Enhancing Teacher Training: A Comparative Analysis of Professional Induction Practices in Italy and Spain

Potenziare la Formazione dei Docenti: Un'Analisi Comparativa delle Pratiche di Inserimento Professionale in Italia e Spagna

Fabiana Coluzzi[1], Alfonso J. López-Rivero[2], Graziella Falcone[1]

[1] *Università di Burgos, Spagna*
[2] *Università Pontificia di Salamanca, Spagna*

fabianacoluzzi90@gmailcom
ajlopezri@upsa.es
gracefalc@yahoo.it

ABSTRACT

In the dynamic field of education, the induction phase for new teachers is crucial for ensuring high-quality teaching and fostering professional growth. This article presents a comparative analysis of induction practices in Italy and Spain, focusing on effective strategies, tools, and applied research aimed at enhancing both initial and continuous teacher training. Italy's induction process, guided by Decreto Ministeriale 850/2015 and Legge 107/2015, emphasizes formative assessment and peer-to-peer observation. In contrast, Spain's approach, influenced by the Ley Orgánica de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (LOMCE), promotes collaborative mentoring and reflective practice. By examining these frameworks, we highlight significant similarities and differences, shedding light on the effectiveness of various mentoring models and support mechanisms. Mentor teachers play a

263

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282

pivotal role in both countries, significantly contributing to the professional integration and development of novice educators. Our research includes case studies from Italian and Spanish educational contexts, demonstrating the practical application of innovative training strategies such as microteaching, tri-focal observation, and semi-structured checklists. These tools have shown to be effective in enhancing the professional readiness and pedagogica competencies of new teachers. The findings from this comparative study provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers aiming to refine teacher induction programs. By understanding the strengths and challenges of each system, this article lays the groundwork for developing more effective and cohesive training pathways that support teacher excellence and student achievement. The implications underscore the necessity for continuous professional development and the crucial role of mentorship in cultivating a reflective and collaborative teaching culture.

Keywords: Teacher introduction, mentor teachers, Comparative Education, Professional Development, Reflective Practice.

RIASSUNTO

Nel dinamico campo dell'educazione, la fase di inserimento professionale per i nuovi docenti è cruciale per garantire un insegnamento di alta qualità e promuovere la crescita professionale. Questo articolo presenta un'analisi comparativa delle pratiche di induction in Italia e Spagna, concentrandosi su strategie efficaci, strumenti e ricerca applicata per migliorare sia la formazione iniziale che quella continua dei docenti. Il processo di induction in Italia, guidato dal Decreto Ministeriale 850/2015 e dalla Legge 107/2015, enfatizza la valutazione formativa e l'osservazione tra pari. Al contrario, l'approccio spagnolo, influenzato dalla Ley Orgánica de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (LOMCE), promuove il mentoring collaborativo e la pratica riflessiva. Esaminando questi quadri normativi, evidenziamo somiglianze e differenze significative, facendo luce sull'efficacia di vari modelli di mentoring e meccanismi di supporto. I docenti tutor svolgono un ruolo centrale in entrambi i paesi, contribuendo significativamente all'integrazione professionale e allo sviluppo dei docenti neoassunti. La nostra ricerca include studi di caso dai contesti educativi italiani e spagnoli, dimostrando l'applicazione pratica di strategie di formazione innovative come il microteaching, l'osservazione trifocale e le checklist semistrutturate. Questi strumenti si sono rivelati efficaci nell'aumentare la prontezza professionale e le competenze pedagogiche dei nuovi docenti. I risultati di questo studio comparativo offrono preziose intuizioni per i decisori politici, gli educatori e i ricercatori che mirano a perfezionare i programmi di induction dei docenti. Comprendendo i punti di forza e le sfide di ciascun sistema, questo articolo pone le basi per sviluppare percorsi di formazione più efficaci e coerenti che supportino l'eccellenza dei docenti e il successo degli studenti. Le implicazioni sottolineano la necessità di uno sviluppo professionale continuo e il ruolo cruciale del mentorship nel coltivare una cultura di insegnamento riflessiva e collaborativa.

Parole chiave: Inserimento Professionale dei Docenti, Docenti Tutor, Educazione Comparata, Sviluppo Professionale, Pratica Riflessiva.

_____

264

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282

1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected world, the relationship between teacher training and employment has emerged as a critical area of academic exploration. This is particularly relevant to educators' initial induction and ongoing professional development, substantially impacting their career progression and professional identity. This study aims to examine and compare the perceptions, experiences, and strategies of teachers in Italy and Spain concerning their induction processes and workforce readiness.

