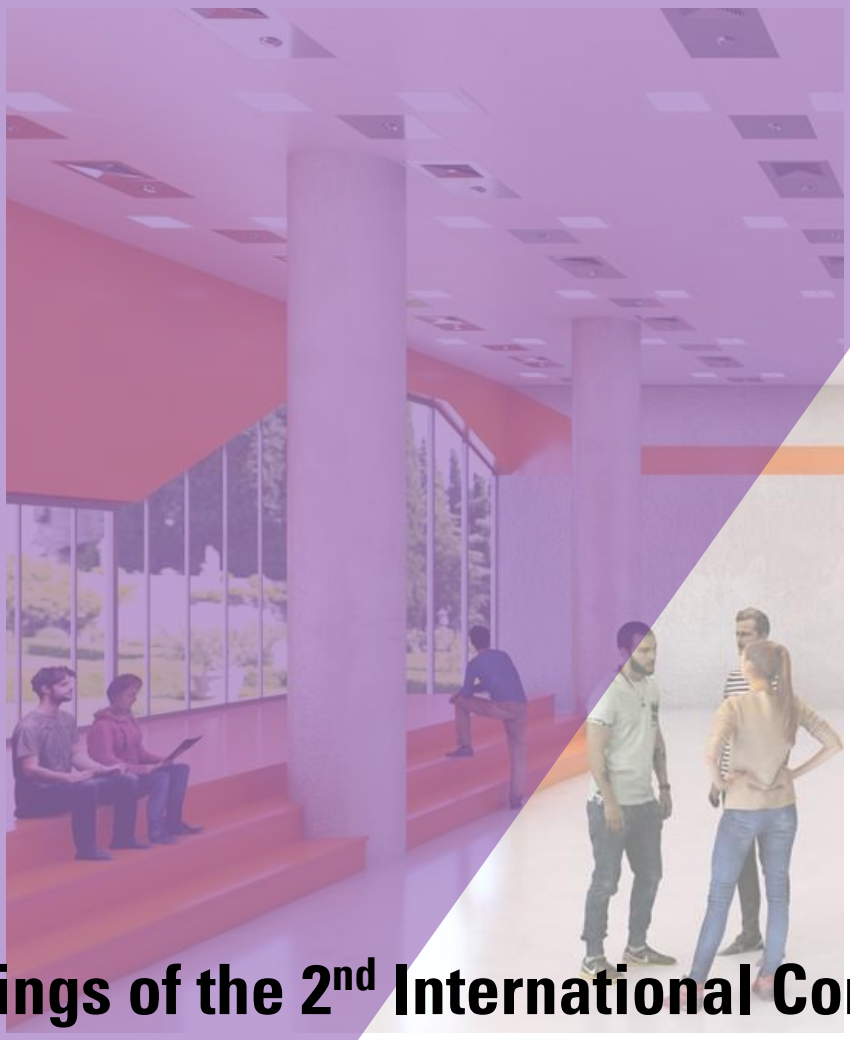

# Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica

## REINVENTING EDUCATION

2-5 June 2021

## VOLUME III

# Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Space and Time

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

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# Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Space and Time

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*Title* **Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the Journal "Scuola Democratica" – Reinventing Education VOLUME III Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Space and Time**

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

The challenges posed by the contemporary world have long required a rethinking of educational concepts, policies and practices. The question about education 'for what' as well as 'how' and 'for whom' has become unavoidable and yet it largely

remained elusive due to a tenacious attachment to the ideas and routines of the past which are now far off the radical transformations required of educational systems.

Scenarios, reflections and practices fostering the possibility of change towards the reinvention of the educational field as a driver of more general and global changes have been centerstage topics at the Conference. Multidisciplinary approach from experts from different disciplinary communities, including sociology, pedagogy, psychology, economics, architecture, political science has brought together researchers, decision makers and educators from all around the world to investigate constraints and opportunities for reinventing education.

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

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## Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Space and Time
## A Premise

Papers in this third volume deals with the Covid-19 pandemic which is having an enormous impact on education systems worldwide. Policy makers, teachers, school managers, parents and students have been called to the reinvent their way of 'doing school'. At the same time, the governance of the education system and schools' organizations have been exposed to unprecedented tensions.

