partly accepted the need to increase the importance of the practicum, even if only partially.

Training for practicing the profession does not mean nor does it include only training through practice. It is necessary to promote paths of professional "awareness" in which work is done, possibly in the laboratory, on exchange and negotiation of representations, observations, experiences are offered of writing, video training, role playing, …

Secondly, the SSIS or any other body dealing with pre-service teacher training must be a place not only of training but also of research. This for at least two reasons: to create a virtuous circle between moments of theoretical study, experimentation able to fuel both epistemological and theoretical debate and the professionalism of teachers, also in methodological and didactic terms.

Although this difficulty seems to have been addressed in the TFA curriculum, through the experimentation of workshops taught by two different professors, one of educational topic and the other that is an expert of a specific discipline, that work together.

Thirdly, the need is underlined for the teacher training institution to assure recruitment and colla-

boration between the different professions involved in the school world: not only therefore university teachers but also expert teachers detached fully or partially from their schools which act as tutors and supervisors, working alongside the university teachers above all in the internship and practicum.
Last, but not less important, we need to underline the need for the presence in the teaching curriculum for a common path for all teachers in educational science, and in particular in the pedagogical and didactic fields.
The data in fact shows that it is precisely this path which assures the development of a common language and through strategies concerning one's own professionalism which are needed to construct a coherent, modern and high quality training programme. The current structure of the TFA curriculum does not seem to respond to these critical issues. However, this can be confirmed, or not, only by a possible further research.

Note

1 The SSIS first began work in the academic year 1999-2000 and was closed in the a.y. 2007-08, waiting for a new organisation of pre-service teacher training that arrive only in 2010 with the DM. 249. The DM has established the Tirocinio Formativo Attivo (TFA); as well known, the TFA were activated only in 2012 (a.y. 2011-12). The TFA is the last training segment for the initial preparation of teachers. Despite the political and institutional contradictions with which the TFA have been activated in the various universities, the new curriculum for pre-service aims to reinvigorate the teaching professionalism. It, picking up the legacy of the SSIS, tries to accompany the young teachers in their first entry to school through an annual curriculum structured with: lecture courses in teaching and disciplinary teaching, reflection workshops and coaching by experienced teachers.

The SSIS was organised into a two-year structure divided into specialisation courses for the various subject spheres that the (post-graduate specialist) students could then go on to teach in schools (for example: FIM (physics, maths and computing); LL (Italian language and literature, Greek and Latin), etc…). The SSIS curriculum was therefore divided into four areas: 1) A common area, concerning educational science (pedagogy, didactics, psychology, educational sociology, cultural anthropology, history of schools and education) which was the same for all areas of specialisation; 2) An area of specialisation, concerning historic and epistemological teaching subjects, and the specific didactical areas of each subject; 3) Subject-specific didactic laboratories; 4) An internship area, concerning the design and implementation of practicum to be carried out in secondary schools under the supervision of a tutor teacher.

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