Italy and Spain, with their rich cultural heritages and educational traditions, offer unique yet comparable frameworks for teacher training. While the two countries share geographical proximity, they employ distinct methodologies for integrating educational practices with professional training. Understanding these similarities and differences is essential for enhancing the ability of academic institutions to better prepare teachers for the evolving demands of modern education. The theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in the concepts of instrumental and substantive rationality as defined by Weber (1922/1978) and Habermas (1979). Instrumental rationality emphasises efficiency and outcomes, often driven by market forces and competitive pressures. Conversely, substantive rationality highlights actions grounded in values and critical thought, advocating for educational practices that foster civic engagement and holistic development. Scholars such as Kitchener and Delbridge (2020) have critiqued the negative consequences of instrumental rationality on teacher education, arguing that an excessive focus on performance metrics can undermine stakeholder well-being and diminish educational quality.

The primary objectives of this study are threefold:

1. To identify key differences and similarities in the induction experiences of teachers from Italy and Spain.
2. To explore how these educators perceive the relationship between their training and professional aspirations.
3. To propose recommendations for improving the alignment of teacher education with employment needs, drawing from interdisciplinary and international perspectives.

To achieve these objectives, the study will address the following research questions:

– What are the principal differences and similarities in the induction practices of Italy and Spain regarding professional teacher training?
– How do teachers in Italy and Spain perceive the connection between their training and future career success?
– What challenges and opportunities do these educators face in integrating academic knowledge with professional skills?

By examining how instrumental and substantive rationality manifests in the teacher induction processes of Italy and Spain, the study provides insights into optimising educational strategies to support novice teachers' professional growth and effective integration into the school community. This research aligns with the broader objective of improving student learning outcomes through well-supported teacher development programs.

2. INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS IN CURRICULUM DESIGN: ITALY AND SPAIN

In recent years, "quality education" has evolved from a simple concept to a fundamental goal for educational systems worldwide. The global aspiration for "quality education for all" has gained **265**

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282

recognition from both international bodies and national governments, leading to the establishment of educational indicators that serve as benchmarks for quality assurance and accountability (Lingard & Rizvi, 2020). However, it is essential to grasp the complex mechanisms through which countries define and evaluate quality education and the international factors influencing these processes.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is a significant entity in education policy. Although it does not directly fund educational initiatives, the OECD is crucial in providing policy guidance and recommendations to various governmental levels (Niemann & Martens, 2018). Its initiatives, such as the "Education at a Glance" report and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), are vital for assessing and ranking national education systems. These tools have contributed to the global alignment of educational frameworks and have established the OECD as a critical participant in quality education dialogues (OECD, 2003, 2006, 2009a, 2012b). This article focuses on the educational systems of Spain and Italy to explore the relationship between international influences and the development of national policies. As prominent economies within Europe, both nations provide significant perspectives on how the OECD's guidelines and indicators are woven into their educational strategies. Often, the OECD's recommendations aim to improve academic quality through a set of indicators developed by the organisation. This top-down approach allows the OECD to influence national narratives regarding quality education (Caggiano & Ragusa, 2023).

Globalisation has reshaped educational policy, enhancing cross-border collaboration and interaction (Freidman, 2023). However, this shift has also facilitated the spread of particular educational ideologies that emphasise competition, test-based accountability, and standardisation, a phenomenon Sahlberg (2023) refers to as the Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM). Thi s dual aspect of globalisation—promoting international cooperation while constraining educational ideologies—has been significantly impacted by global organisations such as the World Bank and the OECD, which advocate for educational models rooted in economic principles (Ayers, 2019).

Spain and Italy have been notably influenced by the OECD's educational frameworks, particularly in the context of economic reforms and the quest for high-quality education. The OECD's focus on educational indicators has prompted national efforts to assess and improve academic quality. These initiatives reflect a broader global trend of incorporating international standards into domestic education policies, thus refining the definition of quality education (Kemmis et al., 2014; Lucisano, 2017).

Analysing the educational systems of Spain and Italy through the lens of OECD frameworks illuminates the complex interaction between domestic policies and international influences in shaping and evaluating quality education. This interplay highlights the importance of understanding how global educational policies affect national practices, ultimately impacting students' training and professional development.

By examining these dynamics, this article aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the globalisation of education and its implications for national education systems in Europe.

2.1 National Commitment to Educational Quality: Insights from Spain and Italy

The dedication to ensuring quality education is firmly embedded in the constitutional frameworks and educational legislation of Italy and Spain, underscoring the recognition of quality education as a fundamental obligation of the state. While a comprehensive historical overview of all relevant educational policies is beyond the scope of this analysis, it is essential to acknowledge that since the

266

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282

1990s, there has been a notable shift towards prioritising evidence-based assessments of educational quality (National Institute of Quality and Evaluation, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2006; European Commission, 2008/2009; UNESCO, 2012).