Within a short period of time, radical changes had to be introduced, simultaneously, at various levels of the school system. At national and regional level, there has been the need to rethink the way in which teachers are recruited, engaged and managed. National assessment and evaluation systems have been suspended or redefined in their uses by school actors The ways through which institutes were managed and organized had to be rethought, passing in a very short time through an on and off of dematerialization and hyper-normativity of time and space. Within schools, managers and teachers have been called to redefine the role of digital technologies in their didactic, as well as in their relationships with families and students. In some cases, these set of changes led to experience novel and unexpected daily proximities, in other prevailed a context characterized by distance and unsatisfactory relationships. Managers and teachers have been asked to re-invent their professionality to rethink their organizational, didactic and relational competences. Students and families, on their side, have been called to rebuild and reimagine new way of being at school, re-inventing the spaces and time of schooling and the way in which they relate among each other and with teachers.

The pandemic emergency has been a lens revealing intersections and structural tensions among various level and actors of the education system, but also allowing opportunities of changes thanks to the exogenous shock. At the same time, it must be considered that the emergency is interacting on pre-existing inequalities and contradictions. The pandemic clearly revealed the deep disparities of educational opportunities associated to students' life and housing conditions, beyond their access and uses of technological devices. Remote teaching and the enactment of an 'emergency didactic' has exacerbated learning difficulties for underprivileged students (children facing material deprivation, students with migratory background, students with special needs or disable, etc.). The interaction between the pandemic and pre-existing inequalities created different contextual conditions for actors' agency, orienting toward different directions the pandemic's transformational potential.

Higher education systems have been affected too: in constant evolution due to constant transformations of society and changed functions of knowledge, universities have undergone a structural

change along with pandemic times. Simultaneously, the growing relevance of knowledge for the economic development of the capitalistic system has profoundly affected higher education systems, characterized by the neo-liberal approach which his subject of increasing critical analysis.

However, Higher education systems are starting to be affected by other somewhat inevitable changing processes due to the evolution of knowledge and the consequent forms of its transmission. These forms have to be necessarily new both because of the availability of new instruments and the increased need to develop interpretative models of a constant and often unpredictable change. In this juncture the university might assume a renewed central role. At Higher Education System level, the growing use of digital instruments is envisaged in order to cope with the rising of the management rates of the training offer as well as to answer to the growing differentiation of user categories. A feasible consequence could be the increasing of the already pressure for the differentiation among the universities, with the related social implications.

At individual university level, it is foreseeable the demand for university involvement in tackling the problems of society and the economy will increase. And this at global, national and local level. From an organizational point of view the most significant feature is represented by the accumulation of traditional and new tasks that do not seem to be possible to manage. Whatever form the higher education systems will come to take, it remains that a central point to be clarified concerns the management of change. It will be the market that will impose its rules and the universities will organize themselves individually within the invisible enclosures that will guide their policies (with predictable growing social and territorial differences), or instead the State will choose incentive policies to direct its training system. It remains that in a condition of uncertainty and constant change the university's roles multiply and become – at least potentially – more and more central. It can therefore be argued that the university is not only called upon to respond to the demands of society but by elaborating answers and solutions to the problems it progressively affects the functioning of society.

We are fully aware that each educational experience produces specific results and definitions of teaching-learning practices. The well-established model of the magister teacher, based on a one-to-many transmission of knowledge, is complemented by new configurations of teaching-learning practices. There are teaching practices that cultivate the ambition to combine the technological innovation with the psychological and pedagogical issues. Educational technologies, such as the Interactive Whiteboard, incorporate a new grammar and pragmatic in which the emphasis is placed on the

involvement and the participation of the student, as well as on a "reverse teaching", compared to the traditional one. The diffusion of online educational platforms, based on algorithmic architectures and data-driven approaches, also draws attention to a personalized way of learning and a datafication of teaching. Digital technologies are therefore stimulating a series of transformations in the socio-material order of the class affecting the spatial and temporal configuration of teaching. At the same time, they are embedded in the complexity of the educational contexts that rework their practical and symbolic value.

In the European framework of strengthening the relations between the labour market and education, we also witness the implementation of teaching practices associated with the idea of knowledge as an economic and social investment. Recently, a large field of critical investigation has highlighted how teaching aimed at improving the employment prospects of students is deeply affecting public values in education. At the same time, different points of view in the educational field claim to postpone the transmission of skills related to the labour market to broader educational objectives of social inclusion and civic participation.

The new proxemics imposed by the current pandemic challenge traditional spatial configuration, from the arrangement of desks to the mobile use of chairs, from the forms of communication in virtual environments to the interaction in the classroom. Therefore, this is to register the need to re-elaborate the ecology of the educational practices, starting from the socio-material space of learning.

