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## PHYSICAL AND SPORT EDUCATION IN ITALY

### ABSTRACT

Physical and sport education (P.E./S.E.) is an obligatory subject in the 13-year basic education, formerly called 'Ginnastica' (Gymnastics), and then 'Educazione Fisica' (Physical Education).

**Present situation:** PHYSICAL EDUCATION, *Primary school* Guideline: 'The body as a value', which means that it is not a mere form but a whole system of being and acting in the world and society. Teacher: P.E. is taught by the general teacher. In some schools a P.E. specialist teacher works with the general teacher. *Middle school* Guideline: the national Guidelines specify the essential level that must be granted by all schools, the number of compulsory hours (2 hours per week) and the quota reserved to autonomy of each school (up to a maximum of 20% of the total). Teacher: P.E. is taught by P.E. specialist teachers.

*High school* Guideline: the same as for the middle school. Teacher: P.E. is taught by P.E. specialist teachers. SPORT EDUCATION *Primary school* No physical education teacher is required in the primary school that comprises 2.6 million students with an average of 20 children per class. The play/sport programmes are defined and implemented by the local school institutions in collaboration with their board members. *Secondary school* There are 5.2 million students in the secondary school. P.E. is a compulsory subject involving students for two hours per week, that can be individually designed for the disabled. Teachers must have a degree in Motor Sciences and Sports (formerly Physical Education degree) and a proper teacher training. The sports most widely practised are: Cross Country Races and Track Races, Swimming, Gymnastics, Alpine Skiing, Orienteering and among the team sports: Volleyball, Soccer, Basket.

**Perspectives:** We are working: 1. to have at least one P.E. teacher in each primary school (presently, it is not compulsory), 2. to keep two hours per week in the curriculum for students aged from 11 to 18 years, 3. to found a School Sports Association in each secondary school. The central role of the Italian Olympic Committee has been reduced in various ways: less money and fewer responsibilities because National Federations have acquired private status autonomy and the Regions have been granted full powers. The Regions and the local bodies have become the main partners in the area of education and sport. They organise financial interventions aimed at extending sport practice and developing sport facilities.

**Key words:** physical education, sport education, Italy

### INTRODUCTION

Italy is an European Parliamentary Republic of 60 million people, situated on a boot shaped peninsula over 1000 km long, whose economic situation much improved in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but mainly in the northern area of the country. Despite a well developed and almost cost-free social welfare, which reduced the infant mortality,

the country has a low birth rate. Nowadays, only 20% of the population is aged under 20 years, and 23% is aged more than 60. Italy is a member of the most industrial nations group (G8 and G20 organizations) with a Gross National Product that in 33% come from industry, 63% from services and 4% from agricultural sectors. Italy is still experiencing a significant development and a wealth gap between the northern indus-

trial regions, where the unemployment rate is around 7%, and the southern agricultural ones, where in some areas it is even over 20%. Like in other countries, the prevalence of obesity is growing rapidly, it is now estimated at around 14% in adults and over a half of the adult population is overweight. The consumption of alcohol appears to be increasing and the number of smokers is still relevant. It is estimated that 19% of the population practise sport regularly, versus 41% that never practise any sport. Sedentary lifestyle is increasing.

### EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK

State schools are free, but State-authorized private schools also exist where tuition fees are required. Education is compulsory for children aged from 6 to 16, consisting of 5 years of primary school, 3 years of lower secondary school, and 2 years of higher secondary education. The university, according to Bologna Process, is generally based on two levels: a 3-year-course leading to a bachelor's degree and a 2-year-course leading to a master's degree with the options of further specialist courses. Recently, a reform has been introduced to achieve the EU standards.

The new system is based on a minimum of 12-year-education divided into two cycles: the first cycle starts at the age of six and lasts 8 years (5 years of primary and 3 years of lower secondary school). After the age of 14, the second cycle starts: students can choose different tracks involving various combinations of study with, in some case, vocational training. Access to the university is direct if the student has selected a lyceum, whereas one additional preparatory year is required if the curriculum was vocational (Tab. 1).

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education (P.E.) is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) and it is a compulsory subject in the 13 years of basic education,

Tab. 1. Sample of annual compulsory amount of hours in lower secondary school (11–13 years)

Subjects	Minimum number	Average amount	Maximum number
Italian History Geography	305	313	319
Mathematics Science and Technology	239	245	251
English 2 <sup>nd</sup> Foreign Language	114	120	126
Art and Design	54	60	66
Music	54	60	66
Motory science and Sport	54	60	66
Religion	33	33	33
		891	

even for the disabled people with appropriate adaptations. P.E. was introduced in 1859, formerly it was called "Gymnastics", then "Physical Education" and now "Motor and Sport Sciences".

