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# An Archaeological Analysis of the Last Italian Education Reform Policy

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## **An Archaeological Analysis of the Last Italian Education Reform Policy**

*Danilo Taglietti*\*

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*Abstract:* In a Foucauldian perspective, our work consists of an archaeological analysis of the last education reform policy of the Italian Government: the so-called “La Buona Scuola” reform. We assume that policies are discourses which exercise power through a production of truth and knowledge. We try to build up an “archaeological tool” for the analysis of policy texts, in order to light up the regimes of visibility and enunciability through which new truths are produced. Then, we use it to analyze the “La Buona Scuola” policy. Deconstructing its texts, we see how they try to produce relevant changes in the truths of the Italian education system. First of all, we will discover the marketization of the Italian politics, through the merging of administrative and commercial aspects in the authorial function. Secondly, we will find the manufacturing of a new teacher’s subjectivity, market-oriented and commodified. Thirdly, we will see the slipping of purposes of the whole system by the re-interpretation of the relations among the education, the right to labour and the citizenship. At the end of the analysis, we will determine the formation of new discursive strategies and light up the fields of possible options that the policy realizes.

*Keywords:* education policy, policy texts analysis, archaeology of policy texts, La Buona Scuola

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## Introduction

This paper has the purpose to offer a different point of view about the last education reform policy of the Italian Government: the so-called “La Buona Scuola” reform. In the current Italian debate, this is an highly contested policy: while it is appreciated by some by virtue of its modernization effects, it is criticized by others because of its propagandistic aspects.

Appreciating the spreading of the “linguistic turn” (Rorty, 1994) through different fields of knowledge, we follow those policy analysis scholars who engaged with language and discourses. If defining “policy” is not a simple matter (Regonini, 2001) and “policy [...] is an analytic category, the contents of which are identified by the analyst” (Heclo, 1972, p. 84), we can leave from the American history (Regonini, 2001) of policy sciences, rooted in the United States culture, values and implicit and explicit assumptions (Dror, 1994), and turn to other perspectives. Following Ball (1990), we answer the question “what is policy” with the theorization of policy as discourse: by this move, we can “appreciate the way in which policy ensembles [...] exercise power through a production of truth and knowledge” (Ball, 2006, p. 48).

By this way, we think to succeed in going beyond the cited Italian rhetorical debate, bringing in it “the shaping influence exerted by power/knowledge regimes” (Grimaldi, 2012, p. 446). At the end of the analysis, in fact, we will find three transversal strategies, which are spreading their effects in the re-culturing of the whole Italian educational system: far from the rhetoric of effectiveness and neutrality of policies, we light up how this reform tries to carry out really political choices which could shape the Italian school.

So, in the first part of this work, we draw upon this literature (Ball, 1990; Ball, 1994; Ball, 2013; Serpieri, 2009) to build an “archaeological tool” for the analysis of policy texts. Looking at the policy process in an “analytics of government” perspective (Dean, 2010), we inquiry policy texts through two “how questions” – how something can be seen and perceived and how something can be thought and said –, in order to light up the regimes of visibility and enunciability (Deleuze, 1992) through which new truths are produced. More specifically, we take inspiration from Michel Foucault *oeuvre* (1981; 2002) to look for four rules, internal to the discourse, that hold together the saying and the seeing: the constitution of objects, the authorial function exerted by who is speaking, the organization of concepts and the formation of strategies.

Then, in the second part, we use this “archaeological tool” to analyse the “La Buona Scuola” reform. Focusing on a closely specified set of texts, we “archaeologyze” the policy in three steps. First of all, we consider the overall discourse and, applying the first two rules, we look for the authorial function and the constitution of objects. Then, we move to the specific contents proposed by the policy and, applying the third rule, we analyse how statements organize themselves in concepts. Finally, thanks to the fourth rule, we can draw our conclusions, depicting how these policy texts carry in the Italian education system three new strategies: the futurologist “digitalization strategy”, which disseminates the entire policy with futurist and positivist hopes; the neoliberal “marketization strategy”, which presents itself like a “site of veridiction”; and, finally, the keystone “labour strategy”, which is deeply re-articulated, from a constitutionally guaranteed social right to the new moral requirement of “decent people”.

### **An Archaeological Tool for Policy Texts Analysis**

Following governmentality studies (Fimyar, 2008; Rose, O'Malley, & Valverde, 2009; Dean, 2010), we don't look at the policy process in a classical stage model (Alexander, 1982; Linder & Peters, 1985; Schneider & Ingram, 1997), but through the lens of the “analytics of government” (Dean, 2010) perspective. In this way, policies can be interpreted focusing on four main “how questions”: how something is seen and perceived; how something is thought and questioned about; how people act and intervene on something and how people think about themselves in acting on something.

In this article, nonetheless, in order to analyze the only textual part of a policy, we narrow our attention to the first and the second “how questions”. By doing so, we aim to light up the regimes of visibility and enunciability (Deleuze, 1992) of the discourse, in the attempt to explore the policy production of knowledge: the third and the fourth “how questions”, instead, refer to dimensions of power and subjectivity, which are not in play here.

In assembling our tool, the starting point is the reflection about the relation between the discourse and the society. Following Foucault,

“in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its

chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality” (Foucault, 1981, p. 52).

But: what is discourse? We don’t think about it as “a mere intersection of things and words” (Foucault, 2002, p. 53). There is not a reality which is in touch with the language, there are not things which are directly equivalent to words: between them we can trace “the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice” (Foucault, 2002, p. 53) and linked not to the objectivity of reality nor to the language syntax, but concerning the ordering of objects. Beyond the discourse, we can find a discursive formation that establishes the “conditions of existence” (Foucault, 2002, p. 131) to which each statement will respond in order to belong to that discourse. In this sense, discourses are not something ideal, but they are deeply historical, because they are rooted in the material formation of their governing rules. Then, we can say that each discourse is constituted by elementary units, called statements: they are “enunciative function[s]” (Foucault, 2002, p. 119) which can involve different units: sometime a sentence, other times fragments of a sentence, but also series or tables or signs or math formulas or figures, up to entire documents.