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# Didactic Strategies and Methods During the COVID-19 Emergency: A Comparison Between Data Obtained from the Qualitative Analyses of SIRD Survey

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**ABSTRACT:** *The aim of this paper is to describe the results obtained from the qualitative analysis of the answers given by teachers to the open-ended questions of the SIRD national questionnaire on distance learning, widespread during the COVID-19 global lockdown. The focus of the present work is on regional data of primary and secondary schools of Tuscany and Umbria, for which the occurrences and the relative percentages by Regional sample were calculated in order to be compared with National results. In addition, a content analysis of teachers' responses was conducted. Some categories which showed more relevant results were selected in order to compare Regional and National results in relation to the use and the effectiveness of certain didactic strategies and methods. The comparison is also made with the quantitative data of the questionnaire to analyse a possible match between different outputs. First, the study revealed that the Tuscan teacher's sample has identified the innovation of teaching methods as a strength of distance learning, compared to the Umbrian and Italian samples. The analysis of the content of the answers has shown, in fact, how distance learning has represented for teachers the opportunity to propose new activities, different from those usually carried out in the classroom, and to revolutionize their teaching strategies mainly thanks to the new potential of the learning environment. The answers also highlighted teachers' intention to use these new strategies even in future. On the other side, we have found in the Umbrian sample the perception of inadequacy of the distance learning environment for practical and group activities, such as the practising of a musical instrument or laboratory subjects, as a weakness of online teaching. The aforementioned results appear to be particularly evident for upper secondary school teachers, while, for primary school teachers, data are very similar to the other two samples, showing a lower perception of inadequacy of the learning environment for these grades. Another weakness of the didactic remodulation is related to difficulties in design and achieving objectives and it was found mainly in the answers of primary school teachers of the Umbria region. These critical issues are related mainly to the expansion of time requested for preparing and carrying out activities, to the difficulty of effectively following all the pupils effectively and the inability of planning activities that involve also the weaker students. Furthermore, in line with the quantitative data, it was found that the percentage of primary school teachers reporting comments related to the implementation of innovative didactic strategies appears to be*

*higher for the Umbrian sample than for the Tuscan and National samples. The percentage of answers related to education innovation that emerged for Umbrian data decreases for higher school levels. The purpose of this contribution is therefore to highlight, not only the difficulties encountered by the teachers, but also their ability to adopt new and effective teaching strategies. The use and the implementation of multimedial methods and the multiplicity of teaching tools made the learning process more innovative and engaging for students*.

**KEYWORDS***: COVID-19; SIRD survey; Distance learning; Teaching strategies; Assessment.*

## Introduction

The Italian Society for Educational Research (SIRD) promoted a national survey in order to reflect on the remote education methods adopted during the COVID-19 emergency. The research was conducted by means of a questionnaire answered by more than 16.000 teachers from all schoolgrades of schools and at all educational levels throughout the country (Lucisano, 2020; Lucisano *et al.,* 2021). The open questions of the survey investigated the strengths and weaknesses of distance learning and the difficulties encountered by students. Furthermore, a space for comments and reflections made it possible to investigate in depth the teachers' point of view.

The following contribution comes from the idea of deepening the quantitative data already presented by the same research group in a recent work (Scierri *et al.,* forthcoming).

The aim of this contribution is to examine data from the Umbria and Tuscany regions and compare them with the national sample in order to find out eventual similarities and differences related in particular to the teaching and assessment methods and strategies used during remote education. In particular, the main focus will be on the positive aspects, in relation to the new teaching methods and strategies adopted and experimented. However, we will also describe the difficulties encountered with respect to the methodologies and strategies that were proposed pre-COVID.

Given the peculiarity of the variables analyzed, teachers of the C.P.I.A (which covers Adult Education), of the preschool and Support Teachers were excluded from our sample. In relation to the use of teaching and assessment strategies, in fact, these teachers present peculiarities that we do not intend to go into here. The sample is not probabilistic, with the limitations and cautions in interpreting the results that follow. Another limitation is the number of the Umbrian sample, which is much smaller than the others (Table 1).

**TAB. 1.** *Distribution of the sample by school order and geographical location (different letters in subscript indicate a significant difference between the categories at least at p ≤.05 level)*

| | *Italy* | *Tuscany* | *Umbria* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Primary* | $47.5_a$ | $32.3_b$ | $26.0_b$ |
| *Lower Secondary school* | $28.2_a$ | $25.1_a$ | $32.8_b$ |
| *Upper Secondary school* | $24.3_a$ | $42.6_b$ | $41.2_b$ |
| *Total* | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| *(N)* | (11.828) | (848) | (131) |

## 1. Methodology

The qualitative analysis of the answers to the open questions of the questionnaire administered in the national SIRD survey responds to the need to deepen some aspects related to the teachers' experience regarding the DL (Distance Learning). The work of categorical analysis allowed a bottom-up modelling of the open questions which, without a priori references, led to the construction of a structure starting from the texts themselves. The elaboration of the categories and subcategories required a process of individual reading and re-reading of the evidence, accompanied by periodic meetings and comparisons on online platforms of the researchers among themselves and with the coordinators, following a bottom-up process (Batini et al. 2020; 2021). The work therefore allowed the identification of neutral and non-evaluative categories, guided by the evidence and not by the interpretation of the researchers, proposing alternative aggregations, offering new possible readings and verifying the sustainability of the proposed categories in order to ensure the methodological rigor of the processes (Braun, Clark, 2006; Gale *et al.,* 2013).

