The administrative, technical and ancillary (ATA) staff of schools in Italy: a "digital" experience of professional in-service training

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Abstract: This article focuses on the need to promote and implement measures to strengthen the provision of multimedia tools and skills in the use of new technologies for the non-teaching staff of Italian schools. Presenting the key findings that emerged from the evaluation of the "PuntoEdu ATA" course, attention is focused on two innovative elements of the course: the blended learning model and the user for which it is intended. The analysis of the assessments provided by participants through a methodological quantity and quality path supplies an identikit of the ATA staff in Italy and investigates the real usefulness of the course for the purposes of work. Finally, the article identifies some elements of improvement in view of the model of lifelong learning and refresher courses to ATA staff, which is fundamental to educational institutions to adequately address the work of cultural and organisational renewal under way.

Keywords: lifelong learning, school staff, new technologies, blended learning

Introduction

Nowadays the growing and apparently unstoppable use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has led to significant changes in teaching and learning processes. The new technologies, after a brief starting

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period of mainly instrumental use, have quickly recognized as useful tools for developing the individual empowerment, confirming themselves as valuable resources for helping students in exploring their interests and actively taking part to the learning process.

The article, trough the examination and evaluation of a lifelong learning experience, aims to investigate whether, and under which conditions, the use of ICT in educational and training paths could benefit students, verifying some commonly accepted hypothesis. The first one refers to the fact that the use of multimedia instruments favours students' higher levels of attention and involvement than traditional (in presence) training. The second hypothesis to be verified is that an higher freedom in the choice of learning time and modalities guarantees higher levels of training path's flexibility and personalization. Strictly connected to this point, and with particular reference to professional in-service training' experience, the article aims to verify if and how the use of new technologies could really allow workers to effectively combine working and training activities. Moreover, the deep description of the blended learning model adopted in "PuntoEdu ATA" course and the analysis of the periodicity between online and in presence activities lead to reflect on how the two different learning environments could be effectively integrated in order to enlarge the opportunities of interaction and collaborative learning among students (Cupaiolo, 2001). On this point, the study highlights the opportunity to avoid to reproduce in an online environment those activities which could be more successful in an "in presence" situation, suggesting some modalities to effectively interchange and crossbreed the two learning environments, maximizing the advantages and reducing the respective drawbacks.

On such basis the article is focused on the targeted user, supplying an identikit of the ATA staff in Italy, characterized by a quite high mean age, a sustained seniority of service and, generally, a low technological familiarity and scarce propensity to use the new technologies in everyday life as well in workplace. The analysis of the course assessments provided by the participants seems interesting to verify the impact of the use of ICT for such a targeted professional category. In particular, the participants recognised the "practical relapse" of the course, i.e. its usefulness for working aims: the training experience seems to have promoted in the ATA staff an aware use of the new technologies as tools trough which optimize activities carried out daily at school. This leads to highlight the need to increase the training experiences addressed to the ATA staff as well the opportunity of a broader consideration in order to rethink a better

improvement intervention and planning of the entire school services. So, the article provides some cues to answer to recent questions animating the debate on the use of new technologies in educational settings, particularly underlining the key role of training in linking the ICT topics to the competences historically characterizing the professional category of ATA staff.

Ongoing training: rights and obligations of the ATA staff of the school

"Training is a key strategic lever for the professional development of staff, supporting the objectives of change and addressing to an effective policy for human resource development". With these words art. 61 of the Italian National Labour Contract (CCNL) relative to the four-year regulatory period 2002-05 and the 2002-03 two-year economic period for the school staff highlights the need to activate the processes of training and retraining of ATA staff in order to adequately respond to the new demands of work, through acquisition of knowledge in regulatory, organisational and procedural information designed to make the administrative machinery more efficient and effective. Already the previous CCNL 1998/2001 had indicated the need for a permanent system of ATA staff training to adequately respond to changes in the educational institutions due to the law on administrative decentralisation[2]. At the same time, this system was recognised as a duty, as well as a right of these professionals, as «functional to implementation of autonomy and professional development under the scope of the reorganisation of the administrative, technical and general services, especially in relation to the processes of computerisation» (Article 7 paragraph 2). With particular reference to the latter aspect, the Committee of Ministers for the Information Society in 2002 has planned human resource development in public administration, envisaging that one third of the training would be delivered online, in order to reduce costs and make it easier to use, to ensure widespread access and to customise the training content according to its users (Barabaschi, 2009). This plan fits in with the continuing vocational education and training system in Italy, which is quite complex and fragmentary since it is based on a variety of instruments referring to a policy and legislative scenario in constant evolution over recent years. The general aim of the plans has been to