If we consider these enunciative functions such as analytical units for the policy texts analysis, we have to make four kinds of inversion:

“Instead of giving a ‘meaning’ to these units, [these] function[s] relate them to a field of objects; instead of providing them with a subject, [they] open up for them a number of possible subjective positions; instead of fixing their limits, [they] place them in a domain of coordination and coexistence; instead of determining their identity, [they] place them in a space in which they are used and repeated” (Foucault, 2002, p. 119).

It’s in the Archaeology of Knowledge that Foucault is interested in outlining these four principles that define, in a correlative way, the possibility of the birth of statements, their composition within discursive formations and their chance to be considered as discourses. We can understand these four principles like four rules of the game and we can convert them in four heuristic tools to define and analyze policy texts.

#### *Rule n. 1: who is speaking?*

We “shall abandon any attempt [...] to see discourse as a phenomenon of expression” (Foucault, 1981, p. 59): according to a Foucauldian perspective, de-centering the subject is the pre-requisite for any type of investigation. The focus of the attention is not on the person who is speaking, but on the discourse itself. The speaker is not the one who is thinking and manifesting his discourse; rather, he is the one who is

exerting an authorial function (Foucault, 1981, p. 59), governed by the discourse, intended like a space of exteriority (Foucault, 2002). It is the *principle of the author*, which narrows the discourse “by the play of an identity which has the form of individuality and the self” (Foucault, 1981, p. 59). So, in the analysis of policy texts, we have not to pay attention to the individual who is speaking, with his name and surname, but to: 1) his status (Foucault, 2002, p. 55), his social role and function, the route which carried him up to there, the way by which he succeeded in gaining the right to speak; 2) the institutional site from which he’s speaking (Foucault, 2002, p. 56), an hospital or a library, a Parliament or a scientific congress, a place rather than a party; 3) the posture that he takes in relation to the object he is talking about (Foucault, 2002, p. 58), the perceiving position (such as the use of instrumental means or the reference to a formalized procedure) and his place in the wider power and knowledge network.

Thus, we don’t look at the author to understand his psychology, but what we are looking for is the authorial function he is exerting. By this way, we can say that discursive elements of a policy really manufacture subjectivities. Much more, this perspective permits us to deconstruct in detail the system of relations and differentiations among subjects involved in a policy process and also to “identify those empowerment processes which the policy enact, giving to somebody the authority to use a specific language and the privilege resulting from an exclusive and often technical use of it (Grimaldi, 2012). This will imply to inquiry the political role and the career of the policy maker, as well as those communication tools through which the text is spread.

*Rule n. 2: what are we talking about?*

Analyzing the role of the speaker, we have de-centralized the subject, while focusing on the object, we have “to dispense with “things”. To “depresentify” them” (Foucault, 2002, p. 52). Discourses are not talking about something that pre-exist them; they are not simply describing a reality that is out of them. Rather, we have to relate their objects to the discursive regularities that enable them to appear as object of the discourse: in other words, we have to look for the rules that constitute each object in the form it is talked about in the discourse.

So, in the analysis of policy texts, we have to focus on objects looking for: 1) “the first surfaces of their emergence” (Foucault, 2002, p. 45), fields (such as social groups or disciplines or aspects of life) considered in their relational dynamic and among which we recognize particular forms of distance, differentiation or regularity which enable a new object to be

seen, named and described; 2) “the authorities of delimitation” (Foucault, 2002, p. 46), the interaction among different authorities (such as institutions, scientific disciplines, popular knowledges or practices) which, at different levels, consider the same object and build it in all its dimensions; 3) “the grids of specification” (Foucault, 2002, p. 46), those systems of relations that specify, re-group, relate and contrast the different dimensions of the same object.

Anyway, these formative rules are not enough: the core of the problem is to understand which kind of relations and interactions are established among the above-cited regularities, in order to grasp the constitution of an object. This means that a policy “is characterized not by privileged objects, but by the way in which it forms objects that are in fact highly dispersed” (Foucault, 2002, p. 49). As we will see later, with this rule we are able to decompose each policy object in multiple units and to find their own provenance.

*Rule n. 3: How do concepts emerge?*

If subjects are authorial functions enabled by the discourse and if objects are temporary assemblages shaped by discourses, we “must not relate [...] the formation of concepts either to the structure of ideality or to the succession of ideas” (Foucault, 2002, p. 78). Rather, in analyzing policy texts, we have to underline how statements are organized through “forms of *succession*” (Foucault, 2002, p. 63) and “forms of coexistence” (Foucault, 2002, p. 64), by “*procedures of intervention* that may be legitimately applied” (Foucault, 2002, p. 65) to them.

In particular, these last are the warning light for the analyst. They are the means that discourses use to implement the succession and the coexistence: techniques of rewriting and methods of transcribing and translating; means used to increase approximation or to transfer from a field of application to another one; methods of systematizing already existing statements that are in a separated state (Foucault, 2002). By observing these, the analyst will be able to unhinge the aleatory novelty of the concepts: indeed, forms of coexistence light up the regularity and the not originality of the concepts, underlining that they come from, contest or repeat other concepts. On this line, we can talk about 1) fields of presence, 2) fields of concomitance and 3) fields of memory (Foucault, 2002, p. 64). They contain all those statements: 1) formulated elsewhere and considered like accepted (or criticized or modified or debated or excluded) truth, 2) which regard different objects but which are used like a model (or a premise or a contraposition), 3) which are no longer accepted nor

discussed, but in relation to which a relation of historical continuity (or discontinuity) can be established.

By doing so, we are able to reveal the internal architecture of the discourse, pointing out the structure on which it is built up: the ordering of enunciative series (such as inferences, successive implications, demonstrative reasoning, descriptions, generalizations and spatial distributions, storytelling, time series, etc.), the type of dependence of the statements (such as hypothesis and verification, general law and particular application, etc.) and the rhetorical schemata for their combination (Foucault, 2002, p. 63).

