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of the Journal Scuola Democratica**

REINVENTING EDUCATION

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VOLUME I

Citizenship, Work and The Global Age

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

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International Conference of
the Journal Scuola
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REINVENTING EDUCATION**

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***Title* Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the Journal “Scuola Democratica” – Reinventing Education
VOLUME I Citizenship, Work and The Global Age**

This volume contains papers presented in the 2nd International Conference of the Journal “Scuola Democratica” which took place online on 2-5 June 2021. The Conference was devoted to the needs and prospects of Reinventing Education.

The challenges posed by the contemporary world have long required a rethinking of educational concepts, policies and practices. The question about education ‘for what’ as well as ‘how’ and ‘for whom’ has become unavoidable and yet it largely remained elusive due to a tenacious attachment to the ideas and routines of the past which are now far off the radical transformations required of educational systems. Scenarios, reflections and practices fostering the possibility of change towards the reinvention of the educational field as a driver of more general and global changes have been centerstage topics at the Conference. Multidisciplinary approach from experts from different disciplinary communities, including sociology, pedagogy, psychology, economics, architecture, political science has brought together researchers, decision makers and educators from all around the world to investigate constraints and opportunities for reinventing education.

The Conference has been an opportunity to present and discuss empirical and theoretical works from a variety of disciplines and fields covering education and thus promoting a trans- and interdisciplinary discussion on urgent topics; to foster debates among experts and professionals; to diffuse research findings all over international scientific networks and practitioners’ mainstreams; to launch further strategies and networking alliances on local, national and international scale; to provide a new space for debate and evidences to educational policies. In this framework, more than 800 participants, including academics, educators, university students, had the opportunity to engage in a productive and fruitful dialogue based on research, analyses and critics, most of which have been published in this volume in their full version.

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The Role of the Italian Public School on the Social and Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants

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ABSTRACT: *This paper concentrates on the linguistic and educational policies aimed to foster the social and linguistic integration of foreign people and in particular of the ones which arrived with the most recent migratory flow. Focusing on the key role played by public actors, the paper analyses the support offered by the Provincial Centre for Adult Education, commonly called CPIA (Centro Provinciale per l'Istruzione degli Adulti), in particular thanks to its Italian language courses for foreigners (Percorsi di alfabetizzazione e apprendimento della lingua italiana or Percorsi AALI). Starting from the analysis of the educational policies for the linguistics integration of foreigners and the results of the experiences developed in the adult educational field, we try to understand the quality of Percorsi AALI, to identify their critical aspects and to understand their causes. Thanks to the results of a survey administrated to a sample of CPIA's teachers in 2020, we tried to evaluate if Percorsi AALI can be said to be part of a systematic action plan and a structured approach or if the Italian government still seems to be uninterested in this.*

KEYWORDS: *Linguistic Policies, Educational Policies, Adult Migrant Learners, Italian Public School, Italian as a Second Language*

Introduction

Italy is a valid example of how old and new minorities share territories and community spaces. As it has been underlined on several occasions (Bagna, Barni, 2005; Barni, Vedovelli, 2009; Maturi, 2016; Marra, Del Nigro, 2020), this contact brings about to interesting and complex multilingual realities. On this basis, it is easy to understand the importance of language competence since it provides the necessary basis for social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and democratic citizenship. Consequently, it cannot be denied that this has a strong impact on schools and on the development of plurilingual and intercultural education.

Focusing on a specific aspect of this multidimensional phenomenon, this paper concentrates on the linguistic and educational policies aimed at fostering the social and linguistic integration of foreign people and in particular of the ones who arrived with the most recent migratory flow.

The main topic of this paper are the courses of Italian as a second language offered by the Italian public school for adults: the *Percorsi di alfabetizzazione e apprendimento della lingua italiana (Percorsi AALI)*. The following reflections are based on the data provided by studies conducted by the Ministry of Education (MIUR, 2003), the *Istituto per lo sviluppo della formazione professionale dei lavoratori (ISFOL)* (Governatori, Montedoro, 2006), INDIRE (Pappalardo, Rangoni, 2013; INDIRE, 2018), and INVALSI (Poliandri, Epifani, 2020), and on a survey submitted to 131 CPIAs during the school year 2019/2020. Called *Indagine Percorsi AALI*, this survey consisted in a self-administered online questionnaire submitted from March to June 2020 and involving 239 teachers who teach in the *Percorsi AALI*.