#### Physical Education in primary school

**Guidelines:** 'The body as a value'. So, it is not a dress but a whole system of being and acting in the world and the society.

**Objectives:** construction of one's own identity in relation to one's self-knowledge and that of the others and the orientation of one's own life project.

**Contents:** parts of the body, senses and perceptions, motor and postural schemes (learned through games), nutrition guidance, personal care, environmental problems and unhealthy habits (pollution, smoking, sedentary lifestyle).

**Evaluation:** an evaluation document including a portfolio of individual skills and all the documentation collected during the entire school period.

**Teacher:** P.E. is taught by the general teacher. In some schools a P.E. specialist teacher works with the general teacher.

#### Physical Education in the lower secondary school

**Guidelines:** the national curriculum specifies the essential level that must be granted by all schools, the number of compulsory hours (2 hours per week) and the quota reserved to autonomy of each school (up to a maximum of 20% of the whole curriculum).

**Objectives:** becoming aware of one's own physical efficiency through the self evaluation and basic norm for accident prevention.

**Contents:** improvement of coordination and motor skills, self evaluation of skills and performance, traffic regulations for cycles and motorcycles, training methods, body expression and communication.

**Evaluation:** one is promoted to the next class with a minimum mark of 6 out of 10; a lower score entail a 'debt' that will have to be settled at the beginning of the new school year; at the state exam (taking place at the end of the cycle) the evaluation can also comprise P.E. with a written or oral test.

**Teacher:** P.E. is taught by P.E. specialist teachers.

#### P.E. in the higher secondary school

**Guidelines:** more or less the same as in the middle school.

**Objectives:** learning the basic principles and techniques for sport performance, well being and physical improvement.

**Contents:** structure and rules of individual and team sports, basic principles of training theory and methodology, principles of nutrition in physical activity, doping health problems versus appropriate physical training.

**Evaluation:** the portfolio of the acquired skills concurs to form the final credit score that will contribute to the result of the final evaluation at the state exam (*esame di maturità*).

**Teacher:** P.E. is taught by P.E. specialist teachers.

Tab. 2. Total amount of P.E. and sport hours in the student career (from 6 to 18 years) in some European countries

Country	Total sum of hours
Italia	810
Austria	1,500
Germany	1,450
Poland	1,620
France	1,680 (P.E.) – 2,600 (P.E. + Sport)

(Censis Servizi su dati MUR, 2007)

#### Extracurricular sport activities

Already in primary school, children can join physical education and introductory sport activities that are free and elective. They are supported by the funding for the extension of the educational range. In the secondary school, school sport activities are well structured and are financed by the special funding from the Ministry of Education and the Regional School Offices for the extension of the educational range, allowing students to train and prepare for competitions. Forms of sport integration are organized for disabled students.

The sport activities concur in the definition of the student's curriculum and acquired competences as well as in the final mark received at the State Exam. According to a recent monitoring, it appears that about 72% of the first-level and 76% of the second-level schools prepare their students and make it possible for them to take part in the student sport competitions.

#### Sport Education in primary school

No physical education teacher is required in the primary school that comprises 2.6 million students with an average of 20 children per class. The play/sport programmes are designed and implemented by the local school institutions in collaboration with a number of their board members such as: local administrations, CONI (Italian National Olympic Committee), national sport federations and local clubs, both in the context of school activities and out-of-school programmes. This leads to a wide diversity of

variously co-financed initiatives that frequently lack a systematic approach and continuity, mainly because in many cases year after year expenditures go over budget. Only recently, with the 2003 school reform, the Ministry of Education introduced a P.E. graduate specialist role in the primary school in order to improve educational performance and give sport sciences the same rank as the other school subjects have.

### Sport Education in secondary school

There are 5.2 million students in the secondary school. P.E. is a compulsory subject involving students for two hours per week, which can be individually designed for the disabled. Teachers must have a master degree in Physical Education and a proper teacher training. Additional hours of sport practice are included in the Educational Formative School Plan (max 6 hours not compulsory) concurring to the student's curriculum and to the evaluation score at the end of the secondary cycle. Throughout the 8 years of the secondary cycle, school sport activities are well structured allowing students to participate in various school sports competitions. The sports most widely practised are: Cross Country Races and Track Races, Swimming, Gymnastics, Alpine Skiing, Orienteering and among the team sports: Volleyball, Soccer, Basketball. Although P.E. teachers and school administration are the protagonists of the student's sport activity in the secondary school, their effort is lacking of the necessary effectiveness because of the limited number of lessons per week. They are only able to help and encourage those students

that are already practising sports on their own in external Sports Clubs (in the sports federations or non-profit sports associations), with only limited success in their mission to improve the 'sport mentality' among the students' population. The regular sport practice is common among 55% of the surveyed sample aged 11–14, but many children drop out of sport practice around adolescence (age 14), mainly because of uneasiness and problematic situations.