It's the *principle of the commentary* (Foucault, 1981), which exerts the double function to bring out the *not-said* and to tell again the *already-said*. This is a method to inquire the formation of concepts which underlines that they become visible and speakable through procedures that are internal to the discourse. This is a critical point for the analysis of policy texts, because it points out that policies “make available a vocabulary of concepts, ideas and values for constructing and interpreting policy problems and imagining policy solutions [...], making visible [...] the regime of truth that [...] serves in part to reproduce” (Grimaldi, 2012, p. 449). By this rule, in the empirical work, we succeed in tracing a sort of “family tree” for each concept contained in the policy text, focusing our attention on the relation among branches, rather than on what is claimed.

*Rule n. 4: How does the organization of concepts drive to the formation of strategies?*

The last rule permits us to enlarge the view. It is the mean by which we are able to connect all concepts in the text and to look the watermark overlying it. Adopting the same reversal of perspective, there is not an architect of a fundamental project to whom we can relate the formation of theoretical choices (Foucault, 2002). Instead, we have to focus on relations among concepts in order to “determine the possible *points of diffraction* of the discourse” (Foucault, 2002, p. 73). When two concepts in the same discursive formation seem to be in contradiction, we will call it a point of incompatibility (Foucault, 2002, p. 73); when two concepts, situated at the same level, create an alternative, we will note a point of equivalence (Foucault, 2002, p. 73); and finally, when equivalent and incompatible concepts, instead of being discarded, are going to form two derived discursive sub-systems, we will name it a *link point of systematization* (Foucault, 2002, p. 73). Then, we have to focus on the *economy of the discursive constellation* (Foucault, 2002, p. 74), depicting the relations



among different discourses: we have to establish when a discourse is used like a model to be applied to other discourses; or when they mutual delimit themselves; or when they place themselves in a system of analogy, opposition or complementarity (Foucault, 2002, p. 74). As we will see in the conclusion, this rule permits us to identify those transversal themes that the policy text carries out. In fact, we could say that strategies obey to the *principle of discipline*: “a discipline is not the sum of all that can be truth-fully said about something: [...] each discipline recognizes true and false propositions; but it pushes back a whole teratology of knowledge beyond its margins” (Foucault, 1981, p. 59).

#### *Final overview of the tool*

These four rules are a sort of invisible magnetic field. They hold together, through a gravitational force, the saying and the seeing: it is what Foucault names the “density of discursive practices” (Foucault, 2002, p. 145). Thanks to them, we are able to treat discourses in an instrumental way, without questioning about the truth or falsehood of what they are talking about. By doing so, we really “pass over”: we focus our attention on the internal procedures through which subjectivities are modified, things can appear and concepts are systematized and became theories. In this sense, policies are enmeshed within wider ensemble of discourses, which “need to be interpreted as unities of distribution that ‘open a field of possible options (Grimaldi, 2012, p. 450) that each policy will implement.

What we are inquiring, in its complexity and not delimitable extension, is the Foucauldian archive: it is not the sum of all the texts that a culture is able to write or save, but “the law of what can be said” (Foucault, 2002, p. 147). If the archive determines, for each statement, the system of its enunciability, of its functioning and of its formation and transformation, we will say that the policy archive is the domain in which the analyst moves (Grimaldi, 2012).

Finally, we have to keep in mind the farthestmost border of our analysis: by archaeologysing policy texts, we will not be able to determine which strategical choice is actually made, because it is “also dependent upon [...] *a field of non-discursive practices*” (Foucault, 2002, p. 75). To get to this, we have to go beyond the textual production of truth and knowledge. But these investigations concern dimensions that are beyond two “how questions” we wanted to focus on.

## Empirical Case: Archaeology of the “La Buona Scuola” Reform Policy

The use of the Foucauldian conceptual toolbox in education policy analysis refers to a broad literature (Ball, 1990; 2008; Fimyar, 2008; Peters, 2001; Serpieri, Grimaldi, & Vatrella, 2014; Bailey, 2013). In this work, we move towards an analysis of the regimes of enunciability and visibility of the latest Italian education reform policy, by the application of the above illustrated “archaeological tool”. Therefore, this analytic is interested in a closely specified set of texts, which, in our opinion, represent the “truth in progress”:

1. the “La Buona Scuola – Facciamo Crescere il Paese”<sup>1</sup> Dossier (Italian Government, 2014a)<sup>2</sup>, published on 3 September 2014;<sup>3</sup>
2. the website “<https://labuonascuola.gov.it/>”, which goes online after a few days and which was intended as the main platform to discuss the Dossier. In this way, the website should be read as a single text with the “La Buona Scuola – La Consultazione”<sup>4</sup> Report (Italian Government, 2014b)<sup>5</sup>, published on February 2015;
3. the “La Scuola che Cambia, Cambia l’Italia”<sup>6</sup> event<sup>7</sup>, which was organized on 22 February 2015 in Rome: it was the government first birthday party and the Premier Renzi celebrated it with a public debate about the Dossier and the participation results;
4. the thematic Prime Minister video (Italian Government, 2015a)<sup>8</sup> and the usual press-conference after the 52<sup>nd</sup> Cabinet (Italian Government, 2015b)<sup>9</sup>, during which the education reform was officially presented.

We choose not to consider the normative acts subsequently approved by the Cabinet and then examined and voted by the Parliament. This is a clear methodological choice, because we focus our attention on the knowledge production, while normative acts – and the process of their final parliamentary approval – regard the power relations and the subjectivity questions of the analytic of government.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Good School – Let’s Make Grow The Country”

<sup>2</sup> By now: Dossier

<sup>3</sup> <https://labuonascuola.gov.it/>

<sup>4</sup> “The Good School – The Consultation”

<sup>5</sup> By now: Report

<sup>6</sup> “The School Is Changing, It Changes Italy”

<sup>7</sup> By now: Event

<sup>8</sup> By now: Video

<sup>9</sup> By now: Press-Conference

### *Archaeology of the Overall Discourse*

In order to grasp the most general aspects of the policy, in the first step of our analytics, we will consider each document, in its entirety, like a single statement. This choice is coherent with the scalability of the analytical unit of the enunciative function and permits us to use the most detailed rules of our tool: the rule n. 1, concerning the authorial function, and the rule n. 2, concerning the formation of objects.