In Spain, enacting the 1990 Organic Law on the General Organization of the Educational System (LOGSE) marked the initiation of a nationwide framework for educational evaluation and quality assurance. This legislation facilitated the creation of the National Institute for Quality and Evaluation (INCE), now called the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEE). In response to international educational benchmarks, Spain established the State System of Educational Indicators (SEIE) in 1993 to systematically measure the quality of its academic offerings. The primary objective of SEIE is to furnish relevant information to a diverse array of educational stakeholders, including governmental bodies, institutions, families, students, and educators, regarding the status of academic quality in the country (National Institute of Quality and Evaluation, 2000).

Quality education has remained a central theme in subsequent reforms in Spain. For instance, the 2002 Quality of Education Act (LOCE) and the 2006 educational reform initiatives prioritised systematic evaluations to enhance academic quality (Ministry of Education, 2006). The most recent legislative reform, the 'Law for Improving Educational Quality' (LOMCE), emphasises the necessity for improving Spanish education quality in light of disappointing results in international assessments. However, LOMCE has attracted criticism for its focus on competitive practices, centralised governance, and a constrained curriculum (Pe´rez-Esparrells, 2004).

In Italy, a similar trajectory has emerged, characterised by an increasing emphasis on quality education and establishing national indicators. The creation of the National Service for the Quality of Education in 1997, followed by the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI) in 1999, represented significant advancements towards systematic educational evaluation (European Commission, 2008/2009). INVALSI's role involves defining national evaluation standards within an international framework (UNESCO, 2012). Furthermore, the 2004 reform aligned Italy's evaluation system with European standards, focusing on assessing student knowledge, school quality, and learning outcomes (Ministry of Education and Research, 2008). INVALSI is tasked with evaluating student competencies, investigating elements contributing to academic underachievement, developing national assessments for crucial subjects, and assessing the quality of upper secondary education using international measures. The newer Evaluation of the System and School (ValSIS) framework integrates quantitative and qualitative indicators to gauge educational quality across Italy. However, it remains in development compared to Spain's SEIE.

The educational reforms in Spain and Italy illustrate the significant impact of international standards, particularly those advocated by the OECD, on shaping national educational policies. These reforms reflect a broader trend of global educational frameworks influencing domestic practices, highlighting the importance of international benchmarks in evaluating educational quality. This section will further investigate the OECD's role in shaping national educational contexts by analysing the SEIE in Spain and the ValSIS in Italy, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the interaction between global influences and national educational policies.

2.2 National Commitment to Educational Quality: Insights from Spain and Italy

Integrating market principles into higher education (HE) systems has become increasingly important with the growing involvement of non-traditional stakeholders, extending beyond governmental and academic spheres. Universities must maintain sufficient autonomy to pursue their objectives

267

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282

independently, especially in competitive environments. Historically, Anglo-American HE systems have thrived on this autonomy, enabling them to embrace market-driven strategies that set them apart from their continental European counterparts. This transformation, which began in the 1980s and 1990s, empowered universities to function as autonomous entities, detached from governmental and academic oversight. The decrease in public funding facilitated this shift, fostering competition for resources and introducing external evaluations of university performance. The embrace of market logic was further driven by external stakeholders, including prospective students, families, and businesses, who have emerged as influential entities demanding accountability and fostering relationships with universities.

Nonetheless, contemporary business education often yields counterproductive institutional results. Kitchener and Delbridge (2020) argue that instrumental rationality, emphasising outcomes, performance metrics, and rankings heavily influence management education. This narrow focus, driven by competitive pressures and the desire for elevated status, causes business schools to overlook the well-being of their stakeholders. Weber (1922/1978) and Horkheimer (1974) describe instrumental rationality as self-interested actions without critical reflection on the underlying purposes.

Higher education's competitive and hierarchical nature, influenced by neoliberal policies (Angus, 2015), has had various detrimental consequences. This shift has transformed the perception of higher education from a public good that fosters critical thinking and civic engagement to a private commodity focused on individual financial gain (Podolny, 2009). Additionally, the pressure to excel, combined with the neo-liberalization of academic work, has hurt the mental well-being of both students and faculty, as highlighted by Fleming (2021a) and Evans et al. (2018). Moreover, transforming business schools into utilitarian institutions undermines the cultivation of intricate decision-making skills as management education increasingly prioritises conformity over ethical considerations (Bastos et al., 2022).

In response to these trends, embracing a cooperative understanding of human nature can lay the groundwork for a reimagined business school anchored in substantive rationality and a civic mission. Substantive rationality, as articulated by Weber (1922/1978), entails actions guided by values, while Habermas (1979) underscores the significance of equipping students with the ability to make judgments based on values. A business school rooted in values can promote critical thinking by integrating ethical principles into its curriculum for analysis and discussion (Parsons et 2005). Incorporating substantive rationality in business education can bring numerous advantages, including bolstering civic engagement, revitalising the academic experience, and fostering a more empathetic workplace.