Having briefly described the Provincial Centre for Adult Education, commonly known as CPIA (*Centro Provinciale per l'Istruzione degli Adulti*), we will address our attention to the CPIA central role in migrants' lives. After this introductory comment, we will analyse two critical issues of the courses of Italian as a second language offered by CPIA. Firstly, the paper concentrates on some specific problems of the curricula of *Percorsi AALI*. In the second part, based on the findings of the survey submitted to CPIA's teachers in 2020, the paper addresses the exploration of CPIA teacher's training. Drawing on the data obtained, it will be possible to highlight some weaknesses that can have a strong impact on the quality of *Percorsi AALI*. The last section contains some final reflections and conclusions.

1. Adult education in Italy: CTP and CPIA

CPIAs are a network of public schools responsible for the adult population education and they started working in the school year 2015/2016. In addition to its curricula courses: Italian language courses for foreigners (*Percorsi AALI*), the lower secondary school courses (*Percorsi di istruzione di primo livello*), and the upper secondary school courses (*Percorsi di istruzione di secondo livello*), the CPIA includes also extra curricula courses (computer courses and language courses), and it coordinates a research centre (Pitzalis, 2019). It is important to remember that before the CPIA, since the school year 1998/1999, the *Centri Territoriali Permanenti per l'educazione degli adulti (CTPs)* were set up to provide continuing education to adults (Colosio, 2015).

2. Adult education and teaching Italian as a second language

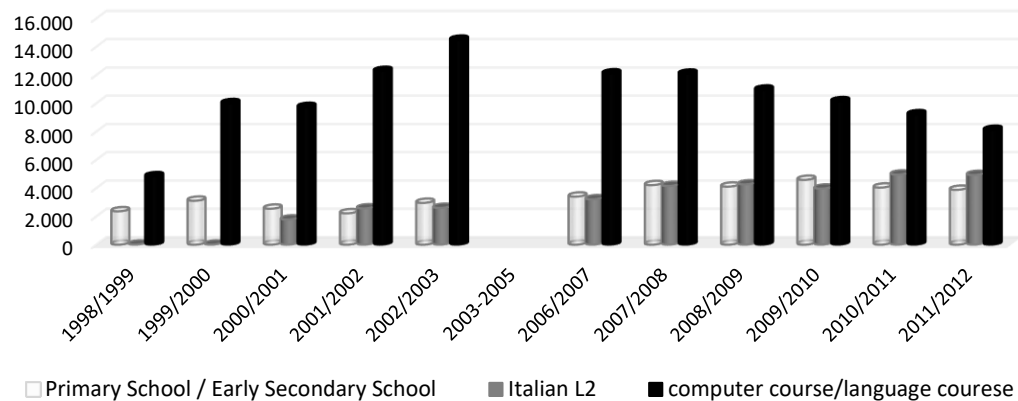
At first the CTP and later the CPIA have tried to promote the development of language skills of foreign people. On the one hand, because the development of linguistic, cultural, and social skills facilitates the integration into the host society, in the early 2000s the

CTP had been doing numerous efforts to provide language tuition for immigrants.

Observing Figure 1, it is possible to appreciate how gradually the number of courses of Italian as a second language offered by CTP increased. Nevertheless, as it was underlined by Giuseppe Sergio (2011), the CTP showed to be unprepared to manage relatively large number of immigrants who are very different in terms of culture, traditions, and language. For this reason, it cannot be denied that a central role for the social and linguistic integration of adult migrants had been played by private schools, non-profit associations, and volunteers.

On the other hand, it cannot be forgotten that migrants are required to acquire linguistic abilities for the purposes of residence and citizenship. It is against that background that CTPs and later CPIAs have been charged with the assessment of some language requirements and for providing some specific official courses.

FIG. 1. *CPIA courses of Italian for foreigners*



Source: MIUR (2003); Governatori and Montedoro (2006); Pappalardo and Rangoni (2013).