Table 2 provides a summary of the categories identified, which gives a synthetic snapshot (one of the possible ones) of the plurality of experiences in different contexts[1].

The analysis reported here is limited to reporting results for some categories and sub-categories. Specifically, for the 'strengths of distance learning', the category 'Enrichment of the training offer' was examined in the following two sub-categories: 1) 'Innovation and teaching strategies/methodologies', 2) 'Monitoring, assessment and self-assessment'. For the 'weaknesses of distance learning', the category 'Didactic difficulties related to the new learning environment' was examined in the following sub-categories: 1) 'Inadequacy of the learning environment for carrying out practical/laboratory activities and collaborative group activities'; 2) 'Difficulties in designing and achieving objectives'; 3) 'Difficulties in the assessment processes'; 4) 'Difficulties in monitoring and control'; 4) 'Inadequacy of teacher training'. For the *comments,* the category 'Effects of distance learning on teaching' was

[1] For further methodological insights, see Batini et al., 2020; 2021.

examined in relation to the sub-category 'Discovery of new teaching strategies'; while in relation to the category 'Difficulties related to the new learning environment' the sub-category 'Difficulties in assessment and monitoring' was analysed.

We started with the categories already defined and counted the occurrences of categories and subcategories for each question at both national and regional level. The percentage data for questions with a double response (strengths and weaknesses) were combined by means of a statistical average. In addition, a content analysis of the teachers' answers was conducted. Some categories that showed more relevant results were selected in order to compare regional and national results in relation to the use and effectiveness of teaching strategies and methods, compared to what the quantitative data showed. The analysis of the answers concerning students' difficulties was excluded because of the focus of the present work.

**TAB. 2.** *Summary of the categorical structure of the four open questions (Batini et al., 2020)*

| Comments and reflections of the teachers | Student Difficulties |
|---|---|
| *1. Teaching professionalism* | *1. Problems related to technological tools* |
| *2. Negative personal consequences on teachers* | *2. Problems related to technological skills* |
| *3. Criticality of the precariat* | *3. Problems related to life contexts* |
| *4. Effects of distance learning on teaching* | *4. Problems related to the lack of social relationship/interaction in presence* |
| *5. Difficulties related to the new learning environment* | *5. Problems related to lack of/poor cooperation* |
| *6. Difficulty of inclusion* | *6. Problems related to the new learning environment* |
| *7. Emergency response* | *7. Students' attitudes towards distance learning* |
| *8. Roles and attitudes towards distance learning* | *8. Inclusion* |
| *9. Organizational difficulties* | *9. Other responses* |
| *10. Other responses* | |
| **Strengths of distance learning** | **Weaknesses of distance learning** |
| *1. Emergency response* | *1. Problems related to technological tools* |
| *2. Development of new technological skills* | *2. Problems related to technological skills* |
| *3. Relational advantages* | *3. Didactic difficulties related to the new learning environment* |
| *4. Organizational improvement* | *4. Difficulties related to the reorganization of the school structure* |
| *5. Professional development of teachers* | *5. Attitudes and roles towards the new learning environment* |
| *6. Students' skills related to distance learning* | *6. Inclusion* |
| *7. Students' attitude towards distance learning* | *7. Negative effects of distance learning* |
| *8. General learning benefits* | *8. Other responses* |
| *9. Enrichment of the training offer* | |
| *10. Inclusion* | |
| *11. Disposition/approach of teachers* | |
| *12. Classroom management* | |
| *13. Other responses* | |

## 2. Results

### *2.1. Didactic remodelling, teaching methods and strategies*

From the analysis of the answers to the open question which asked the teachers to indicate two strengths of the DL, regarding the sub-category 'Innovation and teaching strategies/methodologies', it is possible to observe how the qualitative data of our sample is in agreement with the quantitative data (Scierri *et al.,* forthcoming). In fact, from the results it emerges that the percentage of subjects who identified among the strengths the positive influence of DAD on teaching innovation through the use of new teaching strategies and methodologies is higher for the Tuscan sample (9.43%) than for the national sample (6.43%) and the Umbrian sample (4.58%) (Table 3).