Education, stemming from the Latin term "Educare" (to lead out), should empower individuals to actively engage in their communities, aligning with Freire's (1970) concept of education as a liberating practice. By reconceptualizing education as a form of civic engagement and employing collaborative governance models, business schools can transform into environments where stakeholders participate meaningfully in decision-making. Striking a balance between utilitarian and substantive rationality can reinstate meaningful work within academia, addressing urgent societal issues and resonating with Generation Z's aspirations for fulfilling and socially responsible careers (NSHSS, 2018). While advances in AI may lead to the elimination of numerous jobs, they should only partially supplant human judgment in decision-making processes (Coluzzi *et al*., 2022). Creating business schools that embrace diverse forms of rationality can improve their adaptability to the changing socio-technological landscape and effectively navigate the implications of AI. A **268**

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282

comprehensive approach to substantive rationality involves integrating ecological values and virtues into the academic curriculum while redefining public well-being as sustained environmental health. This perspective promotes the concept of "right livelihood," encouraging students to pursue ethical professions that acknowledge the interdependence of survival and advocate for responsible practices. Reinforcing humanistic management within master's programs in higher education necessitates a reevaluation of the roles and competencies of business schools.

This involves transforming curricula to meet workforce demands and adopting a comprehensive and ethical educational framework. By integrating ethical, humanistic, and socially responsible principles into their curricula, higher education institutions can prioritise well-being, critical thinking, and societal contributions, ultimately fostering a more balanced and humane educational paradigm.

3. THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF SOFT SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Creating business schools that embrace diverse forms of rationality can improve their adaptability to the changing socio-technological landscape and effectively navigate the implications of AI. A comprehensive approach to substantive rationality involves integrating ecological values and virtues into the academic curriculum while redefining public well-being as sustained environmental health. This perspective promotes the concept of "right livelihood," encouraging students to pursue ethical professions that acknowledge the interdependence of survival and advocate for responsible practices. In summary, reinforcing humanistic management within master's programs in higher education necessitates a reevaluation of the roles and competencies of business schools. This involves transforming curricula to meet workforce demands and adopting a comprehensive and ethical educational framework. By integrating ethical, humanistic, and socially responsible principles into their curricula, higher education institutions can prioritise well-being, critical thinking, and societal contributions, ultimately fostering a more balanced and humane educational paradigm. The rapid advancement of technology, mainly through AI tools like ChatGPT, Bing, and Co-Pilot, has further complicated the teaching and learning landscape in Spanish and Italian universities. These tools have sparked concerns regarding academic integrity and the potential decline in critical thinking and writing abilities (Intelligent.com, 2023; Ricciardi et Emanuel, 2018, Romero-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2020). Reports indicate that many students in both countries have utilised AI to complete assignments, raising ethical questions and prompting universities to revise their policies to address these challenges (Caggiano *et al.*, 2023). While these concerns are legitimate, the potential benefits of generative AI in education should be noticed. Such technology can provide personalised feedback and adaptive learning opportunities, enabling students to identify and improve their weaknesses (Pozo-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020; Bastos *et al.*, 2023). As AI continues to permeate various sectors, including finance, healthcare, and transportation, it becomes crucial for graduates from Spain and Italy to possess a solid understanding of AI principles to thrive in these fields (López-Alcarria *et al.*, 2019).

To navigate this evolving educational landscape effectively, institutions in Spain and Italy must balance embracing AI's capabilities and upholding academic integrity. Establishing comprehensive policies that address AI's advantages and challenges will ensure that students become proficient and responsible users of this transformative technology (Revelo-Rosero *et al.*, 2019; Ragusa *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, recognising the disparities in digital skills among educators, particularly in Italian and Spanish universities, underscores the necessity for targeted professional development programs that equip faculty with the skills needed to meet modern educational demands (Rodríguez-García *et al.*,

269

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282

2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards online and distance learning in both countries, emphasising the importance of digital teaching methodologies. This transition has increased access to education, allowing students to engage with learning materials remotely. Nevertheless, it has also exposed significant disparities in access to technology, particularly among students from low-income or rural backgrounds in Spain and Italy. The move to online education has presented challenges related to student engagement, motivation, and accountability (Margottini, 2017).

Integrating a humanistic approach in Spanish and Italian universities highlights the need for developing technical and soft skills. This holistic perspective prepares students to meet the intricate demands of the contemporary workforce, ensuring they possess the requisite technical knowledge and critical thinking, effective communication, and teamwork abilities necessary for success. Continuous professional development and innovative pedagogical strategies are essential for achieving these educational objectives, aligning with broader European goals for modernising higher education and enhancing teaching quality. By embedding these elements into their curricula, institutions in Spain and Italy can create a balanced and inclusive educational experience that maximises human and technological resources.