FIG. 2. *Migration policies and language testing in Italy: the role of CPIA*

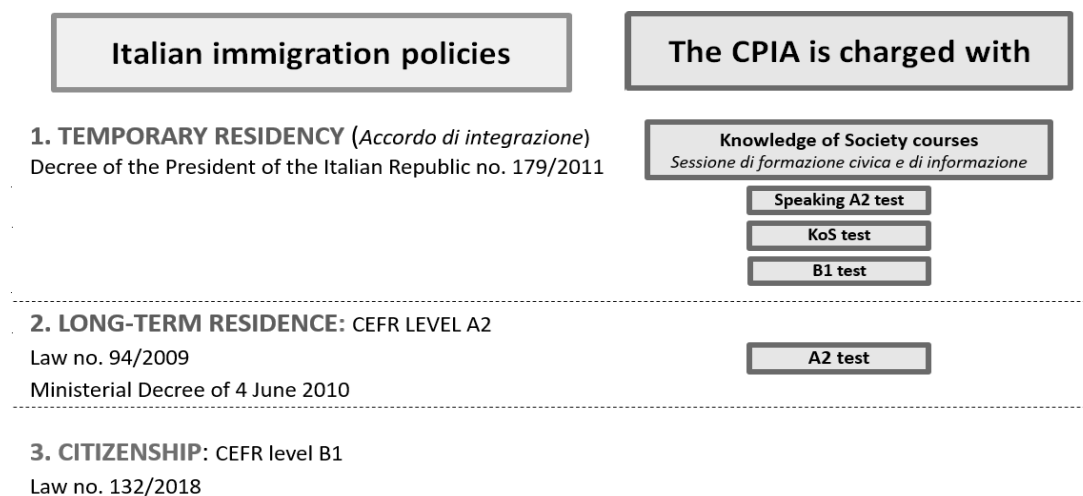


Figure 2 shows that CPIA has a key role in particular for the temporary and the long-term residence permit (Deiana, Spina, 2020; Deiana, 2021a). It is quite clear that the policies implemented by the

Government to control and limit the number of migrants entering the country has had a strong impact on both the linguistic and the educational policies.

Taking in consideration what it has just been underlined, it is clear that the CPIA plays a central role in the lives of migrants. In fact, it helps to promote the development of language skills for social inclusion, education, employment, and for the achievement of requirements for residency.

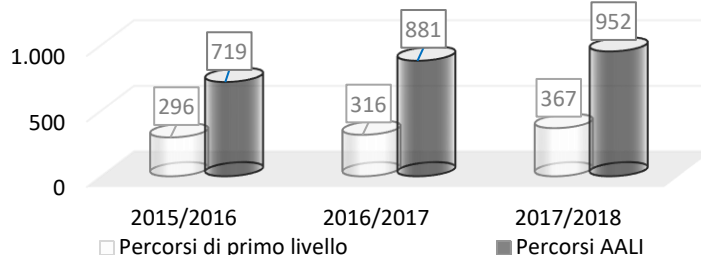
3. Some critical issues

This paper focuses on the central role played by the CPIA as a public actor and it analyses the support given to foreign people. Starting from the analysis of the educational policies for the linguistics integration of foreigners, we try to understand and identify the critical issues of *Percorsi* AALI and to understand their causes. Focusing on these aspects, we analyse if there have been any improvements on understanding the students learning process, their difficulties, and their needs in educational terms. Thanks to these reflections, our aim is to point out if *Percorsi* AALI can be said to be part of a systematic and structured action plan or if the Italian government still seems to be uninterested in this.

3.1. The Percorsi AALI

Percorsi AALI are the Italian language courses for foreigners of the CPIA's curricula. They were established by the Decree of the President of the Italian Republic No. 263 in October 2012 and better regulated thanks to the Ministerial Decree of 12th March 2015 (*Linee guida per il passaggio al nuovo ordinamento a sostegno dell'autonomia organizzativa e didattica dei Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti*). In contrast to the CTP, where Italian language courses for foreigners had been taught as an extra or additional course, thanks to the establishment of *Percorsi* AALI for the first time this subject has been officially included in the curriculum of the Italian public school (Emilio Porcaro, 2019). Figure 3 shows *Percorsi* AALI are the most activated courses of the CPIA curriculum.

In accordance with the legislation, *Percorsi* AALI offer only the levels A1 and A2. Consequently, it is easy to understand the reason why Italian language courses for foreigners are offered also by the CPIA *extra curricula courses* (Table 1). Since everything that comes before A1 (pre-Alfa, Alfa, pre-A1) and upper A2 is not covered by *Percorsi* AALI, Table 2 shows how CPIA *extra curricula courses* also offer these levels.