First of all, we question: who is speaking? Which is the authorial function exerted by the speaker and enabled by these statements? The “La Buona Scuola” policy, being Dossier, Report, Event and Video-message / Press Conference, opens a very clear authorial function: it produces a Government - and, in particular, a Premier – which is authorized to suggest and lead a reform policy. To clarify the topic, we will consider the Act 400 of 1988 concerning the discipline of government activities and the organization of the Department of the Prime Minister. Regardless of the specific provisions contained in it, a simple reading of articles 2c.3, 4 and 5c.1, c.2, c.3 is enough to perceive a bureaucratic-administrative positioning of Government and Premier political activities. Even the Constitution contains a set of norms, which bound the legislative action of the Government (see art. 76); while purely political activities are left to the Parliament and to citizens through political parties.

Actually, this is not an absolute innovation: the two decades of the so-called “Second Republic”<sup>10</sup> had already made significant changes in institutional practices and manners. In particular, the Government's practice of the first 10 years of 2000, overwhelmed by politics personalization and mediatization phenomena, had already led to various forms of mixture between administrative and political activities. Many education system reform policies (e.g.: Moratti in 2003, Fioroni in 2007 and Gelmini in 2008) are an example of these changes: they were promoted by political leaders during the election campaign and, then, included in the Government agenda with a strong political load.

In relation to “La Buona Scuola”, instead, we could say that its statements combine, into a single authorial function, political and administrative aspects, creating an unprecedented subject: a political Government, in the broadest and common sense of the first term. A partisan Government, in which there is no distinction between political

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<sup>10</sup> A journalistic term to define, in opposition to the “First Republic”, the new political system emerged in Italy between 1992 and 1994. (Bobbio, 1997).

and administrative activities: a Government that makes political proposals, political propaganda and, then, acts of adoption of its own proposals. In light of the archaeological tool above illustrated, we can underline:

- The status of who is speaking: it is always the Premier (Calise, 2016), both as Head of the Cabinet and as Secretary of the Democratic Party, a dual and con-fused (in the etymological sense of the term) role. If the Dossier and the Report have Prime Minister Office and Italian Republic logos (institutional and administrative role), audiovisual documents are offered by both the Prime Minister (in the Video) and the Secretary of the Democratic Party (in the Event: political role). This is even more evident looking at the way by which the speaker has come to play those roles: first, Secretary of the Democratic Party through primary elections (namely, a selection process internal to the Party itself); then, Prime Minister as Secretary of the Party that has the relative majority in the Parliament;

- The institutional site from which he is speaking: if in the Dossier and in the Report the site is the Prime Minister Office (institutional and administrative role); in the Event, it is the stage of a Democratic Party convention (political role);

- The posture that he takes towards the objects he is talking about: all four statements exploit the same transversal and ubiquitous instrument: the corporate identity of the presentation, which crosses through them and functions as a structuring principle. As is known, presentations are a typical marketing tool, conceived to support the selling process of a product or service. Thanks to the diffusion of computers, over time, the use of this tool has spread to various fields, in order to present content of different kind. What essentially distinguishes today's common use from the original one, is the strategy adopted in designing the graphic layout of the document. Considering "La Buona Scuola", this strategy is driven to the creation and the strengthening of a brand identity. A brand is "a coherent set of ideas in the mind of the consumer" (Cawthorne, 2013) and, since "emotions, intuitions, memory and unconscious motivations determine 80% of our decisions" (Roberts, 2009), an effective brand identity is the one "that touches audience emotions [by the principles of] archetypal branding" (Cucchi, 2013). It consists in the use of images that bring some archetypes: activators of emotions, able to call us for a journey (Pallera, 2012). Is it happening, for the "La Buona Scuola" design, something like that? The graphic layout of "La Buona Scuola" was first used in USA, in the 50s of last century, for the fast-food menus. More than this particular occurrence, we would like to underline the context recalled

by these years: the period of the economic boom and of consumerism, which will arrive in Italy at the end of that decade; the period of the birth of RAI<sup>11</sup> and of “Carousel”<sup>12</sup>.

In advertising, today, “a “vintage style” (vintage graphics) is a design highly inspired by trends of the past [...] (years 1950/1960), regarding the use of certain colors and/or graphic elements [...]: it is a highly emotional design, which belongs to the history of every man and evokes mostly nostalgic and melancholy feelings. Even the person has lived or not the years 60/70, he is nearly always attracted and intrigued by graphic elements and objects that testify our evolution process” (Montalbano). At this point, it is clear the explicit link between the graphic layout of “La Buona Scuola” and a well-defined archetype, which is able to recall the fashion of the economic boom and social values of those years. Figure 1 is illustrative in this regard.

So we brought out the authorial function performed by the speaker, which completely merges political communication, commercial sale and public administration. It produces a new specification of the speaking subject: not a politician, not an administrator, not a seller but a hybrid figure that combines these three features into a single role: the leader (Calise, 2016).

Going on in the analysis of the overall discourse and applying the second rule of our tool, the question is: what are we talking about? The first and the fourth statements talk about: “The Good School, Let’s Make Grow The Country!”. The second statement has as its topic: “The Good School, The Consultation”. The third one, finally, announces: “The School Is Changing, It Changes Italy!”.

