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THE TEACHING OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL: THE PROFILE OF THE GENERALIST TEACHER AND SPECIALIST OF MOTOR EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Abstract. The topic dealt with in this article is physical education in primary school, the teaching of which is provided for by ministerial documents but not mandatory to date.

Keywords: physical education; generalist teacher, specialist teacher, budget law 2022.

The Italian primary school consists of a cycle of studies organized in five classes with pupils in the age group of 5-10 years. The number of hours per week offered to families is 24, 27 or 30 and full time 40 hours per week. The same disciplines are taught in each hourly offer, including physical education, but with different hours. Through a complex inter-procedural procedure that starts from class planning, the number of hours of the individual disciplines are established and ends with the assignment of the disciplines by the headmaster to the individual teachers, until now exclusively generalists being able to teach all disciplines.

Unfortunately, the number of hours entrusted to physical education does not respond even in part to the indications of the World Health Organization (WHO), which recommends at least 60 minutes a day of physical activity, from moderate to intense, depending on the age groups, since the discipline is not taught in a sufficient and adequate number of hours. The evidence is that in Italy children (7-8 years) who are overweight are in fact 20.4% and obese children are 9.4%.

After countless legislative attempts and special projects with the collaboration of the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) for the effective teaching of
physical education in primary school, the government provision, inserted in the budget law 2022, of the mandatory nature of the "teaching of physical education by graduates in motor science. Teaching is mandatory for two hours per week, possibly in addition to the current 1 or 2 hour forecast of the current weekly timetable by the generalist teacher. The hours of physical education are taught by two types of teachers:

1) generalist teacher who teaches all subjects for the 5 classes and physical education for classes 1, 2 and 3 and is trained in physical education for 9 credits university (CFU) in the degree courses in primary education sciences,

2) specialist teacher who only teaches physical education for 2 hours in classes 4 and 5 and is trained with an adequate number of CFU in motor activity sciences and disciplines sports, biomedicine and psycho-pedagogy in the master's degree courses in motor science. The insertion of the specialist teacher will be progressive: starting from the school year 2022/23 only for the fifth grades (final grades) and then also expanding to the fourth grades in the school year 2023/24.

The problem addressed relates to the determination of a double method of entrusting the teaching of physical education hours to two specific and different teacher profiles who have different academic backgrounds. Furthermore, a methodological overlap of the teaching of physical education for primary classes 4 and 5 is implemented ex novo by the 2 different types of teachers and a methodological difference in the teaching of physical education is determined between classes 4 and 5 with both generalist and specialist teachers and classes 1, 2 and 3 only with the generalist teacher. This is certainly a source of organizational-didactic and methodological disciplinary problems that primary schools have to face.

The objective of the study is to identify the organizational-didactic and disciplinary methodological issues in the application of the new legislative provision of the generalist model of the single teacher and the specialist for motor education limited to primary classes IV and V.

The method adopted is that of archival research through the analysis of ministerial documents in application of the new regulatory provisions and the review of the literature.
An overall review of the teaching of physical education in primary school is underway. With the introduction of the specialist teacher in only 4 and 5 primary school classes, the organizational flexibility of the primary school would be partially reduced: while with the profile of the generalist teacher only, the head teacher could assign subjects indifferently to teachers with the introduction of the specialist teacher in the final classes, the assignments for the final classes for the teaching of physical education are compulsory with difficulties in the constitution of the timetable since the specialist teacher would be engaged in eleven classes.

Furthermore, with the dual professional profile of generalist teacher - specialist teacher on the same teaching discipline, confusions and misunderstandings would be created. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a mutually formative dynamic that involves both types of teachers. It is therefore necessary that the generalist teacher, in order to be able to dialogue with specialist teachers, has a partially generalist function so that he can also adapt to the disciplinary teaching of physical education; conversely, the specialist teacher deepens the methodology of generalist teaching (the same for all subjects) with psycho-pedagogical thematic insights. Furthermore, in full time the coexistence of the generalist teacher with the specialist teacher in the last classes can translate as a direct internship so that the generalist teacher learns useful operational practices that can be replicated even in the absence of the specialist teacher as occurs in non-full-time terminal classes where the co-presence of the specialist teacher is not foreseen but only the comparison in the weekly programming. In the 1, 2 and 3 classes of primary school, where the presence of the specialist is not foreseen, an adequate formative moment is necessary: in fact for the other generalist teachers additional training in the subject-specific teaching of physical education is necessary. If we look at the Maltese model, in each class there are both types of teachers: the specialists are present for only one hour a week while the generalists conduct the other hours of physical activity that can even go beyond the second hour. In this way, the same co-ownership of teaching between two teachers with different backgrounds can already represent a moment of fruitful educational dialogue for achieving the goals set by the National Guidelines for the Curriculum.
Finally, there are problems in putting the various hourly models of 24, 27 and 30 hours into a system in the educational organization where different needs of the timetable must coexist to be analyzed and resolved on a case-by-case basis. In fact, the partial activation of the additional hours makes the organization of each single school more complex, which is forced to adopt an additional timetable model: in addition to the offer of 40 hours per week (full time) and the 24 or 27 hours per week of the first three classes, an hourly model of 26 or 29 hours per week is outlined in the fourth and fifth classes (24 + 2 or 27 + 2) with the consequent and necessary reorganization of the teaching staff (generalist) and administrative and auxiliary staff, without prejudice to the need for clarifications to be part of the Ministry of Education on the compulsory nature of these additional hours by families who, to date, have the right to decide the school time of their children.

While acknowledging the innovative scope of the legislative intervention, the problem of entrusting the teaching of physical education entirely to teachers in possession of a suitable master's degree has not been solved in its entirety since teaching in the first three classes remains entrusted to generalist teachers of primary school and the number of hours per week of the discipline is not univocally established for these classes, still leaving the individual schools the faculty to decide on the matter.

The generalist teacher chooses the contents of the disciplines entrusted to him without distinction of method and specificity between them, while the specialist teacher for the peculiarity of the teaching of physical education, more operational as it is linked to the body and movement, has its own specific methodology of teaching like that implemented in secondary school, where the disciplines and the number of hours attributed to them are well defined. Therefore, an appropriate training of the generalist teacher, who deals with physical education, on the methodology of motor science is necessary so that a point of fruitful interaction can be found in the team of teachers of each single class.

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