FIG. 3. Average number of students attending CPIA curricula courses

Source: INDIRE (2018), Poliandri, Epifani (2020)

TAB. 1. CPIA extra curricula courses

Extra curricula courses	2015/2016				2016/2017			
	courses		students		courses		students	
Italian language for foreigners	690	54,3%	11.330	59,2%	1.401	71,5%	22.454	75%
Computer courses	202	15,8%	2.753	14,4%	179	9,1%	2.195	7,3%
Language courses	382	29,9%	5.035	26,3%	371	18,9%	5.181	17,2%
Financial education courses	3	0,2%	17	0,1%	10	0,5%	152	0,5%

Source: INDIRE 2018

The fact that *Percorsi AALI* cover just A1 and A2 levels has different negative consequences both in didactical and administrative terms. The first ones are strongly evident when the extra curricula courses are not activated. In fact, in this case pre-Alfa, Alfa and pre-A1 student attend courses that keep very different levels together or even end up directly in A1 level. On the other hand, it must be underline that this lack of *Percorsi AALI* has also an impact on the composition of the CPIA teacher's staff. In fact, every year the teacher staff is assigned according to the number of curricula courses activated. Consequently, since the highlighted criticism of *Percorsi AALI*, only a little part of the Italian language courses for foreigners activated can be used by the CPIA for having assigned teachers.

TAB. 2. CPIA extra curricula courses: Italian language courses for foreigners

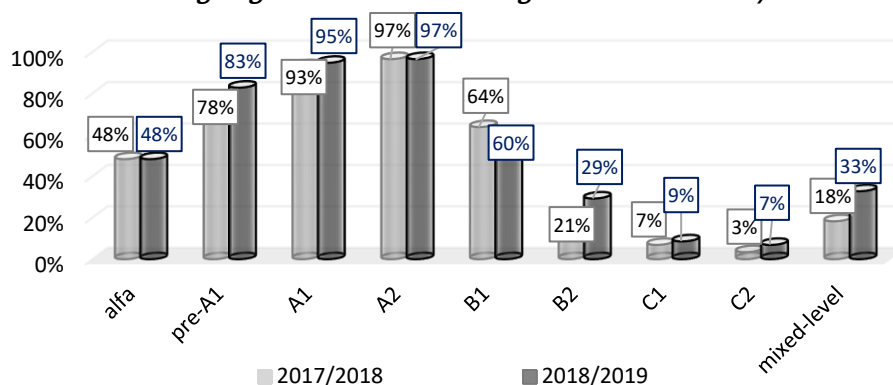
	2015/2016		2016/2017	
	courses	students	courses	students
pre-A1	371	5.961	643	10.493
UPPER A2	279	4.582	355	5.299
Corsi FAMI (<i>Fondo asilo migrazione e integrazione</i>)	40	787	412	6.662

Source: INDIRE 2018

Figure 4 helps to understand how criticisms of *Percorsi AALI* does not facilitate CPIA to foster language skills of foreigner people. On the one hand the absence of specific courses that cover levels that comes before A1 is a strong weakness. In fact, as it has been underlined on different occasions (Borri *et al.*, 2014; Bricchesse, Caon, 2019; Deiana, Spina, 2020a), given that many CPIA students are illiterate and have little formal education, it is evident that the CPIA curricula does not ensure

them the specific linguistic classes. On the other hand, particularly after that B1 has been required for the acquisition of the Italian citizenship, the fact that the CPIA curricula courses does not cover levels which enable to express more complex needs in a wider range of situations is another critical issue.

FIG. 4. *Italian language courses for foreigners activated by CPIA*



Source: Deiana (2019)

In addition, it cannot be denied that these issues point out some weaknesses of language and educational policies. In fact, since data of the CTP Italian language courses for foreigners was available (Pappalardo, Rangoni, 2013), it seems that they had been ignored. Because during the long and complex reform that resulted in the establishment of the CPIA this evidence had not been taken into consideration, the fact that the CPIA curricula does not cover some of the levels that were offered during the CTP period seems to be a serious error. This fact is even more serious, if we consider that also in Italy people are asked to certify their language knowledge to obtain the temporary and the long-term residency and the citizenship.