In order to answer the previous question, we decentralized the subject. Now, in order to answer this one, we have to depresentify things. The “School”, prominent object of all these statements, is not something physical, something that exists, something that is there. Topics of these statements could have been: the educational system, or education, or even the school system, just to mention a few. The word “School” is a definite choice: it clearly refers to a “knowledge” that is at the center of the wave of transnational reforms in the neo-liberal and managerialist discourse (Capano, 2006; Grimaldi & Serpieri, The transformation of the Education

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<sup>11</sup> The Italian State Television Broadcast was born in 1954.

<sup>12</sup> It was a two minutes show where some sketches suggested a product, which was mentioned explicitly only in the final fifteen seconds.

State in Italy: a critical policy historiography from 1944 to 2011, 2012; Serpieri, Senza leadership: la costruzione del dirigente scolastico, 2012).

Figure 1. Fast Food Menu, Carousel and “La Buona Scuola” graphics



Source: our reworking

There is a broad literature which analyses the object “school”: schools that create public value (Paletta & Vidoni, 2006), schools responsible for outcomes (Paletta, 2011), schools where leadership makes the difference (Hallinger, 2012), schools in which the leader role changes (Cappiello, Paletta, & Vidoni, 2004), just to name a few. They are really authorities of delimitation, which constitute the object “school” in all its dimensions. Actually, since they are discourses derived from economics (such as economics of education), managerial sciences (such as school management) or from statistics, such authorities shape a “school” which is solid, countable, linear, like an engineering object.

The same authorities also delimit “The Good School”, anything more than “a simple headline” (Event, S. Giannini): “the control of the knowledge management cycle [...] is crucial [...] to identify the profile of a “good school” (Maviglia, 2011, p. 8). That’s all folks: the school (measurable and objectified) is good when it achieves good outcomes and makes itself examinable.

*Archaeology of Contents*

Concluded the analysis of the overall discourse, we switch to analyze the content of the policy. In this stage of the analysis, the main document will be the Dossier. It is the cornerstone of the whole policy and it functions as a real “index” of all other documents: in fact, they join to its structure with the function of commentary (Foucault, 1981).

If, in the previous step, we used the most detailed rules of our tool, by now, we will exploit only the third rule, namely the one related to the formation of concepts. Indeed, although we could have continued to use all rules in progress, we think that a more methodological thinness will lead to a greater clarity. Anyhow, the rules concerning the production of objects and the authorial function will not be ignored: rather, we can say that they will remain concealed and incorporated into a wider “way of looking” at the discourse. However, relating to some specific points, we will make explicit their use.

Once defined that the topic is the school and, much more, a particular kind of school; once outlined which one is the “good school” among all possible others; we can observe that this “good school” is the only speakable one and, more, the target to achieve. The object “good school” is conceptualized as a goal by the rhetorical combination of two statements: “Italy needs a good school” and “the Italian school has the capability [...] to be the vanguard, not the rear” (Dossier, p. 5): so, the “good school” does not still exist and, *de facto*, the existing school is its contrary (Sestito, 2010). This aim is to come, like a second statement declares: “what will be realized for the school in the next few years will determine the future” (Dossier, p. 5). Finally, a third statement grounds the truth of the entire rhetorical construction: “education is the only structural solution to unemployment” (Dossier, p. 5). What we see is a field of presence in action: this statement claims the “knowledge economy” as an undisputed and accepted truth (Peters, 2001; Ball, *The education debate*, 2013). Furthermore, by this way, aims and reasons of all following proposals are removed from the insidious and conflictual field of politics and are put directly to the “tranquil yet seductive territory” (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 188) of scientific truth. Referring to Charles Handy (defined by the Economist a “guru of managerial sciences”<sup>13</sup>), Peters points out that “the employment society is ending. Further, he sought new meanings and patterns of work, inevitably turning towards education as the panacea: as not only the means for generating new wealth, credentials and technology, but as a creator of labor-intensive employment. [...] In

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.economist.com/node/13847396>

promoting a new education agenda [...] he argued for the “home as classroom” and the “workplace as school” (2001, p. 2).

At this point, the Dossier / “fast-food menu” lists six steps to achieve the success: “employ teachers whose good school needs; [...] new opportunities for all teachers: education and career in the good school; [...] real autonomy: evaluation, transparency, openness, zero bureaucracy; [...] rethink what school teaches; [...] work-based; [...] resources for the good school: public and private” (Dossier, p. 3).

Even this index plays a key role: it sets the arrangement of the enunciative series in a logical order and determines a recursive sequential dependency between each statement. The first step makes possible the second one, but it needs the preliminary acceptance of the second itself, and so on. Enhancing the observations we made about the authorial function, the index setting seems to follow a sales contract, where some unfair terms must be signed. Now we analyze each one of these steps.

In the paragraph “Employ teachers of whom good school needs”, the relation of dependence among the statements appears immediately significant. In fact, they are organized following a “problem-solution” pattern: if the recruitment of teachers is the solution, it will need to create the problem that is going to be solved. “Hen-house classes are unacceptable” (Event, M. Renzi; Video): “we are not creating an “employment office”, we are creating a way to provide schools with teachers [...] they need” (Event, D. Faraone). Moreover, under the positioning we discussed above, the solution is pressing and, therefore, even the problem is placed in a rhetorical scheme of emergency: “it’s hard to face school structural problems without facing emergencies before, [...] we need to tackle, in a definitive way, the legacy of thousands of people that the State [...] keeps “pending” (Dossier, p. 12-14). So, the recruitment plan slips from being a problem of labour law<sup>14</sup> to becoming a cornerstone: “[we will] restore school true significance and [we will] turn it into a nursery for teachers and students who will re-start the Country through education” (Dossier, p. 15).