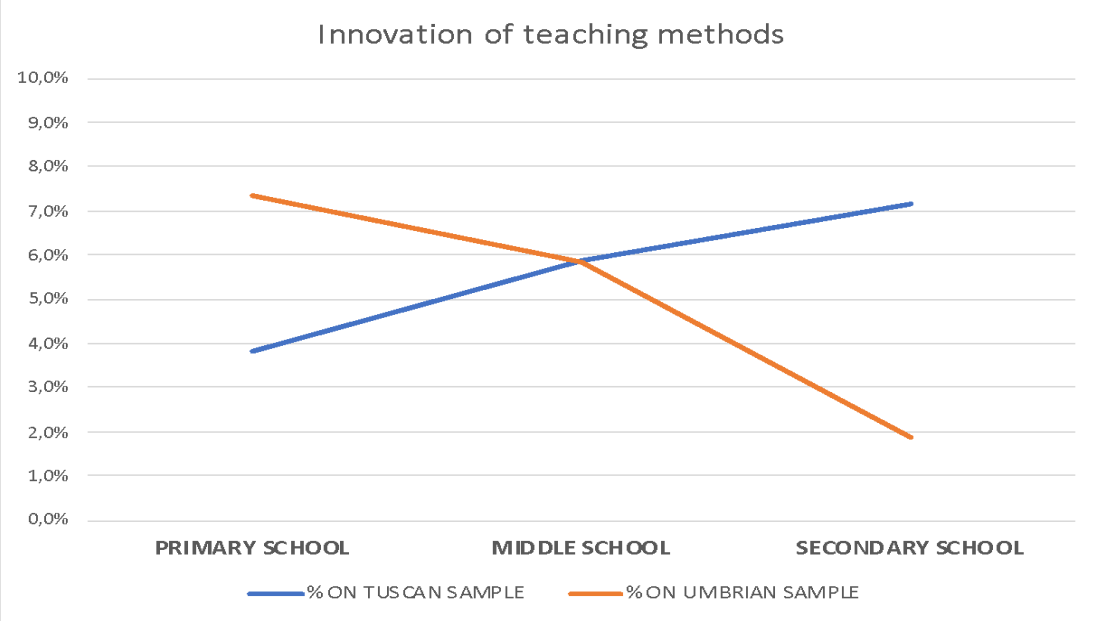
**TAB. 3.** *Innovation and teaching strategies/methodologies*

| | *% On National sample* | *% On Tuscan sample* | *% On Umbrian sample* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Answer 1* | 6.43 | 12.62 | 3.82 |
| *Answer 2* | 6.42 | 6.25 | 5.34 |
| *Mean* | 6.43 | 9.43 | 4.58 |

Data shows, therefore, a greater effort of Tuscan teachers in the didactic remodulation. However, investigating the trend of the regional answers divided by school order, we can see an opposite trend as far as Tuscany and Umbria are concerned (Figure 1). The percentage of answers in which a renewal of the teaching methods in the primary school is reported is higher for the Umbrian regional data (7.35%) compared to both the national data (6.46%) and the Tuscan data (3.83%). This difference is reversed when we look at the higher grades of school: for Umbria the percentage decreases for lower secondary school teachers (5.82%) and is drastically reduced for upper secondary school teachers (1.85%). Thus, in Umbria, the higher the level of school considered, the less the remodulation of teaching and the use of innovative strategies. Data from Tuscany show an inverse trend, in line with the national data: Tuscan teachers who have identified the didactic remodulation as a strength of the DAD increase in percentage terms if we consider the lower secondary school (5.90%) and even more in the upper secondary school (7.18%), coming to exceed even the national data (6.41%).

This result is coherently linked to what emerges from the answers to the question that provided the opportunity to highlight two weaknesses of the DL.

**FIG. 1.** *Innovation of teaching methods*




The perception of 'Inadequacy of the learning environment for carrying out practical/laboratory activities and collaborative group activities' is generally greater for Umbrian teachers (3.31%) than for the Tuscan (2.67%) and national (2.45%) figures. This difference remains when we look at the higher school levels: with reference to the secondary school, the percentage of answers that pointed out an inadequate environment for teaching is again greater for Umbria (4.36%) in comparison to the national (2.25%) and Tuscan figures (3.18%) (Table 4).

On the contrary, the Umbrian qualitative data for primary school teachers is in line with the other samples, so there is a lower perception of inadequacy of the learning environment. This data can probably be interpreted in the frame of reference of the data described above: a lower remodelling of the teaching strategies can lead to a higher perception of inadequacy of the learning environment. The analysis of the content of the answers shows a weakness of online teaching, that is the perception of inadequacy of the distance learning environment for practical and group activities such as the practising of a musical instrument or subjects that involve laboratory activities.