### Physical Education evaluation

In the first cycle (primary and lower secondary schools), the evaluation of pupils takes place through:

- An evaluation document called “the Pupils' Personal Record”, recording the periodic assessments and the final assessment made at the end of years 1, 3 and 5;
- A Summary Report stating whether the pupil has been promoted to the next class;
- The Portfolio of Individual Competencies, which is the document where the educational team, the pupil and the family include the documentation collected during the entire school path.

For disabled pupils, an *Individual Educational Plan* is designed jointly by the educational team with the family and the responsible medical officer. The evaluation refers to the differentiated path the pupil has followed with the help of a support teacher.

In the second cycle (higher secondary school) each teacher makes specific periodic and final assessments on a scale of 1 to 10. A mark of 6 or over allows access to the next class, otherwise a lower mark entails a “debt”. The periodic assessment made by P.E. teachers involves the areas of motor learning and the pupil's physical abilities. The assessment is generally organised as an integrated process combining:

- Observational techniques and motor tests so as to evaluate the motor competencies attained;
- The written and oral tests to evaluate the knowledge of the discipline's contents.

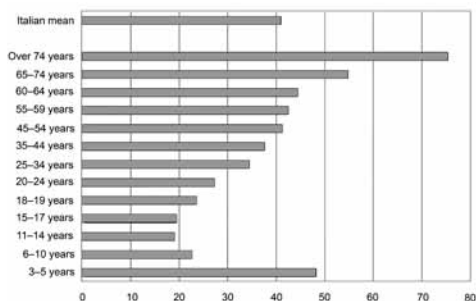


Fig. 1. Sedentariness in Italy (% and age)

At the State Exam taking place at the end of the cycle, the evaluation can also involve motor and sport sciences. The calculation of school credits includes the sport credits acquired in out-of-school contexts and contribute to the final evaluation.

#### Additional contexts for physical and sport activities

##### *Extracurricular Physical Activities*

They are school sport activities, taking place after the school hours, conducted by P.E. teachers involving pupils, even from classes different from theirs. Their objective is to promote and practice educational sport, which involves a competition whose aim is to provide an opportunity to play and feel at ease with the others, thus promoting social integration.

##### *Extra-School Physical Activities*

A range of sport activities is wide; they are sometimes offered by sports associations. In this case, families pay some part of the costs

##### *Out-of-School Physical Activities*

Sport associations, federations and private subjects can organise sport centres offering courses for beginners in various sports. Generally, families must cover the costs of participation. Soccer is one of the most widely practised activities.

#### Training

##### *Physical Education Teachers*

To be qualified as a P.E. teacher a University master degree is needed plus one year of teacher training (3 + 2 + 1). This is provided by Faculties of Physical Education.

##### *Sport instructors*

They are trained at the National Federations in a multi-level qualification path, from the initial level of Assistant Instructor to, after several intermediate steps, Federal Techni-

cian. Access to the courses does not require any school degree.

#### *Volunteer sport operators*

Volunteering is a valuable asset, particularly for the non-élite sport sector. This involves many associations which are almost all non-profit, usually very small and run by volunteers. A sport association can be established without necessarily having a qualified sport technician, although those who work as instructors generally have such qualifications.

*Tab. 3. P.E. and Sport University Data*

Students	24,000
Bachelor Courses	98
Master Courses	22

(Censis Servizi su dati MUR, 2007)

#### Italian P.E. Teachers' Association (CAPDI)

Our National P.E. Teachers' Association has more than 30 provincial P.E. Teachers' Association with more than 3.000 members. CAPDI represents P.E. Teachers at the Ministry of Education. CAPDI provides service training for P.E. teachers and general teachers of nursery and primary school. CAPDI is a member of EUPEA (European P.E. Association).

#### Perspectives

##### *Physical Education*

We are working:

- to have at least one P.E. teacher in each primary school. At present it is not compulsory;
- to keep 2 hours per week in the curriculum for students aged from 11 to 18 years;
- to found School Sports Association in each secondary school.

##### *Sport*

The central role of the Italian Olympic Committee has been reduced in various ways: there has been a reduction in the incomes

and in term of responsibilities because National Federations have acquired private status autonomy and the Regions have been granted full powers.

The Regions and the local bodies have become the main partners in the area of education and sport. They organise financial interventions aimed at extending sport practice and developing sport facilities.

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