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[2] Italian Law 23 December 1994 no. 724.

establish a more coherent supply structure to achieve the objectives of employability, active citizenship, social inclusion and personal development. So, in the 2007-2013 round, Italy's National Strategic Framework has listed human capital as one of its key priorities, involving, more specifically, the integration of education/training/employment systems and lifelong learning (Isfol, 2010). In this framework, it has to be underlined the impact of informational innovations and their interdependence with lifelong learning, which are not only confined to educational institutions (in space), nor are limited to specific or static (in time) training (Jobring and Svensson, 2010). The issue is particularly timely considering that the European Commission, through specific initiatives (such as "E-learning - think of tomorrow's education", "e-Europe Action Plan 2005" and the MAP, "E-learning, 2004-2006") has supported the effective integration of information and communication technologies in education and training in order to fully exploit the potential of the Internet to improve lifelong learning. More recently, the European Commission has pointed out that an increasing share of learning occurs at the workplace, in non-formal contexts and in leisure time - often through new ICT-based learning tools and methods (European Commission, 2008). Consequently, the e-learning defines the effective response to the need for updating (re-skilling) of the workforce in Europe (Spinella *et al.*, 2004, p. 67), promoting the acquisition of knowledge and skills for professional development and personal development of individuals and their active participation in the Knowledge Society (Liscia, 2006, p. 60). Based on these premises, the National Agreement between MIUR and the Italian Trade Unions of 20th October 2008[3] has proposed the implementation of the training course PuntoEdu ATA, proposing such initiative as a fundamental part of the process of building a permanent training system aimed to improvement, support and development of professional skills and qualification of the ATA staff.

Unusual end users: the ATA staff of the school

An innovative aspect of the PuntoEdu course is the fact that it is aimed at the ATA staff of the school, which despite the programmed intentions contained in legislation and initiatives, at the national and European level

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[3] Available at the address: www.edscuola.it/archivio/norme/varie/acnazataart2.pdf

(mentioned at the beginning of this article), is still rarely the targeted users of professional in-service training. For the 2010-2011 school year the ATA staff was made up of 221,289 people: the largest category, with 142,456 employees, is that of Scholastic Collaborators, followed by Administrative Assistants (50,642) and Technical Assistants (16,509). The remaining 11,682 employees are made up of Directors of the General Administration Services, Workers for Farm Companies, Cloakroom Attendants, Cooks and Nurses (Table 1).

Table 1: Administrative, technical and ancillary (ATA) – Scholastic and educative institutions – Staff numbers school year 2010/11

Professional role	2010/11 staff numbers
Scholastic Collaborator	142,456
Administrative Assistant	50,642
Technical Assistant	16,509
DGAS, Workers for Farm Companies, Cloakroom Attendants, Cooks, Nurses	11,682
Total	221,289

Source: Our elaboration of the provisions concerning the determination of the staffing of administrative, technical and ancillary staff of the school sector and the consistency of the personnel for the 2008/2009 scholastic year - Ministry of Public Education – Department for education – General Head Office for school staff

The analysis of the data in historic series from the school year 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 relating to the staffing of the three major professional roles shows a progressive decline in recruitment in the five-year period, amounting to 35,008 employees less for the 2010-2011 school year (Table 2). The constant cuts in staff in recent years have caused widespread discontent among the ATA staff, who complain of an excessive increase in work and responsibility, which is not reflected by an adequate legal or economic recognition. For years, the relative associations[4] and trades union organisations[5] have been endeavouring to define and implement, with the Ministry of Education, a project on the set up of services of the school, on autonomy and the quality of ATA work (Mancuso, 2007).

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[4] Among the most important one recalls the National Association of ATA Staff (ANPA), the National Association of Administrative Assistants (A.N.A.AM) and the National Association of School Technicians (A.N.TE.S.).

