

NOTE:

Document submitted to the forty-seventh session of the International Conference on Education (Geneva, 8–11 September 2004) by the Ministry of Education of Italy.



ITALY

I. Description of education system

1. Education population and language of instruction

At the first January 2001, the number of people aged 29 and under was 15.987.263 (27.6% of the population). The language of instruction is Italian, although in some areas the use of the local language is officially authorised for education.

2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

Overall responsibility lies with the Ministry of Education, University and Research (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca* – MIUR). The Ministry of Education, University and Research is represented at local level by regional and provincial education offices. Regions may delegate certain responsibilities to the provinces and municipalities. From school year 2000/2001, all the schools have autonomy in the fields of administration, organisation, pedagogy, research, experimentation, and development.

The reorganisation of the Ministry of Education, University and Research and the decentralisation of administrative and management responsibilities from the State to territorial and local authorities (regions, provinces and municipalities) aim to enhance efficiency of both the central (Ministry of Education) and peripheral components – regional school administrations and provincial education directorates (*Uffici scolastici regionali*) – of the school administration more efficient and incisive.

The approval of the bill concerning the equal status of State and State-recognised schools (*scuole paritarie*) (March 2000) aims to provide measures to support parents of children and school-aged young people regardless of whether they are enrolled in a State school or attend a State-recognised institution in order to ensure the right to education and promote the expansion, diversification and integration of education delivered within the public education and training system.

A technical inspectorate, answerable to the Ministry, operates at national and regional level and supervises the education system as a whole.

At higher education level, the private sector comprises university institutions, promoted and managed by bodies and private citizens, authorised by the Ministry of Education, University and Research to issue academic qualifications equivalent to state qualifications.

State financial support for private institutions amounts to approximately 20% of the total income. The MIUR funds state universities up to about 77% of their total income.

Universities have gained autonomy in different stages. The first one dealt with administrative, financial and accounting aspects. Since 1994, the public state and private university institutions have had their own budgets. The tasks of the Ministry are the allocation of funds, monitoring and evaluation.

The present stage aims to conclude the move towards autonomy by taking educational organisation into consideration. The universities are responsible for the content and flexibility of courses within a framework that establishes general and specific criteria at national level. The legislation that will regulate the subject is currently being formulated.

3. Pre-primary education

Daycare centres or crèches are available for children up to the age of 3. From then on, children can attend nursery school, which is the first stage of the schooling system. Nursery schools are free of charge. In school year 2003-2004 pre-primary education is available for children who reach 3 years of age before 28 February 2004.

4. Compulsory full-time education

(a) Phases

<i>Primo ciclo dell'istruzione</i> (first cycle of education)	
<i>Scuola primaria</i> (primary school)	Age 6–11
<i>Scuola secondaria di I grado</i> (lower secondary school)	Age 11–14

From the 1999/2000 school year, education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 15.

(b) Admission criteria

Children should be aged 6 to attend primary school. In school year 2003-2004 primary education is available for children who reach 6 year of age before 28 February 2004. Students must have the primary school leaving certificate to be admitted to lower secondary education. Children normally attend the nearest school within the school catchment area. Compulsory education is free of charge.

(c) Length of the school day/week/year

The school year comprises at least 200 days between the beginning of September and the end of June. Schools open five or six days, full or half days, depending on the institution. Primary and secondary schools offer up to 30 hours of teaching a week. The length of lessons varies. The minimum number of annual teaching hours is 800 when children are aged 7, 900 when they are aged 10 and 933 at lower secondary level.

(d) Class size/student grouping

At primary and secondary level there is a maximum of 25 students per class. This figure is reduced to 20 if there are one or more students with special educational needs in the class. Students are grouped by age in mixed ability classes. In primary school, team teaching is the norm. At primary level, there is usually more than one teacher in each class. At secondary level, students have separate subject teachers.

(e) Curricular control and content

The general curriculum is nationally determined and adapted to local needs by each school. Curricular content, targets, teaching methods and possible links between the various subject areas are determined for each subject. At primary level, the core curriculum comprises Italian, a foreign language, mathematics, sciences, humanities, social studies, art, music and physical education. Religious education is an optional subject. At lower secondary level, technical education is added. Teachers select teaching methods, textbooks and materials.

(f) Assessment, progression and qualifications

There is no national system of student assessment during compulsory education. School-based assessment usually takes the form of an appraisal made every three or four months and at the end of the school year. Students who have not reached the required standard may be required to repeat a year, although this is rare. At the end of primary education, students take oral and written examinations leading to the primary school leaving certificate (*diploma di licenza elementare*). On completion of compulsory secondary education, students take an examination leading to the certificate of compulsory secondary education (*diploma di licenza media*).

5. Upper secondary and post-secondary education

(a) Types of education

Classical education <i>Liceo classico</i> (classical upper secondary school) <i>Liceo scientifico</i> (scientific upper secondary school)	Age 14-19
Artistic education <i>Liceo artistico</i> (artistic upper secondary school) <i>Istituti d'arte</i> (art schools)	Age 14-18 Age 14–17/19
Technical education <i>Istituto Tecnico</i> (technical school)	Age 14–19
Vocational education <i>Istituto professionale</i> (vocational school)	Age 14–17/19

Some upper secondary institutions are organised in two stages with automatic progression between the twos.