3.1 Career Development for Teachers

Numerous countries have already recognised the importance of fostering teacher career advancement by outlining the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that should be cultivated throughout a teacher's professional journey. Some nations have even delineated various stages of a teacher's career, ranging from novice to expert status, including examples such as Belgium (Flemish-speaking community), Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, and the United Kingdom (Scotland) (European Commission, 2018).

Alongside professional standards and competency frameworks that define the evolving competencies of teachers, the methodological issues associated with assessing teacher quality using 'proxy measures'—like years of experience or student performance—can be mitigated. These proxies may not effectively convey a teacher's ability to foster learning opportunities or support diverse student populations' growth (Rowe & Ingvarson, 2007). As a result, teachers need to engage in ongoing education throughout their careers to adapt to changes and innovations in the field. In this context, in-service training (INSET) courses play a vital role in facilitating the introduction of new practices and innovations for teachers (Fullan, 1991; Baki, 2000).

Interest in evaluating the effects and efficacy of higher education pedagogical training is rising (Ödalen *et al*., 2018). These professional development programs are increasingly offered online to ensure continuous career development for teachers in the digital age. Some studies advocate implementing online professional development initiatives (Teräs, 2016). Although Oleson and Hora (2014) noted that teaching in the manner in which they were educated can have its advantages, it is essential to consider the application of past practices with intentionality. Reviews of instructional development within higher education (Steinert et al., 2006; Stes *et al*., 2010) have highlighted the need for more significant variability in methodologies and approaches when researching the impact of development initiatives, particularly in measuring tangible behavioural outcomes. As a result, common challenges associated with traditional self-report questionnaires, such as difficulties in identifying unconscious processes (Harteis *et al*., 2018) and the potential for socially desirable

270

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282

responses (King & Brunner, 2000), c can be effectively addressed.

3.1 What is a Soft Teacher?

Articulating the essential qualities of an effective teacher is challenging. Globally, numerous initiatives aim to define these qualities through competency lists, a trend that finds strong support among policymakers (Fernandes *et al.*, 2021). While these competencies should be rooted in evidence of effective teaching practices, they often encompass values and beliefs about the overarching goals of education and schooling, which can be contentious (Domenici & Biasi, 2019; Kemmis *et al.*, 2014). Some experts argue that the concept of 'good teaching' cannot be encapsulated within policy frameworks, as definitions of quality are context-dependent and vary among individual educators (Magnoler & Pacquola, 2018). Others critique the establishment of teacher standards, claiming that such frameworks risk imposing a sense of 'standardisation' on the profession, overlooking its inherent complexity (Bocci, 2019; Meckes-Gerard, 2018).

Engaging a broad range of stakeholders in creating professional standards and competency frameworks is crucial for fostering acceptance and facilitating dialogue among those with diverse perspectives and experiences.

4. ASSESSING HUMANISTIC TRAINING FOR TEACHER INDUCTION: AN APPLIED RESEARCH APPROACH

In light of the increasing emphasis on integrating education and employment, a comparative study was conducted involving 60 teachers—30 from Italy and 30 from Spain—to evaluate the effectiveness of humanistic training on their professional development and soft skills.

Each participant completed the Business-Focused Inventory of Personality (BIP) questionnaire, which assessed socio-demographic characteristics (such as gender, age, and years of teaching experience) alongside their soft skills. The assessment encompassed 14 scales grouped into four domains: interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, activity development skills, and impression management. Teachers rated statements on a six-point scale from 'Completely true' to 'Completely false,' providing a detailed overview of their soft skills. This study aimed to analyse the impact of humanistic training on teachers' readiness for the workforce and to understand how these training experiences align with their professional aspirations.

A balanced representation of participants was ensured, with an equal number of male and female teachers averaging 35 years of age (SD = 7) and a diverse range of teaching experiences. Specifically, 60% of the teachers had 1-5 years of experience, 30% had 6-10 years, and 10% had more than ten years of teaching experience. This diversity offered a rich dataset for examining the development of soft skills through focused interventions.

The research methodology included focus group discussions with experienced teachers and educational leaders from Italy and Spain. These discussions aimed to explore the nuances of the induction process and the effectiveness of humanistic training methodologies. Qualitative data gathered from these focus groups revealed critical insights into educators' challenges and opportunities when integrating academic knowledge with practical skills. Participants shared their experiences regarding the induction process, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of existing training programs and suggesting improvements based on their firsthand experiences. Key differences emerged: Italian educators emphasised structured formative assessments and peer observations, while Spanish counterparts highlighted collaborative mentoring and reflective practices.The focus group **271**

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282

discussions highlighted that mentoring and tutoring practices in both countries are particularly effective in fostering a reflective and collaborative teaching culture. Italian participants pointed to the benefits of structured formative assessments and peer observations in setting clear performance expectations and providing constructive feedback. In contrast, Spanish participants underscored the value of collaborative mentoring, which encourages open dialogue and mutual learning among educators.