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Table 2: Administrative, technical and ancillary (ATA) staff: main professional profiles – Scholastic and educational institutions – Historic series from 2006/2007 to 2010/2011 school year

Professional role	2006/07 school yr. staffing	2007/08 school yr. staffing	2008/09 school yr. staffing	2009/10 school yr. staffing	2010/11 school yr. staffing	Difference 2010/2011/ 2006/2007	% change
Scholastic Collaborator	166,266	164,615	163,776	153,343	142,456	-23,81	-14,3
Administrative Assistant	58,101	56,894	56,422	53,682	50,642	-7,459	-12,8
Technical Assistant	20,248	1,908	19,355	17,685	16,509	-3,739	-18,5
Total	24,4615	24,0589	23,9553	22,471	20,9607	-35,008	-14,3

Source: Our elaboration of the provisions concerning the determination of the staffing of administrative, technical and ancillary staff of the school sector and the consistency of the personnel for the 2006-2007 and 2008/2009 scholastic years - Ministry of Public Education – Department for education – General Head Office for school staff

However, this still seems not to be followed by appropriate actions in the political-administrative and financial management areas to improve the employment status of these professionals, so that among them they felt like "the last in line, as if their work was completely useless and worthless"[5]. What is being asked for in a very loud voice is the possibility of "living with dignity one's professional skills" (Corradini, 2007), putting an end to the "imposition of a job" that changes from year to year, requiring more and more specific knowledge, for which each person has to take care of his/her own training, often obliging a "change of skin"[6] and reducing individual figures to "jokers" to be used according to the needs of school managers[7]. Therefore, the PuntoEdu course takes on significant importance not only for the aforementioned purpose of adapting skills to the innovations of the school system, but also to give more "social visibility" to a profession rarely at the centre of political debates, and instead in need of safeguarding and protection just as other categories.

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[5] From a letter sent by the Administrative Assistants of the Teaching management of San Mauro Torinese to the Minister of Education on 2 May 2007, available at the address http://nuke.anaam.it

[6] From a message posted in the blog of the Technical Assistants, available at the address http://assistecnici.wordpress.com

[7] From a message posted in the blog of the Technical Assistants, available at the address http://assistecnici.wordpress.com

PuntoEdu ATA: new technologies as tools for professional in-service training

The training model adopted in PuntoEdu ATA is blended learning (Bonk & Graham, 2005; Ligorio *et al.*, 2006; Picciano & Dziuban, 2007), characterised by moments of training face-to-face (organised by the Regional School Offices on the basis of regional integrative bargaining) and distance learning through the online learning environment (created by the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy). The training plan envisages the achievement of 40 credits, that is 16 for the 8 hours of online training (1 hour equals 2 credits) and 24 for activities face-to-face, divided into 6 hours corresponding to the attending of the Professional Scholastic Laboratory[8] and in 6 hours accrued during classroom lectures. This system allows each student to choose among the online activities those that he/she prefers to reach the total number of credits: send the form upon completion of each proposed activity, participate in thematic forums and download the study material. The online learning environment also presents a variety of functions to support the students during their training and their e-learning tools designed to facilitate interaction and collaboration among the participants (Rivoltella, 2003; Calvani, 2006):

- access to fields and topics in an area of guidance material;
- operational and financial proposals;
- links to other resources on the topics proposed in the network;
- a help desk by e-mail and online page server (a contextual aid that provides information on the functions of the main navigation keys, modules and learning objectives);
- a portfolio, through which each student can monitor the activities and credits earned;
- textual chat to communicate in real-time;
- notice board, virtual area where tutors can share information of common interest, schedule, the instrument with which the tutor remembers events, meetings and work deadlines;

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[8] The Professional Scholastic laboratory envisages that the course participant goes in-depth, in agreement with the Director of the General and Administrative Services, with a work experience relative to the new duties, to be carried out on the basis of the experience gained during training.

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- forum, a tool that allows students to communicate in asynchronous mode;
- synchronous laboratory, a space where students can work in groups collaboratively and in real time, accessing the materials proposed by the tutor or work colleagues sharing and editing documents;
- repository, a database that collects the processed result of collaboration between members of the groups working online.

Given the structure of the course, assessment activities started by focusing on some specific items of the evaluation, selected from among those considered essential for building validated measurement models of training provided through the use of new technologies (Trentin, 2001): the individual characteristics of users, the response of those attending the course to the methodological approach used, the training materials, the technology tools, the learning environment at the local, virtual and social level, the dimension of the involvement and participation. In particular, the research set itself the objective of investigating two different aspects: a) the *effectiveness of the learning process*, understood in terms of knowledge of the contents and ability to apply them to concrete working contexts and change of behaviour; b) the *efficiency of the learning process* where indicators are the use of available resources, the rate of return of questionnaires and exercises and participation in collaborative activities. The multidimensional evaluation system adopted, considering a variety of factors (economic, organisational, social), turns out to be more suited to modern educational contexts, particularly those oriented to vocational training and related more closely to the new dimensions of organisational learning understood as lifelong learning (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2000; Gherardi, 2008).