Despite the fact that for the first time Italian language courses for foreigners have been officially included in the curriculum of the Italian public school, the organization of *Percorsi AALI* shows the carelessness that characterised the Italian educational policy. In fact, the critical points just listed underlined that *Percorsi AALI* cannot be considered as part of a valid, systematic, and well-structured approach.

3.2. Teachers' training

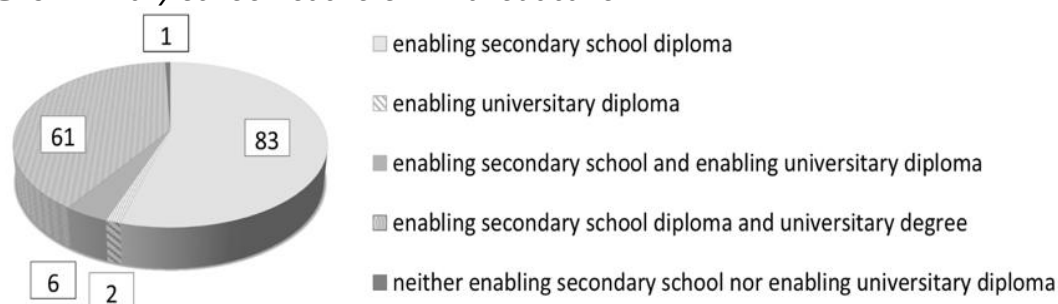
CPIA teachers' staff consists of primary school teachers, secondary school teachers (Italian, English, Mathematics and Science, Technologies and sometimes also Music or Art's teachers) and A23 teachers (Deiana, 2020, 2021b; Deiana, Spina 2020). As it has been highlighted by Borri and Calzone (2019), it cannot be ignored that there is a general lack of specific training in teaching to adult students.

Focusing on *Percorsi AALI*, it must be said that the decree of the President of the Italian Republic No. 263 in October 2012 did not set a specific and trained teachers' staff. Despite teaching Italian as a second

language, teachers do not have to be specialised or trained on this specific subject. In agreement with trends emerged from our survey, primary school teachers seem to be the majority (153 out of 239), while secondary school teachers are a little minority (49 out of 239). Despite having successfully completed a structured course in teaching Italian as a foreign or second language, also A23 teachers are a minority. In fact, A23 teachers are only a little part of the CPIAs' school staff: every year maximum 2 A23 teachers are assigned to the CPIA teachers' staff (Deiana, Spina, 2020b). Since teachers 'quality and professionalism have a direct effect on the learning outcomes, in relation to the above, focusing our attention on primary school teachers is very interesting.

According to the outcomes of *Indagine Percorsi AALI* (Figure 5), it is possible to observe that as a general tendency, the majority of primary school teachers (144 out of 153) teach thanks to the enabling secondary school diploma (*Diploma magistrale*). Only 8 teachers declared to have an enabling university diploma (*Laurea in Scienze della formazione primaria*).

FIG. 5. *Primary school teachers: initial education*

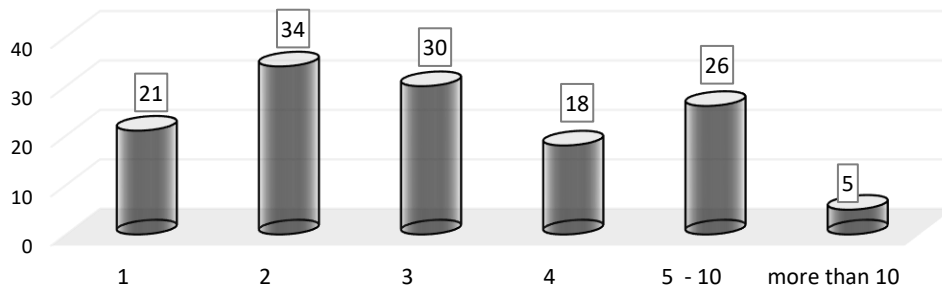


Source: *Indagine Percorsi AALI*

In addition to pointing out that 61 out of 153 also graduated (many of them in subject not strongly related with teaching), this data underlines how almost all of the teachers belong to the *scuola magistrale* generation. Despite having a long experience in teaching to pupils, it means that during their initial education they did not concentrate on specific subject such as linguistics, language teaching and didactics or teaching Italian as a foreign language.