**TAB. 4.** *Inadequacy of the distance learning environment – Secondary school*

| | *% On National sample* | *% On Tuscan sample* | *% On Umbrian sample* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Answer 1* | 1.64 | 2.21 | 5.56 |
| *Answer 2* | 2.86 | 4.14 | 3.70 |
| *Mean* | 2.25 | 3.18 | 4.63 |

Remaining on the weaknesses found by the teachers, it is important to pay attention to the response frequencies concerning the 'Difficulties in designing and achieving objectives'. It is possible to hypothesise that the didactic remodelling has led to greater difficulty in the designing of

teaching activities. At a general level, the data emerged are comparable between Italy (3.98%) and the two regions considered (Tuscany: 3.54%; Umbria: 4.20%). However, as far as primary schools are concerned, the percentage of teachers who highlighted critical points in their teaching designing is higher in Umbria (7.35%) than in Tuscany (4.74%) and Italy (4.92%) (Table 5).

**TAB. 5.** *Difficulties in designing and achieving objectives – Primary school*

| | *% On National sample* | *% On Tuscan sample* | *% On Umbrian sample* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Answer 1* | 4.91 | 4.01 | 8.82 |
| *Answer 2* | 4.93 | 5.47 | 5.88 |
| *Mean* | 4.92 | 4.74 | 7.35 |

This is in line with what was observed in the strengths results, which showed a greater remodelling of teaching at primary school for Umbria. In this case the critical points are linked above all to the extension of time required for the preparation and execution of activities. Another critical issue is related to the difficulty of following all students effectively and equally and the inability to plan activities. The 'Difficulties in designing and teaching activities' seem to be particularly crucial when it comes to the inclusion of weaker students. Moreover, in the last section of the questionnaire, in which the teachers expressed comments or personal reflections on the DAD experience, a relevant aspect emerges in line with what has already been described regarding the strengths and the quantitative data. The percentage of primary school teachers who reported comments on the discovery of new teaching strategies was higher in Umbria (2.94%) than in Tuscany (1.09%) and at the national level (1.48%) (Table 6).

**TAB. 6.** *Implementation of innovative didactic strategies by school order*

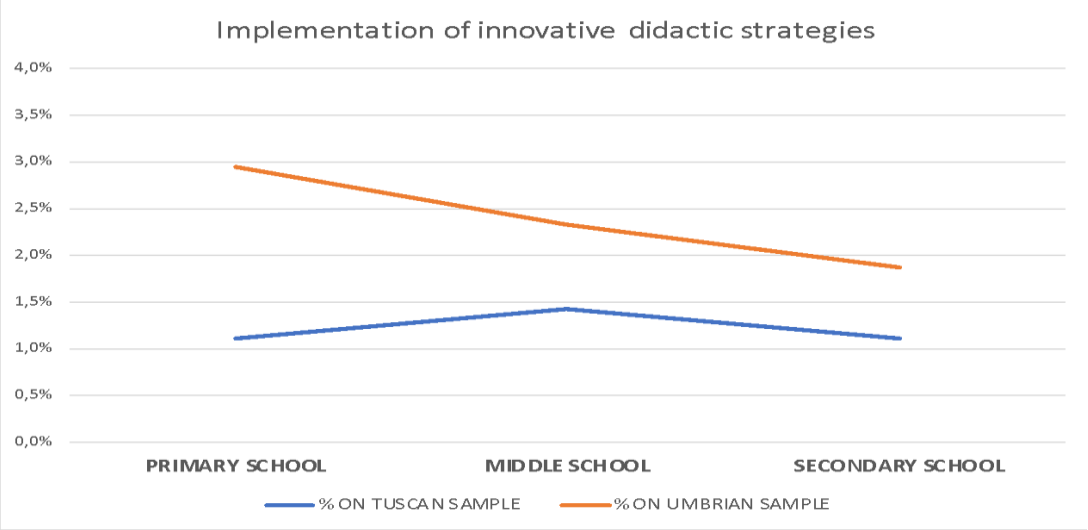
| | *% On Tuscan sample* | *% On Umbrian sample* |
|---|---|---|
| *Primary school* | 1.09 | 2.94 |
| *Lower Secondary school* | 1.42 | 2.33 |
| *Upper Secondary school* | 1.10 | 1.85 |

The percentage of evidence relating to didactic innovation that emerges from the Umbrian data decreases by considering higher grades of school: for the secondary school the Umbrian percentage goes down (1.85%) (Figure 2). For Tuscany the reverse trend (observed for the strengths) is not observed, so there is no increase in frequencies as a function of school grade. This is probably due to the nature of the question itself, which asked for a further in-depth examination of what has already been said in the previous ones.