It is interesting, now, to make a briefly analysis of the construction of the object “flex-teachers”, making explicit what the rule n. 2 tells us. They

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<sup>14</sup> Framed by the sentence of the European Court of Human Rights of 26/11/2014, which functions as authority of delimitation of the object “precariousness at school”. See the integral text of the sentence: <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text&docid=160109&pageIndex=0&doclang=it&mode=lst&dir&occ=first&part=1&cid=123116>.



are described as “a parallel group of teachers that meets schools staffing needs” (Dossier, p. 13). In past years, the State “made a commitment” with them (Dossier, p. 21): “a promise inherited from the past” and never kept (Dossier, p. 21). Then, the object is defined by series of statistical specification grids: class of public competition, membership list, qualification (winner, suitable, licensed, etc.), regional origin (Dossier, p. 16-20). This is a numerical construction of the object: functional, classificatory and objectifying. The comparison through histograms (Dossier, p. 18) is a perfect example of this: it compares an “aged” permanent teaching staff to “young” flex-teachers. It is the creation of the previously examined “nursery of teachers”.

By the “necessary [...] conditions [which] make possible the plan” (Dossier, p. 26), all other items come into play and make the object “flex-teacher” appears: “a greater mobility” (Dossier, p. 27), “the evaluation of each profile” (Dossier, p. 27) and being “available to schools” (Dossier, p. 24). It can be governed and substituted by type and geography: it is an equivalent function rather than a person. Only accepting these conditions, it will be enrolled in the permanent staff: this is the re-design of tomorrow teachers.

This production is once more confirmed when the Dossier talks about the new public competition which will be published in 2015. It will succeed in selecting “young people [...] who choose to teach not for a permanent job [...] but because they believe in the value of education” (Dossier, p. 29). In these statements, applying the rule n. 3, that concerns the emergence of concepts, we can see a field of concomitance at work, which concerns the redefinition of the work in the school on the basis of managerial theories: “the flexible firm” [involves] more innovative, horizontal and flexible structures, based on so-called high skill, high trust and increased involvement of employees” (Peters, 2001, p. 5).

In the paragraph “New opportunities for all teachers: education and career in the good school”, the re-design of teachers and of the educational system is the target: “Teachers should teach kids to challenge themselves, but to do so credibly they must be able to believe [...] that taking a challenge will pay” (Dossier, p. 44). The reason of this is the seductive activation of a field of memory: “we have allowed the teacher’s social role [...] to become less appreciated. [...] To go back to the ancient social value, we have to change” (Event, M. Renzi).

What “to take a challenge” means, then, is immediately unveiled by two watchwords: in-service training and evaluation.

Even in this case, we see a field of concomitance in action: an elsewhere formulated statement is claimed as an accepted and undisputed truth. “Take a challenge” is the rhetorical re-articulation of the Becker's Human Capital theory (2008), moreover explicitly re-called by Matteo Renzi at the beginning of his speech during the Event: “if you want to re-start the Country for the next 30 years, you have to think about the Human Capital and the school [...] or you go nowhere”; as well as in Video: “the act [...] will include [...] a big, giant investment on Human Capital”. This is the ideological substratum of what Ball (2012, p. 19) calls “performativity”: “a powerful and insidious policy technology that is now at work at all levels and in all kinds of education and public service, a technology that links effort, values, purposes and self-understandings to measures and comparisons of output”.

We can see this technology at work: “the professional profile reinforcement starts from the codification of teachers' skills, clearly defined for each stage of their career” (Dossier, p. 45). Applying the rule n. 2, that concerns the formation of objects, we are able to see that the object “teacher” is functionalized and linearized, so that it can be made consistent and processed through an input-process-output model, such as in school effectiveness prescriptions (Scheerens, 1990). These ones, in fact, play the role of authorities of delimitation of the object.

At the level of concepts, instead, the rule n. 3 lets us to underline that the truth of this last statement is explicitly referred back to an umpteenth field of presence: “As well as in international experiences (and as well as explicitly required by the EU Commission Communication “Rethinking Education”), educational systems must be based on a shared view of teachers quality” (Dossier, p. 45).

So far, the policy has created an object “teacher” which is: objectified, instrumentally handled and manipulable; flexible and interchangeable; measurable, whose value is itemized in a linear model. These are three of the four criteria that Radin (2001) defines in the construction of his “commodification index” (Ball, 2012). The fourth is the monetary equivalence and it cannot miss: “we need to drag out teachers from the greyness of undifferentiated payments. [...] It is necessary to rethink the teachers career: we will introduce elements of differentiation based on the recognition of merit and value” (Dossier, pp. 49-50).

Making explicit the combined use of rules n. 2 and 3, we can recap: from the opening field of presence, an uncritically accepted truth is claimed and, on its basis, all following statements are consequentially organized; through authorities of delimitation and grids of specification,

the policy defines the new configuration of the object “teacher”. This is probably the best way to observe how “regimes of visibility and enunciability” work.

In the paragraph “The real self-government: evaluation, transparency, openness and zero bureaucracy”, we are at the core of the production of the object “school”: “the school [must] radically revise the way it works” (Dossier, p. 62). This means that “we must fully realize the school self-government” (Dossier, p. 62): the school keystone is recognized in the self-government. It is not a self-government yet to come, but an already codified one: “self-government probably dates from acts at the time of the Berlinguer Reform” (Video). Therefore, this older reform policy works as a field of presence, as an accepted truth, but also as a field of memory: it’s an historical precedent and what comes in play now is the historical filiation and the ideal continuity, rather than a clear codification.

The re-articulation of the self-government occurs in four steps: 1) “there is no true self-government without responsibility. And there is no responsibility without evaluation” (Dossier, p. 63); 2) “the full access to data about the school must be the basis of the self-government” (Dossier, p. 67); 3) “self-government means good governance of the school” (Dossier, p. 64) and, finally, 4) “self-government is the opposite of self-referentiality” (Dossier, p. 64).

Each one of these statements comes from a field of concomitance. The first move derives from the combined action of New Public Management theories (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993; Grimaldi, Landri, & Serpieri, 2016), which led “the fashion of promoting the idea of school self-government” (Paletta & Vidoni, 2006, p. 27), and of the Economy of Education, for which “the high degree of autonomy granted to each level [...] fits well with the principle of subsidiarity, by providing, at the same time, some forms of control” (Paletta & Vidoni, 2006, p. 59). The second move, instead, refers to the neo-liberal economic ideology: the information availability is one of key-features for the just functioning of the free market. Finally, even the third and the fourth moves derive from the Economy of Education ground: schools self-government can be interpreted in a client-to-agents model, in which “without conflicting interests or asymmetric information, agents behavior is compliant with preset targets” (Paletta & Vidoni, 2006, p. 109). Here we can see the emergence of “good governance” and “open school” concepts: where “good” means “examinable”, as we have seen for the object “good school”, and “open” means “decreasing the risk of asymmetric information”.