In addition to the above it adds the awareness that, in the case of a technology-enhanced learning systems, the level of evaluation complexity increases because technological aspects are involved, besides the elements considered in traditional training systems (input, output, constraints and resources). Such elements cannot be classified as purely instrumental, because they materially and functionally affect a specific training model.

The methodological tools used to investigate the aforesaid dimensions were an online questionnaire and several batteries of online focus groups. The decision to apply two of the traditional survey instruments to conduct social research in a virtual setting is linked to the specificities of the PuntoEdu course. Firstly, the fact that the course users, located in different

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regions of Italy, could hardly have been surveyed without the use of a heavy deployment of time and resources (financial and human), where, instead, the Internet ensured a wide geographical coverage. Secondly, the online methodology was aimed at testing the computer skills of the course users, giving them another opportunity to explore the use of new technologies, consistent with one of the aims of PuntoEdu, that is to raise the level of technological familiarity of the users.

The heterogeneity of ATA staff: professional profiles and computer skills

The online questionnaire was filled in by about 39,000 course users, representing 76.2% of the total population of participants in the current year (51,135 employees). There is a prevalence of Scholastic Collaborators (71.3%), followed by Administrative Assistants (21.6%) and Technicians (6.8%). The incidence of other professionals (Cooks, Cloakroom Attendants, Nurses and Farm workers)[9] is quantitatively residual and not consistent (adding up to less than 1%). The profile of respondents is characterised by a high prevalence of female gender (males are a third of the sample) and a decidedly mature average age: only 3.4% of respondents were of less than 40 years and the sample splits between a range of 41-50 years (45.2%) and those over 50 (50.6%). There follows from this a high length of service: about 58% of cases recorded seniority of between 11 and 20 years, a fifth has been in service for over 20 years and more than 15% of the sample the length of service ranges between 5 and 10 years. The regions of origin most represented were Lombardy (13.9%), Campania (13%) and Sicily (10.8%), followed by Latium (9.3%), Apulia (8.8%) and Veneto (8.5%). Very small and unrepresentative was the presence of course users from Liguria, the Aosta Valley, Trentino Alto Adige and Umbria (all below 0.2%). In summary, the macro-regions, however, reflect an adequate geographical spread across the country: 39.2% in the North, 18.7% in the Centre and 41.8% in the South and the Islands.

A section of the questionnaire was specifically designed to investigate the level of computer literacy as well as frequency of use and intended use of new technologies in everyday life and in the workplace. First and foremost, the use of the Internet and new technologies in everyday life is

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[9] The Directors of General and Administrative Services, belonging to the ATA professional category, did not take part in the training initiative.

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still limited to little or nothing for more than half of the respondents (51.3%), although a more frequent or regular use was found in 48.2% of cases. The reason for use mainly reflects motivations of updating: for useful topics (25%) or regulatory updates (24.6%) both for work, to learn about news events that took place in the world (22.1%), or to keep in touch via email with friends (15.2%) or colleagues (13%).

Significant insights emerge from prior knowledge of some programs and the most popular tools. About 70% of respondents use Word or other text programs (34.8% regularly, 33.3% occasionally). The figure fell slightly to just under half in the case of programs such as Excel or similar (use on a regular basis is claimed by 21.4% of the sample, occasional use by 31.1%). Much less known and used is the presentation software such as PowerPoint and the like (only 9.3% of respondents use them regularly, 32.2% occasionally). 65% use e-mail, more than half of the cases visit sites of online newspapers (34.3% occasionally, 22.2% regularly), and 66% visit the Italian Ministry of Education site (37.1% regularly and just 28.8% occasionally). Two thirds of respondents know how to search the Internet using Google, the search engine used regularly by 44% of respondents and occasionally by 27%. The percentage of people who say "I've never heard of" and "I've heard about it, but I've never visited/used it" instead stood at the highest values corresponding to some online communication means and social network sites. 74% of the sample responds in this way with reference to Skype (used regularly by only 7.3% of cases, occasionally by 15.9%), 65% in relation to Messenger (in this case the proportion of subjects who make regular use rose to 10.6% and that of those who use it only occasionally to 20.8%) and 74% in relation to blogs (used regularly by only 6.4% of the sample, occasionally by 17.5%). With regard to social networking sites, YouTube is not known by 60% of respondents (22% has never heard of it and 38%, while being aware of its existence, has never used it), the share of those who have used it sometimes amounted to 24%, while that of those who use it regularly drops to 11%. Facebook records the lowest spread among ATA staff: 61% of respondents has never used it, 22% has never heard of it and only 18% have looked at least once for an old friend on Facebook (only 9% claims to do it regularly). However, the general lack of computer literacy of the sample should be seen considering some significant differences between the different professional ATA profiles. These depend, on the one hand, on different propensities in using new technologies for personal interests and, on the other hand, to the heterogeneity of work duties. If, for some professional profiles, computer