The general lack of specific training in teaching Italian as a foreign language seems to be a serious criticism of primary school teachers 'professionalism. This is even more evident when we observe that only 20 out of 153 teachers obtained a formal qualification after having completed a structured course in teaching Italian as a foreign or second language. On the other hand, the vast majority (134 out of 153) declared to attend at least one training or refreshing course of teaching Italian as a second language, many of which are organised by the CPIA (Figure 6).

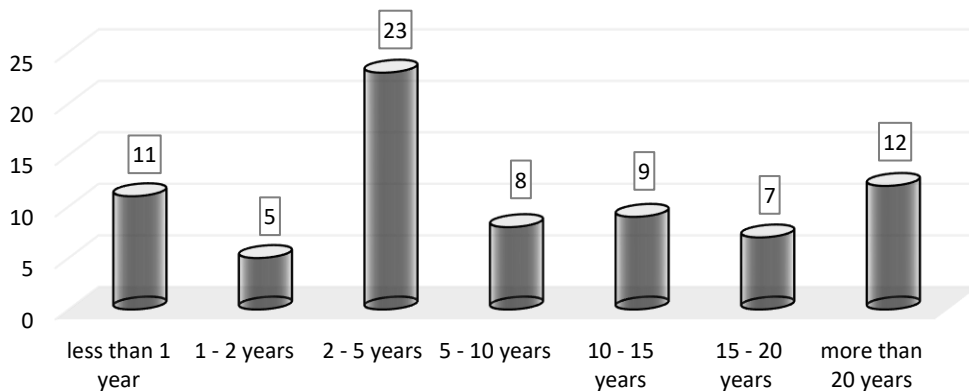
FIG. 6. *Primary school teachers: number of Italian L2 trainings and updating followed per year.*



Source: *Indagine Percorsi AALI*

Thanks to *Indagine Percorsi AALI* it has also been stressed that approximately half of the primary interviewed school teachers (75 out of 153) declared that they had not taught Italian as a second language before teaching on CPIA or even in CTP. Since it means that *Percorsi AALI* were their first experience as teachers of Italian as a second language, data presented in Figure 7, which focuses only on these 75 teachers, allow to reflect on several aspects.

FIG. 7. *Primary school teachers without previous experience on teaching Italian as a second language: CPIA experience in teaching Italian L2*



Source: *Indagine Percorsi AALI*

Generally, according to Borri and Calzone (2019), the CPIA teachers' staff is characterized by quite a strong turn-over. Furthermore, based on addition outcomes of the *Indagine Percorsi AALI*, taking into consideration the years of teaching experience in *Percorsi AALI* it is possible to observe two interesting critical aspects. Firstly, none of the 39 teachers that have less than 5 years of experiences declared to have a formal qualification in teaching Italian as a foreign or second language. Moreover, 8 out of these 39 said they do not attend any training or refreshing course. This data reveals a critical and alarming situation. In fact, the poor training amplified by the lacking experience seems to be a main characteristic of these teachers. Secondly, focusing on the 28 teachers that have more than 10 years of experiences (they had considered also the CTP years of experience), it is evident that once

again the majority (23 out of 28) did not obtain any formal qualification in teaching Italian as a foreign or second language. Since they have been teaching this subject for many years, the fact that only a little minority of teachers completed a structured course in teaching Italian as a foreign or second language is an unexpected trend.

Since teachers play a critical role in achieving high-quality education for all learners, our data has pointed out some fundamental weaknesses. In fact, the tendencies that came out about primary school teachers' training and teaching experience can have a strong impact on the quality of *Percorsi AALI*.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it must be underlined that the two critical issues described has a strong negative effect on the quality of *Percorsi AALI*. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that *Percorsi AALI* have also some strong points. In fact, the responses received from the questionnaires have provided useful insights both into the strengths and the weaknesses. Compared to what had been done in the past, the creation of *Percorsi AALI* represents a key moment for the teaching of Italian as a foreign language in the Italian public school. Despite the critical issues highlighted by our data, it appears that *Percorsi AALI* have begun to be part of educational plan. Unfortunately, what has been done up to now is not enough. Taking into consideration the weaknesses underlined, it is evident that the Italian government still have to improve in order to facilitate the development of a systematic action plan and a structured approach. It is evident that many of the highlighted problems are linked to the lack of specific training in teaching to adult foreign students. Representing a critical long-term issue, it is clear that a decisive intervention is needed.

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