In the paragraph “Rethinking what is learnt at school”, the Dossier focuses on what should be taught in “The Good School”. About this, the policy systematizes different concepts. Firstly, it places a theme from a nationalist discourse: “school has weakened its ability of transmitting the historical, cultural and creative heritage [...]. An heritage [...] that characterizes our identity” (Dossier, p. 89). So, the increase of music and arts studies is politically claimed in a nationalist and elitist fashion. An economic reason nonetheless immediately follows this political perspective: “we will be a prosperous Country if we are able to exploit the best of our features [...]. We need to train young people to start again from the *Made in Italy*, [...] by choosing entrepreneurial ways” (Dossier, p. 91). “When we think about the culture [and about] the idea of educating to the beauty of music [...]; it will be useless to say “I have to keep up the Opera and symphonic foundations”, if I’m not able, on the offer side, to create the conditions for which the Opera and symphonic foundations can drive themselves forward; if we do not educate children to the demand [...] of music “ (Event, M. Renzi). The political discourse is made dependent on an economic field of concomitance and is systematized in a new concept, that we could call “economical and political” (in which the order of factors reflects their hierarchy).

Physical education follows the same pattern: initially, it is justified by neoclassical and conservative political claims. Then, these claims are placed in a logical and chronological dependency on the future policy for the health of the Country: “sport [...] is considered also something useful [...] to the State treasury, since everything important to avoid health expenditure will not arise at the last moment” (Event, M. Renzi).

In the paragraph “Work-based”, purposes follow contents. Already this title can be interpreted as the action of a field of memory. The principle of Art. 1 of the Italian Constitution is transcribed and rewritten: from being an ideal and general value to which the whole Republic will tend, it becomes the concrete aim of one of its articulations.

This procedure of intervention operates by generating a new conceptualization: the field of concomitance of youth unemployment and the phenomenon of so-called NEET<sup>15</sup>, a real actual emergency, are systematized in an almost unique relationship with another field of concomitance. “[Unemployment and NEET are] mostly fed by the highest European school dispersion” (Dossier, p. 104): this statement derived

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<sup>15</sup> Not (engaged) in Education, Employment or Training.

directly from the Confindustria economic discourse: “most of the youth unemployment [...] depends on early school leaving” (Event, I. Lo Bello).

Thanks to this regularity, the Dossier can state: “We must make the school the most effective structural policy at our disposal against unemployment” (Dossier, p. 104); while the Premier can sentence: “our bet on the school makes the [economic] growth” (Press Conference, M. Renzi). Then, the new target is clearer coded: “the school must train good citizens who will have means, knowledge and skills to live as protagonists in the labour market” (Dossier, p. 106). One of the classical social and political objectives of the school, namely “citizens education”, is here re-structured and re-specified in an economic standpoint, through establishing a constitutive relation between the good citizenship and possession of the ability to “live as protagonists in the labour market”.

On the means level, there is something even more advanced. The “school-work alternance” system, in fact, is identified as the cornerstone to be strengthened to achieve the aim. But the lack of resources leads to a further step: “it is necessary to involve enterprises more directly [...]. We will say no more “school-work alternance”. Rather we will say “joined training” [...]. Enterprises and school will co-design courses” (Dossier, p. 109). The field of presence of public finances rewrites the dependency between the education and the economic statement: it establishes a new hierarchy in the order of enunciative series.

In the final paragraph “Resources for the Good School, public and private”, as in a typical business proposal, the focus is about the money, both as purchase prices or investment costs: “an ambitious project is not without cost” (Dossier, p. 118). As we have seen in the previous point, the field of presence of public finances rewrites again the hierarchy between what is social and what is economic. “Public resources will never be enough” (Dossier, p. 124): this is the truth claimed and uncritically accepted through a form of coexistence.

We can find the first procedure of intervention in statements on public resources: they must become “more significant and more reliable” (Dossier, p. 120), but they must also be “allocated in a transparent and rewarding way” (Dossier, p. 121). What it is at stake, here, is the organizational aspect of the neo-liberal economy: the market is the governing principle which is embodied in the teachers market (with its merit-based payment), in the schools market (with the destination of the

MOF<sup>16</sup> “to schools which develop improvement practices” (Dossier, p. 121), and in the supplementary teaching activities market.

Finally, statements on private resources lead the re-articulation in depth. Thanks to the school new aim, it is possible to claim that “it applies to school as to many other fields [...]: adding public resources to private interventions is the only way to return to compete” (Dossier, p. 124). The school, deeply enmeshed in the competitive State in a State-competing system (Foucault, 2007), has the primary function of catching economic resources. It no longer matters if these resources come from the business world: it crashes no more with social aims of the school, since entire system purposes were entirely re-written in an economic key.

### *Archaeology of Participation*

There is one more discourse we want to analyze: it is the theme of participation. There are various statements which concern with it, both in the Dossier, in the Event and in the Video. Furthermore, the Website and the Report explicitly concern this topic.

This is introduced by the Dossier, when it says that “[it is offered] to all innovators of Italy. [...] Because they will help us to improve proposals [...]. Since, for the Good School, a Government is not enough. A whole Country is necessary” (Dossier, p. 9). Beyond the rhetoric, a subjectivity is manufactured: the power of speech, the possibility of intervening in the discourse, is clearly attributed to a specific category of people. Unlike processes of subjectivation that creates networks of experts (Rose & Miller, 1992; Grimaldi E. , 2012), here it is something different. We can say that this is an ethical/ideological based subjectivation: “we decided to snatch school from insiders” (Video; Press Conference M. Renzi); innovators are “students, teachers, principals and school staff [...], parents and all those who want to have their say” (Dossier, p. 132). As in all subjectivation processes, enabling the right to speech for someone is to disable the same for others: “who has ideas, bring them out! Who comes here to do foolish and to get on television, we give it to him, but what we are doing is something else” (Event, M. Renzi).