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use is required by daily work activities (such as administrative assistants and technicians), the same is not true for others, who rarely (if ever) need to use new technologies to perform work tasks (think of the scholastic collaborators, cooks, cloakroom attendants, nurses and farm workers). So, inevitably, the level of computer skills and the utilisation rate of some multimedia tools are generally higher in the case of administrative assistants and technicians, compared with scholastic collaborators, cooks, cloakroom attendants, nurses and farm workers.

Overall assessment of the course: practical effects and blended training model

Overall, the course evaluation is very positive, with an average of 4.7 on a scale from 1 (lowest satisfaction) to 6 (highest satisfaction). To confirm this, nine out of ten respondents say they are willing to and interested in repeating such a training experience in the future and recognise the usefulness of being able to continue to access an online learning environment even after the end of the course. When asked to justify such a response, most of the participants recognised the usefulness of PuntoEdu *to broaden and deepen personal knowledge* relative to both the *use of computers and new technologies*, as well as for competencies to be used in the workplace, providing *a necessary professional updating*. This confirms the overall outcome of the training, which gives, in one third of cases, the knowledge that participants have benefited from an experience of personal growth (30.7%), useful to share work issues with colleagues (18.3%) and an effective learning of computer skills (14.8%), and, overall, an opportunity to enhance their personal and professional skills (14.3%). From the data, therefore, it appears that most participants considered one of the aims of the project clearly reached, that is increasing the level of familiarity with computer tools, essential to improve the quality of education services and to adapt professional skills to the innovations of the school system, satisfying the requirements connected with a regime of school autonomy (Fischer, 2003).

With regard to the blended training model, 85%[10] said they would agree that PuntoEdu was more effective than a purely online course and 80% consider it more effective than a course attended face-to-face. For 83% of

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[10] The figure, like the following, is supplied by the sum of those who reply "more in agreement than in disagreement" and "in agreement".

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the cases the hours spent attending the course face-to-face were useful to further the training content and 80% recognised the importance of the same for learning to use the platform and tools online. Recognition by 85% of respondents of the usefulness of hours online to deepen knowledge of the training content further reinforces the validity of the blended model. Finally, the overall result of the commitment of the course compared with a face-to-face course shows that the blended mode turned out to require a greater commitment than that required in a course only face-to-face (a position shared by 84% of respondents), but the positivity expressed in the items above with respect to the combination of hours face-to-face/online highlights the effectiveness of blended recognised by those interviewed. From the views expressed by the participants in focus groups the advantage of the face-to-face are to be found first and foremost in direct contact with students and tutors, the immediacy of feedback and solutions to any difficulties and/or clarification regarding the training content. In addition, the fact that, inevitably, when they are face-to-face there are no technical problems that might potentially affect online training (both due to lack of computer skills by course participants and those related to difficulty connecting to the Internet). Lastly, the online platform is praised for the richness and diversity of training materials, which you can use when necessary, whenever congenial to each of us, highlighting, in this way, the flexibility of online learning. The summary of the blended training model allows one to reflect on two main aspects. On the one hand, the integrated use of multimedia technologies as tools for teaching and learning with traditional training methods (face-to-face) seems to have ensured higher levels of flexibility and customisation of training, while allowing workers to reconcile the continuity of commitment to working with the upgrading of their skills (Giorgetti & Palumbo, 2003). On the other hand, the use of online communication tools and the resources of the platform is inevitably related to familiarity with computer tools. The views expressed by the course participants, in fact, being on two diametrically opposed levels. On the one hand, subjects with a high degree of technological fluency acknowledge that they benefited from these tools, especially related to the ability to communicate in real time (chat) or delayed (forum), with colleagues located in all regions of Italy, with whom they could not have made contact in other ways. On the other hand, there are numerous testimonies that trace the poor (sometimes non-) use of such tools back to insufficient technological knowledge on a personal level, which prevented (or severely limited) their usage.