Data collected from the BIP questionnaire and interactive training sessions using Lab Bricks x Tips were analysed to assess the effectiveness of the training in enhancing pedagogical competencies. All variables, including gender, teaching background, and years of experience, were examined using t-tests and ANOVA. The analysis revealed that while factors such as gender and academic background did not significantly influence outcomes, the years of teaching experience had a notable effect on teamwork and communication skills. Spanish teachers had slightly higher initial scores in these areas than their Italian counterparts.

Results indicated significant improvements in teachers' soft skills following the training. Specifically, the mean scores for teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills exhibited substantial increases, with p-values demonstrating statistical significance ($p < 0.001$). The mean score for teamwork skills among Spanish teachers was 4.85 (SD = 0.45), while the Italian teachers had a mean score of 4.75 (SD = 0.55). Regarding communication skills, Spanish teachers outperformed their Italian peers, with mean scores of 4.30 (SD = 0.50) versus 4.20 (SD = 0.65).

These findings underscore the potential of integrating humanistic training and participatory learning methods to enhance teachers' professional preparedness across different cultural contexts. The interactive sessions utilising Lab Bricks x Tips were explicitly designed to improve soft skills through experiential learning and to gauge teacher engagement and satisfaction with the training. Participants demonstrated high engagement levels throughout these sessions, achieving a mean participation score of 4.6 (SD = 0.4) on a scale of 1 to 5. Observations indicated that teachers were eager to contribute, frequently collaborating with peers, and actively seeking innovative solutions. Many participants expressed that these interactive and playful sessions made learning enjoyable and less stressful, fostering a dynamic and inclusive educational environment.

The post-session questionnaire assessing teacher satisfaction yielded a mean score of 4.7 (SD = 0.3) on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating that teachers found the Lab Bricks x Tips methodology effective and enjoyable for enhancing their soft skills. Qualitative feedback from open-ended questions revealed that participants valued the hands-on learning approach, facilitating better understanding and retention of key concepts. Common remarks included sentiments such as "The hands-on experience made the theories come to life" and "I felt more connected to my colleagues and the material."

Integrating Lab Bricks x Tips into the training curriculum enhanced soft skills and increased teacher enthusiasm and satisfaction with the program. The combination of quantitative scores and qualitative feedback underscores the value of innovative, participatory methods in teacher training. The positive outcomes from these sessions highlight the potential for such methodologies to create an engaging, effective, and enjoyable learning experience.

This holistic approach to teacher induction emphasizes the importance of incorporating interactive and experiential learning techniques to improve educational outcomes and professional development for educators. This alignment aligns with the broader goals of enhancing educational practices in Italy and Spain. This alignment is particularly relevant to the broader objective of leveraging evidence-based strategies to improve teacher induction programs, thus supporting the professional integration of novice teachers and ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes.

272

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study underscores the importance of effective educational and professional training programs in enhancing the employability of teachers in Italy and Spain. The analysis reveals that both countries exhibit high higher education enrollment rates, with approximately 40% of young adults (aged 25-34) holding a tertiary degree, according to Eurostat data (2021). However, the challenge of aligning educational outcomes with labour market needs remains significant, as evidenced by persistent youth unemployment rates—30.7% in Spain and 29.2% in Italy. This research sheds light on several critical insights regarding teacher induction experiences.

Differences and Similarities in Induction Practices: The study identified notable differences between the induction practices of Italy and Spain. While Italy's structured approach emphasises formative assessments and peer observations, Spain strongly emphasises collaborative mentoring and reflective practices. These variations highlight the differing regulatory and cultural contexts shaping teacher induction in each nation.

Perceptions of Training and Professional Aspirations: Educators in both countries view their induction training as vital for career success. They acknowledge that practical training enhances pedagogical and soft skills, such as communication and teamwork, essential for navigating modern educational environments. However, many educators expressed concerns about the adequacy of their training in preparing them for real-world challenges, particularly in addressing diverse student needs.

Challenges and Opportunities in Integrating Academic Knowledge with Professional Skills: A significant challenge identified is the gap between theoretical training and practical application. While academic programs provide a solid foundation in educational theory, there often needs to be more hands-on experience in natural classroom settings. To bridge this gap, the study recommends enhancing teacher education programs by incorporating more experiential learning opportunities, collaborative projects, and mentorship initiatives that allow new teachers to apply their knowledge effectively.

At a regional level, the analysis uncovered intriguing discrepancies related to the differing roles of regional and central governments in higher education in both countries. In Italy, the central government primarily funds universities; in Spain, this responsibility is decentralised to regional governments. This variance leads to different motivating factors for universities based on their geographic locations. Economic disparities exist within Italy, where northern regions are generally more prosperous than southern ones. In Spain, the decentralisation of university funding has resulted in varying levels of efficiency, with "fast lane" regions exhibiting more robust performance metrics than "slow lane" regions.