(b) Admission criteria

Holders of the certificate of compulsory secondary education (*diploma di licenza media*) may enter upper secondary education. Fees are payable, but students in state schools may be exempt or receive financial support, depending on their family income.

(c) Curricular control and content

Central government determines basic curricula for each type of education and gives guidance on teaching methods. Core subjects common to all institutions are Italian, history, a modern foreign language, mathematics and physical education.

(d) Assessment, progression and qualifications

At upper secondary level, students' oral and written work is assessed every three or four months. The final examination, at the end of upper secondary education, is the *esame di Stato conclusivo dei corsi di studio di istruzione secondaria superiore*.

6. Higher Education

(a) Types of institution

There are two main types of higher education. University education offers a range of degree courses and diplomas, some of which qualify the student for various professions. Non-university higher education is offered by various types of higher education institutions, each of which has its own particular structure, regulations and organisation.

A process has been initiated to increase the diversity and flexibility of the education offered in higher education by introducing a new course of post-secondary training (*Formazione Superiore Integrata - FIS* (integrated higher education) designed for specific types of profession to parallel and provide an alternative to university studies.

(b) Access

Applicants must have the upper secondary school leaving certificate (*esame di Stato*). A maximum number of students is established to attend the degree courses in medicine and surgery, dentistry, veterinary, architecture. Admission age and requirements for arts academies and institutes vary; some run parallel courses throughout secondary education, as well as courses at higher education level.

(c) Qualifications

The reorganisation of university curricula, content and goals implies a wider university institutions' autonomy and a different concept of the students' workload, now based on credits. Common general criteria and goals are defined at national level for the different courses. Three different degrees have been detected: a first degree after a three-year course (180 credits); a

second degree after another two-year course (120 credits), and a third specialised degree after a course with a duration which varies according to the branch.

As this reform has been implemented in most universities starting from the academic year 2001/02, for the next years two types of university courses will co-exist: the new system (see above) and the old one which leads to four types of academic titles: a *diploma universitario* (from two to three years), a *laurea* (courses lasting from four to six years) and a diploma of specialisation (from two to four years), and a research doctorate (three years). Access to specialisation or a research doctorate needs the *laurea* and is regulated by examinations. Non-university courses offer diplomas or higher diplomas.

7. Special needs

Students with special needs are integrated into mainstream education and specialist support is provided.

8. Teachers

Teachers in nursery and primary schools must obtain the *diploma di laurea*. A two-year postgraduate course at a *scuola di specializzazione* is necessary for secondary school teachers who want to participate in a competitive exam to obtain the qualification of *abilitazione all'insegnamento*. Primary school teachers are generalists, but assume responsibility for a subject area. Secondary teachers are specialist teachers. Teachers are civil servants.

II. Ongoing Reforms and Topics of Debate in Education

Reforms already approved and in implementation phase:

A new reform of the Italian education system has been approved last year by the Parliament (Law n.53/2003) and is coming into force by degrees. Recently (23 January 2004) the first law decree concerning the first cycle of education (primary and lower secondary education) has been approved, but it will come into force after its publication on the Official Journal (*Gazzetta Ufficiale*) foreseen in the next few months.

This decree establishes that enrolment into pre-primary and primary education is available respectively for children who reach 3 and 6 years of age within the 30th of April of the reference school year.

Reform law 53/2003 foresees that the duration of compulsory education will be redefined by a decree. In the meantime, education is compulsory until accomplishment of the first cycle of education (primary and lower secondary school – age 6-14).

Law decree of 23 January 2004 establishes the annual number teaching hours at 891 for primary level. Furthermore it foresees 99 additional hours for the organisation of learning optional activities. As for lower secondary level the annual number of teaching hours is 891 plus 198 additional hours for the organisation of learning optional activities.

Starting from next school year, primary schools have to apply, instead of a general curriculum, specific learning objectives defined for the following subjects: religious education, Italian, English, history, geography, mathematics, sciences, technology and computer science, music, art and image, physical education. As for lower secondary education, specific learning objectives are defined for the following subjects: religious education, Italian, English, a second foreign language, history, geography, mathematics, sciences, technology, computer science, music, art and image, physical education. Moreover in both levels it is foreseen a curricular area called Civil living together which includes citizenship, traffic, environment, health, alimentary education and affective education.

Other aspects defined in the decree are the following: Primary and lower secondary education will constitute a 8-year cycle and the final examination at the end of primary education will be abolished. As far as the duration of compulsory education is concerned, a compulsory training (*obbligo formativo*) has been introduced according to which students who stop attending the educational paths provided by the school system must attend three years of vocational training outside the typical educational institutions.

As for upper secondary level the reform law 53/2003 establishes the institution of 8 types of *liceo* (artistic, classic, human sciences, economic, linguistic, music, scientific, technological), organised in two two-year periods and a fifth year of in depth study and guidance for university studies. However a clear description of the new system will be available when the decree on upper secondary education will be implemented.

The reform foresees also a new evaluation system. At school, students will be evaluated every two years and those who don't attain the minimum level must repeat the year. Moreover, an evaluation team will be set up with the task to verify the quality of teaching and the cultural level of students.

Another issue under debate in Italy concerns the new conditions of initial teacher training and the necessity to offer new opportunities of in-service training in order to enable teachers to face the new school challenges in a society in continuous evolution.

Unrevised English

For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE (http://www.eurydice.org)
--