Towards a lifelong learning system in schools

What has been said so far enables us to identify some strengths and weaknesses of the PuntoEdu course, consideration of which offers food for thought in view of the creation of the model of lifelong training and retraining of ATA staff.

First and foremost, the training experience qualifies as a positive opportunity to spread a culture of information technology to these professionals (often lacking such skills). Most of participants, in fact, considered as achieved one of the aims of the project, that is, increasing the level of familiarity with the technological tools. At the same time, is recognized the course's usefulness in having promoted the use of new technologies as tools to improve every day work activities. In particular, the most positive evaluations refer to the training materials available online, considered rich, detailed and calibrated to the needs of the individual professional figures. The chance of anytime digitally downloading and the possibility of using the platform night and day and from anywhere, permitting to everybody to chose the time to carry on the course's activities on the basis of personal needs, thereby highlights the flexibility of online learning.

Another strong point of PuntoEdu refers to the blended training model, which was appreciated for the excellent integration between moments of training face-to-face and online, revealing how the latter mode on its own, especially in the case of users with poor skills, such as ATA course participants, is not sufficient to ensure good results in terms of learning. Furthermore, as often emerged in many focus group users, is underlined the usefulness of the training experience in enhancing the work of the ATA staff, recognising the strong necessity of professional development interventions addressed to this profession. This takes on greater significance since the respondents show that they are "hungry" for training, ready and eager to improve their skills in order to provide a quality service. Besides that, ensuring greater familiarity with computer use, the course qualifies as an excellent way to ensure that these professionals (especially the scholastic collaborators) may be involved in activities in which, to date, their use is not envisaged (such as, for example, those of the secretary's office). Therefore, PuntoEdu offered over 250 thousand ATA staff the opportunity to receive a course of personal and professional development, allowing the redemption of a category for too long underestimated in educational institutions (Corradini, 2007) and at the same time providing

the opportunity to benefit from ongoing training, a determining factor to encourage professional skills that are performed in an active and aware way. One of the most critical points of the project, however, can be traced back to the poor technological fluency of many course participants: this, on the one hand, leads one to consider whether to direct the training provided to users of this type, albeit in part, through new technologies, and on the other highlights the need to implement computer literacy courses preparatory to commencement of training. Equipping all course participants with the appropriate skills would have enabled them to effectively use the technological tools on this platform and take advantage of the potential benefits associated with the use of new technologies both for learning purposes and in the workplace. Not surprisingly, asked to indicate some elements desirable in a future learning environment, the words typed most frequently by respondents were "IT, computer use, the Internet, multimedia, training on new technologies, in-depth study of the IT area" The low level of technological fluency found in the sample under investigation, highlighting the persistent digital divide still living on today in the Italian school system, thus leads one to reflect on the need to implement interventions aimed at strengthening the skills of non-teaching staff. Moreover, the fact that over 20% of respondents indicated that they followed the course from home because there was too much confusion at school, more than 15% because they lack a private Internet connection and about 4% because of inadequate computer facilities in the workplace, highlights the need to ensure appropriate conditions for use in schools of training of this kind, primarily the implementation of IT tools supplied. Finally, some critical points refer to the structure of the training, many course participants complain about the excessive shortness of the duration of the course, making it impossible to properly investigate the training content, complete all the activities envisaged, thereby limiting the opportunities to use communication tools online. In particular, the lack of training hours face-to-face is highlighted, the increase of which is strongly desired in view of future editions of the course, for a threefold reason: a) to ensure greater technical-IT support to those with a lack of familiarity with technology, b) to allow a greater depth of training content, with immediate feedback from the tutors and direct comparison between course participants, c) to provide an opportunity to establish deep and lasting ties.

While considering the improvement elements described above, the experience of PuntoEdu shows the effectiveness of using new technologies in training courses for non-teaching staff in order to pursue a dual

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objective: to meet the needs of employees, related to enhancing the working conditions and professional development and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of all educational services, more and more affected by processes of change and innovation in response to increasing use of multimedia technologies.

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