The study has several limitations. Firstly, it only encompasses a sample of 60 teachers, which may only partially represent part of the teaching population in Italy and Spain. Additionally, the research primarily focuses on qualitative assessments and insights, leaving the potential for more extensive quantitative analyses in future studies. Future research should consider more extensive, more diverse samples and longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impacts of induction training programs. Future applications of this research involve developing transnational guidelines for teacher induction programs, emphasising a balanced approach that integrates formative assessments and collaborative mentoring. Additionally, exploring the inclusion of technology-enhanced learning methods could provide more accessible and effective training solutions. By understanding each system's strengths and challenges, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers

273

aiming to refine teacher induction programs and improve educational outcomes. It emphasises the necessity of continuous professional development and effective mentorship in teacher training.

REFERENCES

Alioto, B. P., & Poletti, G. (2022). A complex pedagogy: the training response for social workers, 6(1).

Bachmann, C., Sasse, L., & Habisch, A. (2018). Applying the practical wisdom lenses in decision-making: An integrative approach to humanistic management. *Humanistic Management Journal*, 2, 125-150.

Bastos, S., Moreira Silva, M., Santos de Oliveira, H. M., Caggiano, V., & Poza-Lújan, J. L. (2021). Digital-distance-education: a step back?. *Psychology and education journal*, 3(58), 2733-2740.

Bastos, S. M., Oliveira, H. C., & Caggiano, V. (2021). Hybrid Model in Accounting Education: The Experience of Management Simulation Course. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 16(5), 2402-2411.

Bocci, F. (2019). Pratiche di osservazione tra pari. Il Microteaching come me- diatore per lo sviluppo e l'apprendimento professionale degli insegnanti. In M. Fiorucci & G. Moretti, (Eds.) *Il tutor dei docenti neoassunti*, Roma: Roma Tre-Press.

Boyatzis, R. E., Goleman, D., & McKee, A. (2019). Emotional intelligence and its relation to cognitive and social skills. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 104(2), 1–14.

Caggiano, V., Broccoli, A. (2023). Stem pedagogy to participate with Community learners. *Q-TIMES WEB MAGAZINE*, 3(2023), 145-155.

Caggiano, V., & Ragusa, A. (2023, June). New Trends in Education: Humanistic Management for Ethics Manager. In *International Conference on Disruptive Technologies, Tech Ethics and Artificial Intelligence* (pp. 249-260). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland

Commissione Europea (2020). Comunicazione della commissione al Parlamento europeo, al Consiglio, al Comitato economico e sociale europeo e al Comitato delle Regioni sulla realizzazione dello spazio europeo dell'istruzione entro il 2025. Bruxelles, 30.9.2020. COM/2020/625.

CRUE. (2006). *La Universidad Espan˜ola en Cifras*. Madrid: CRUE.

Domenici, G., & Biasi, V. (Eds.). (2019). Atteggiamento scientifico e formazione dei docenti. FrancoAngeli.

Emanuel, F., Ricchiardi, P., Sanseverino, D., & Ghislieri, C. (2021). Make soft skills stronger? An online enhancement platform for higher education. *International Journal of Educational Research Open,* 2, 100096.

ESCO (2016) https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home

Fabbri, M. (2021). L'apprendimento collaborativo online per lo sviluppo delle competenze digitali e trasversali dei futuri docenti di matematica. *SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI PEDAGOGIA*, 1112-1119.

Fernandes, P. R. D. S., Jardim, J., & Lopes, M. C. D. S. (2021). The soft skills of special education teachers: Evidence from the literature. *Education Sciences*, 11(3), 125.

Fiorucci M. & Moretti G., (Eds.) Il tutor dei docenti neoassunti, Roma: Roma Tre-Press.

OECD. (2021). OECD *Digital Education Outlook 2021: Pushing the Frontiers with Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and Robots*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

274

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282

https://doi.org/10.1787/589b283f-en

EU - European Commission. (2006). *Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems*. COM (2006) 481 final.

Gaeta, M. L., Gaeta, L., & Rodriguez, M. D. S. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 home confinement on Mexican university students: Emotions, coping strategies, and self-regulated learning. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 642823.

Kemmis, S., Heikkinen, H.L., Fransson, G., Aspfors, J., & Edwards-Groves, C. (2014). Mentoring of new teachers as a contested practice: Supervision, support and collaborative self-development. *Teaching and teacher education*, 43, 154-164.

Habermas, J. (1979). *Communication and the evolution of society*. London, U.K.: Heinemann. Dale, 55-65.