But what is meant by innovation in teaching and didactic strategies? The analysis of the content of the answers has shown how distance learning has represented for teachers the opportunity to propose new activities, different from those usually carried out in

classrooms, and to revolutionize their teaching strategies mainly thanks to the new potential of the learning environment. The answers also highlighted teachers' intention to use these new strategies even in future.

**FIG. 2.** *Implementation of innovative didactic strategies*




## *2.2. Modalities of Assessment*

National data (1,83%) concerning the sub-category 'Monitoring, assessment and self-assessment', related to the strengths question, is almost similar to the regional data, both from Tuscany (2.00%) and Umbria (1.53%) (Table 7). Teachers, in fact, underline a greater speed in correcting the verifications or the written texts, an immediacy of the results with the written tests and also a better return of the papers and the possibility to correct them with the students themselves. With this new mode, students were also monitored and helped more on an individual level. However, it is relevant to note that Umbrian primary school teachers do not seem to have found any strengths in the diversification of monitoring, assessment and self-assessment methods (0%) (Table 8).

**TAB. 7.** *Monitoring, assessment and self-assessment*

| | *% On National sample* | *% On Tuscan sample* | *% On Umbrian sample* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Answer 1* | 1.12 | 1.18 | 0.76 |
| *Answer 2* | 2.54 | 2.83 | 2.29 |
| *Mean* | 1.83 | 2.00 | 1.53 |

**TAB. 8.** *Monitoring, assessment and self-assessment by school order*

| | *% On National sample* | *% On Tuscan sample* | *% On Umbrian sample* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Primary school* | 1.90% | 1.28% | 0.00% |
| *Lower Secondary school* | 1.87% | 2.36% | 2.33% |
| *Upper Secondary school* | 1.64% | 2.35% | 1.85% |

Qualitative data of the secondary schools of Tuscany are instead in agreement with the quantitative data on the greater effort of remodulation of the methods of assessment implemented by the teachers (Scierri *et al.,* forthcoming). In fact, teachers, albeit with greater effort, seem to have diversified more the methods of monitoring, assessment and self-assessment compared to the national and regional data on lower (2.36% Tuscany; 2.33% Umbria; 1.87% National) and upper secondary schools (2.35% Tuscany; 1.85% Umbria; 1.64% National).

Teachers from Umbria (12.98%) also showed more weaknesses with respect to the sub-category 'Difficulties in the assessment processes' in comparison to the National (8.04%) and Tuscan sample (8.43%) (Table 9). This difference does not emerge in relation to the 'Difficulties in monitoring and control'. These data are partly in contrast to what emerges in the same sub-category 'Difficulty in assessment and monitoring' in relation to the comments question. Data show less difficulty in assessment and monitoring than reported in the same subcategory on the weaknesses question. Most probably most respondents did not feel it necessary to stress this aspect again in the question on general comments.

**TAB. 9.** *Difficulties in the assessment processes*

| | *% On National sample* | *% On Tuscan sample* | *% On Umbrian sample* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Answer 1* | 5.39 | 6.37 | 9.16 |
| *Answer 2* | 10.69 | 10.50 | 16.79 |
| *Mean* | 8.04 | 8.43 | 12.98 |

The lack of opportunity to implement an adequate assessment of the didactic gain emerged from the quantitative data, concerning the secondary school teachers of Tuscany, is in line with the data emerging from the sub-category of the comments concerning the 'Difficulties in the assessment and monitoring'. In fact, Tuscan teachers are those who reported a higher percentage (3.30%) than the Umbrian teachers of the first level secondary schools, where the percentage is 0 (Table 10). The Tuscan figure, however, seems to be more in line with the National figure, which stands at 2.78%. Tuscany has a higher percentage (4.70%) compared to the National (2.37%) and to the Umbrian figure (3.70%), even for upper secondary schools.

**TAB. 10.** *Difficulties in the assessment and monitoring*

| | *% On National sample* | *% On Tuscan sample* | *% On Umbrian sample* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Lower Secondary school* | 2.78% | 3.30% | 0.00% |
| *Upper Secondary school* | 2.37% | 4.70% | 3.70% |

Of particular interest is the result of secondary school teachers of Umbria since this is the only school grade where difficulties were found reported by teachers (3.70%). This result was found analysing the category

'Difficulties in assessment process' of the question related to weaknesses of distance learning.