The object “participation”, then, becomes even “material” through the Report. In its index, the order of statements (Report, p. 2) defines a story-telling scheme, whose epic features are established through rhetorical patterns, like in the title of the second section: “a debate great as the

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<sup>16</sup> Fund for the Improvement of Education Supply

Country” (Report, p. 8) and the question-answer: “How big is this consultation? The biggest in Europe” (Report, p. 17).

Moreover, by the rule n. 2 of our archaeological tool, we are able to highlight the formation of the object. The participation process is reconstructed ex-post through a succession of numerical and statistical statements: from page 10 to page 15 and from page 21 to page 69, more than 50 pages (on 70) of the Report are a sequence of graphs and numbers, used to show the general aspects (first six pages) and the content analysis (the other 49). The same “numerical rationality” is enhanced in the Video, where these statements are placed at the opening, and in Matteo Renzi’s Press-Conference. We can see, through this, that natural sciences determine the manageability of the “participation” object: its social complexity and multiversity are objectified and made manageable by a scientific observation; using instruments that count, link and classify it on the basis of formalized quantitative properties.

Finally, the analysis of grids of specification highlights that, while the overall object description is made almost exclusively through whole numbers (Report, pp. 10-15), the content analysis uses exclusively percentages and their graphical representations (Report, pp. 21-69). The participation is not related to the universe of all potentially interested people; while the results are related to the universe of all people who participated.

### **Conclusion**

Paraphrasing Foucault (1998), each policy analysis has value as a critique. Coherently with his role of destroyer of taken-for-granted assumptions, the analyst offers himself to the policy-maker, in a parrhesiastic game (Foucault, 2005), like a truth-teller: someone who is able to show how decision-making is not under the boundaries of necessity, but the exercise of a real choice.

A thorough analysis of the formation of strategies is not possible in this work, because it involves a wider ensemble of discursive and non-discursive practices. What we can do is to determine the points of diffraction of the discourse (Foucault, 2002), to light up the fields of possible options (Grimaldi, 2012) that the policy realizes. Within this aim, we found three transversal strategies.

The first one is the futurologist “Digital Era strategy” and it constitutes all ultra-modern aspects of the policy. This theme comes into play every time that the policy talk about digital instruments: they will realize the de-

bureaucratization of administrative procedures, the digitalization of the school and learning innovations. But “Digital Era” is much more than instruments: it is a more articulated and complex strategy, which disseminates enthusiastic effects. Every time we meet a teen-age slang (such as: *barcamp*, *hackaton*, *co-design jams*); everywhere we read about a revolution (e.g.: “throw in the air desks and chairs: make the school you want!”); every time it needs to balance the imposition of a new hierarchical order (e. g.: the de-bureaucratization placed immediately after the definitive consolidation of the head-teachers in the ministerial bureaucracy): “Digital Era” is the futuristic hope of an imminent progress. “Digital Era”, lastly, is the trust in computing technologies and, through them, in a total knowable reality: the significance of the computational thinking to solve problems and the countability of the participation are the main line of a newborn neo-positivist narrative.

The second transversal theme is the “Marketization strategy”. It is the most diffuse one and we meet with it in many points along the whole policy: from the constitution of teachers like objects in competition, to the fabrication of a market in which they can be bought and sold; from the setting of a financing system in which there is no distinction between the public and the private, to the planning of a market in which schools are in competition for public loans. Also “Marketization” is much more than an instrument: it is a “site of veridiction” (Foucault, 2008), in which the law of supply and demand is unquestionable and appears the structuring principle of thinking and decision-making. The politics itself is interpreted like a market and the presentation of the reform policy itself is made through sales tools.

Finally, the third transversal theme is the “Labour strategy”, which is the keystone of the policy. First of all, labour ensures discursive continuity: constitutionally found in the past and seriously undermined in the present, it will be restored, thanks to “*La Buona Scuola*” reform, in the near future. It is through this continuity that a final reversal is made possible. Where it was an incompatibility between the right to work (in the past) and the truth of the Market (in the present), labour slips from being the right which enables the citizenship, to the target of the citizenship itself. Furthermore, the “Labour strategy” is at the core of the first part of the policy, concerning the employment of the flex-teachers: what emerges is the notion of a flex-labour for a commodified worker (Ball, 2012). Lastly, a moral dimension enriches labour: when self-government and evaluation are merged in a necessary unit, labour becomes the new moral requirement of “decent people”. We can say that ethics is the fulfillment



of a triad: by now, labour is qualified as teleological, entrepreneurial and pastoral (Foucault, 2007).

Citing Ball: “futurology is a mysterious and dangerous art” (Ball, 2013, p. 224). Probably we are still far apart the profitability of the British education system (Ball, 2013): truths manufactured in this policy, highly contested too, have a long way to become current practices. But international pressures are increasing and the crisis – the economic one and, mostly, the labour one – produces opportunities for significant re-articulations of discourses which constitute our archive. Particularly, we can say that the re-articulation in progress is the slipping of the school from a disciplinary *dispositif* for the fabrication of docile people (Foucault, 1995) to a governmental *dispositif* for the fabrication of mobile people.

In the ancient Greece, education was the necessary training to discover the truth and to take care of the self (Foucault, 2005): it was the answer to the problematization of the alethurgy of the truth in the polis (Foucault, 2005). Today, education – turned into the school *dispositif* (Serpieri, 2016) – is at the center of the re-articulation of relations between the Market and the Labour: perhaps, this problematization could be the starting point to write a genealogy of the modern school.

More than a conclusion, we found a beginning.

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