Ley Orgánica 8/2013, *de 9 de diciembre, para la mejora de la calidad educativa*, BOE, 10 de diciembre de 2013

López-Alcarria, A., Olivares-Vicente,A., & Poza-Vilches,F. (2019). A Systematic Review of the Use of Agile Methodologies in Education to Foster Sustainability Competencies. *Sustainability*, 11(10), 2915.

Lucisano P. (2017). Il fine come criterio della validità di interventi educativi. In Notti A. M. (2017) *La funzione educativa della valutazione. Teoria e pratiche della valutazione educativa*. Lecce: Pensa MultiMedia.

Maisuria, A., & Cole, M. 2017. The neo-liberalization of higher education in England: An alternative is possible. *Policy Futures in Education*, 15: 602–619.

Magnoler, P., & Pacquola, M. (2018). Curare la professionalizzazione nelle organizzazioni: nuove pratiche e saperi del tutor. *STUDIUM EDUCATIONIS-Rivista semestrale per le professioni educative*, (1), 115-132.

Margottini, M. (2017). *Competenze strategiche a scuola e all'università. Esiti d'indagini empiriche e interventi formativi*. Milano: LED Edizioni.

Martınez Cabrera, M. (2000). Analisis de la Eficiencia Productiva de las Instituciones de Educación Superior. *Papeles de Economıa Espanola*, (86), 179–191.

Meyer, M. W., & Norman, D. (2020). Changing design education for the 21st century. *The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 6(1), 13–49.

M.I.U.R. – D.M. n° 850 del 27/10/2015 – *Obiettivi, modalità di valutazione del grado di raggiungimento degli stessi, attività formative e criteri per la valutazione del personale docente ed educativo in periodo di formazione e di prova.*

NFA. 2021. *National footprint accounts*. Retrieved from https://data.footprintnetwork.org

OECD. (2006a). *Education policy analysis: Focus on higher education*. Paris: OCD.

OECD. (2006b). *Education at a glance 2006*. Paris: OECD.

OECD, 2019. OECD *Main Science and Technology Indicators R&D*, Paris: OECD.

Parsons, M., & Stephenson, M. (2005). Developing reflective practice in student teachers. Collaboration and critical partnerships. Teachers and Teaching. *Theory and Practice*, 11, 95-116. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/ 1354060042000337110

Pozo-Sánchez, S., López-Belmonte, J., Rodríguez-García, A. M., & López-Núñez, J. A. (2020). Teachers' digital competence in using and analytically managing information in flipped learning (Competencia digital docente para el uso y gestión analítica informacional del aprendizaje invertido). *Culture and Education*, 32(2), 213-241.

Perez-Esparrells, C. (2004). La Educacion Universitaria en España: El Vınculo entre Financiación

275

y Calidad. *Revista de Educacion* (Ministerio de Educacio´n y Ciencia), Septiembre–Diciembre(335), 305–316.

Ragusa, A., Caggiano, V., Trigueros Ramos, R., González-Bernal, J. J., Gentil-Gutiérrez, A., Bastos, S. A. M. C., ... & Santamaría-Peláez, M. (2022). High education and university teaching and learning processes: Soft skills. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(17), 10699.

Revelo-Rosero, J. E., Lozano, E. V., & Romo, P. B. (2019). La competencia digital docente y su impacto en el proceso de enseñanza–aprendizaje de la matemática. Espirales *Revista Multidisciplinaria de Investigación*, 3(28), 156-175.

Ricchiardi, P., & Emanuel, F. (2018). Soft skill assessment in higher education. *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies* (ECPS Journal), (18), 21-53.

Rodríguez-García, A. M., López Belmonte, J., Agreda Montoro, M., & Moreno-Guerrero, A. J. (2019). Productive, structural and dynamic study of sustainability in the educational field. *Sustainability*, 11(20), 5613.

Romero-Rodríguez, L. M., Ramírez-Montoya, M. S., & Aguaded, I. (2020). Determining factors in MOOCs completion rates: Application test in energy sustainability courses. *Sustainability*, 12(7), 2893

Schleutker, K. J., Caggiano, V., Coluzzi, F., & Luján, J. L. P. (2019). Soft skills and European labour market: Interviews with Finnish and Italian managers. *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies* (ECPS Journal), (19), 123-144.

United Nations (2020). *World Social Report 2020. Inequality in a rapidly changing world*. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/ uploads/sites/22/2023/01/World-Social-Report-2020-FullReport.pdf

Valiente, O. (2014). The OECD skills strategy and the education agenda for development. *International Journal of Educational Development*, pp. 39, 40–48.

Weber, M. (1922)/1978. Economy and society. An outline of interpretive sociology, 4th ed. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

World Economic Forum, J. (2020). *The future of jobs report 2020*. Retrieved from Geneva.

276

QTimes webmagazine - Anno XVII - n. 1, 2025
Anicia Editore
www.qtimes.it
ISSN 2038-3282