*2.3. Assessment of the quality of the experience in relation to the teachers' previous experience*

We tried to relate previous experience and thus familiarity with technology to the sub-categories relating to assessment. The results that clearly emerge is that neither the National nor the Regional data, differentiated by grade, show significant percentages of previous training. The only teachers who reported a previous preparation as a strong point, with a slightly higher percentage compared to the National and Tuscan data, are Umbrian teachers of first degree secondary schools (1.16%). From the qualitative data therefore it is not possible to sustain that those who have a previous training, realize an adequate assessment of profit, perhaps associating this data to a greater diversification of assessment methods, self-assessment and monitoring.

The same reasoning also applies to perception of effectiveness of the students' learning in relation to the previous training, which can be found in the sub-category 'Effectiveness of the didactics' (on the learning results and attitude of the students) within the 'Comments' question. The data that is confirmed is always that relating to the Umbrian teachers of the lower Secondary Schools who declared as a strength point their previous experience to a greater extent than the other samples. They also perceived a greater effectiveness of teaching on learning outcomes and student attitudes (2.33%) compared to the National data (1.20%) and the Tuscany data, that is attested with occurrences equal to 0. At this point we have analysed instead those who reported the lack of previous experience and training as a negative datum to see how this could affect the assessment practices. Teachers from Tuscan primary schools are those who reported with a greater extent, as a point of weakness, the difficulty given by the inadequate training of teachers (2.19%). This data, unlike the quantitative data, is not reflected in the subcategory 'Difficulties in assessment processes' within the weaknesses. In fact, teachers from Tuscan primary schools, although reporting a poor previous training, seem not to have found difficulties in the assessment processes (4.20%) or at least to a lesser extent than the Umbrian teachers (8.82%) who report a percentage of 1.47% in the sub-category relating to 'Inadequacy of teacher training'. However, it is interesting to note that for the teachers of upper secondary schools in Umbria there are no weaknesses related to inadequate training of teachers (0%), an aspect that is instead reported significantly more by the same Umbrian sample (4.65%) within the sub-category of comments about teachers' lack of training and skills, compared to both the Tuscan (2.83%) and the National data (1.95%).

## Conclusions

The contribution aimed to present an in-depth analysis of some data from the national SIRD research on Distance Learning, relating in particular to the regions of Tuscany and Umbria. Specifically, the answers to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire concerning the strengths and the weaknesses of the DL experience were examined, taking into consideration the categories related to the didactic and assessment aspects.

Firstly, the study revealed that the Tuscan sample of teachers identified innovation in teaching methods as a strong point of distance learning to a greater extent than the Umbrian and Italian samples. According to some teachers, distance learning represented an opportunity to propose new activities and to revolutionize their teaching strategies, especially thanks to the new potential of the learning environment. Teachers' answers also highlighted the intention to use these new strategies in the future. Secondly, in the Umbrian sample, a perceived inadequacy of the distance learning environment for practical and group activities, such as the practice of a musical instrument or laboratory subjects, was found as a weakness of online teaching.

In particular for upper secondary school teachers. This aspect may depend on the type of school, given that it is often reported by technical institutes that perhaps often provide for laboratories or practical activities in their organization. Another weakness detected is related to the difficulties in planning and achieving objectives. This fact was found above all in the answers of the primary school teachers of the Umbria region. These critical points are linked above all to the extension of the time required for the preparation and carrying out of the activities, to the difficulty of effectively following all the pupils and to the inability to plan activities which involve even the weakest pupils. Moreover, it emerged that the percentage of primary school teachers who reported observations concerning the implementation of innovative teaching strategies appears to be higher for the Umbrian sample than for the Tuscan and National ones. The percentage of answers related to didactic innovation emerged for the Umbrian data decreases for the higher school levels. In summary we can say that both the Tuscan and the Umbrian samples have found some positive aspects with opposite tendencies between primary and secondary schools.

Teachers' answers show the importance of adopting new and effective teaching strategies to make the learning process more innovative and involving. The use of interactive teaching strategies seems to have been, at a national level, a determining aspect for a better evaluation of the DAD experience in terms of both effectiveness for student learning and adequate assessment of student achievement (Scierri *et al.,* forthcoming). In general, collaborative strategies were accompanied by a positive evaluation of the online teaching experience (Trinchero, 2021).

In conclusion, the need to innovate teaching strategies was seen by some teachers as a strong point of the distance learning experience. Moreover, as emerged from the quantitative data analysis, teachers who used 'active' teaching and assessment methods were the same ones who provided a higher evaluation of the experience. Furthermore, according to teachers' answers, the use and implementation of multimedia methods and the multiplicity of teaching tools made the learning process more innovative and engaging. It is important to consider, among others, these aspects as a starting point for restarting and designing a 'new' post-COVID-19 didactics.

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