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Teaching European Integration in Italian Upper Secondary School

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Abstract

An extensive study of the representations of Europe in history textbooks has been conducted with regards to Italian lower secondary school (Pingel 1994, 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Cajani 2003). These studies have included considerations upon the history of European integration, although this was not their exclusive topic. To date, however, few pieces of research have addressed how the history of European integration is dealt with in Italian textbooks for upper secondary school (Accardo, Baldocchi 2004; Challand 2009). The present paper examines how curricula and textbooks portray the integration process in upper secondary school. It focuses on the position they attribute to Italy in different phases and the extent to which they use recent findings of historiography.

Keywords

Textbooks; European integration; History education; Upper secondary school

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s the increasing efforts to promote a European dimension in education made both by the Council of Europe and the EEC/EU (Ryba 1992; Stradling 2001; Cajani 2003; Paoli 2010) have resulted in a growing interest of researchers in history education towards the representations of Europe at school (Pingel 1994; Pingel 2000; Pingel 2003a; Soysal and Schlisser 2005). Transnational identities, including the European one, have become one key topic in textbook and curricula studies (Szakács 2018), opening the way to comparative research projects and giving prominence to issues related to Europe and European integration in single-country studies. Textbook studies have shown that the scope for topics of European relevance and, among them, for the integration process has increased over the decades due to long-term developments in didactics (Pingel 1994: 11). Indeed, the purposes attributed to history as a school subject have varied. In the 19th century, State-sponsored schooling played a pivotal role in the process of nation-building as a tool of socialisation of national histories and construction of shared memories (Ascenzi 2009; Seixas 2018). However, during the 20th century, the relation between school history and nation-building became more complex, and international pressures affected the aims and approaches to history teaching. As a result, although history continued to be related to individual identity and collective memory (Carretero and Rodríguez-Moneo and Asensio 2011), three competing paradigms of the relation between identity and memory have been identified in school curricula. School history can focus on a 'well-defined narrative' made of events and actors relevant at a national or supranational scale, disciplinary competencies or 'critical historical scrutiny' of memorial cultures of students and societies (Seixas 2018). The balance between these three components has wide-ranging implications for what and how the subject is taught.

In different countries, like Spain (Pingel 2000: 19) and France (Garcia, Leduc 2003; Legris 2014), there have been controversies about the feasibility of contemporary history that affected the collocation of the process of integration as part of history or citizenship education classes. In Italy, contemporary history has been controversial since the defascistization of schools (Ascenzi 2007) and re-emerged periodically as the battleground of 'history wars' (Cajani, 2019a). Analyses of Italian textbooks for lower secondary school proved that they tend to provide an instantaneous picture of present-day Europe. The process of integration is reduced to background information for citizenship education rather than interpreted as a relevant process in contemporary history (Pingel 1994: 12, 21).

Regarding upper secondary school, some studies highlighted that the portrayal of European integration could serve to self-enhance the nation, as in the cases of France (Sakki 2014; Soysal, Bertilotti, Mannitz 2005) and Romania (Szakács 2018: 131-174). Whereas in the case of France EEC/UE becomes a projection of a French construction, in Romania and Italy it has represented a significant Other for the evolution of a discourse of national identity (Challand: 2009). However, Italian textbooks began to move from this approach in the early 2000s, and there is little research on textbooks published after the school reform of 2010 and the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2007-2008. These events were likely to affect the representations of the EU. Indeed, the school reform ended more than 25 years of debates on the education system that involved the content, methods and aims of history teaching. On the other hand, the economic crisis opened the way to new forms of criticism of the integration, sometimes broadly referred to as Euro-scepticism (Pasquinucci and Verzichelli 2016).

This paper addresses the question of how recent textbooks present the European integration process to secondary school pupils. It applies the centre-periphery framework (see Alpan and Diez, in this volume) to textbooks widespread in use in 2018 in Italy to further articulate the question: do they clearly identify a centre of an integrated Europe? And what is the position that Italy occupies? Does this position change in different phases of integration and, if so, when, and how?

Former research applied the concept of periphery in textbook analysis to countries of contested or recent EU membership – as Greece, Spain, Turkey, Bulgaria (Antonίου and Nuhoglu Soysal 2005; Pereyra and Luzón 2005; Pilbrow 2005) – or Russia (Maier 2005). However, these studies did not focus on upper secondary school and gave cursory examination of the integration

process *per se*. On the contrary, the present paper applies this framework to a founding member of the EEC/EU and focuses on the links between EU integration and Italian domestic and foreign policy to explore how the interaction between these different levels is presented to pupils. Textbooks have been chosen as a source to study social representations of European integration because they are the products of processes of negotiations of knowledge (Christophe 2014: 1), which involve political authorities, writers, teachers, pupils and families, and academic historians. In fact, textbooks are not neutral responses to school curricula (Roldán Vera 2018: 107) but an interpretation of them that reflects the writers' view of the discipline of history and the expectations of their audience (Klerides 2010: 41). Textbook authors, as well as teachers, are interpreters of the curriculum, who implement the decisions about educational goals taken at the macro level of Ministerial policies (van Akker, 2003). Since textbooks mainly follow the national syllabus, a discussion of the place of European integration in post-war history syllabuses for upper secondary schools has been presented at the beginning of the paper. I put into evidence the controversies over contemporary history and the adoption of a disciplinary approach to teaching to evaluate how they affected the discourse about the second half of the 20th century. Indeed, the scope of the narrative in a textbook changes if it aims at informing a passive reader or providing materials for modelling the practice of disciplinary history.

Moreover, content analysis has evaluated the use of historiography. The progressive opening of archives, which are subject to more restrictions than abroad, and the institutionalisation of the history of European integration in Italian universities (on European Studies in other academic contexts, see Süleymanoğlu and Turhan in this volume) have supported new lines of research and contributed to the emergence of an autonomous subject (Laschi 2008). During the 2010s, Italian historians have increasingly investigated the external relations of the EEC/EU (Bitumi and Laschi and D'Ottavio 2008), and they have attempted to overcome the academic competition between international relations and contemporary history that affected the field (Laschi 2019). They have stressed the engagement in European integration as the most relevant feature of the country's foreign policy after the Second world war (Varsori, 2010: 23), the mutual relation between foreign and domestic policy (Neri Gualdesi 2004; Craveri and Varsori 2009), and the political implications of specific European policies (Laschi 2008).

The sources used for the study are chapters or paragraphs dealing directly with European integration and national history¹ in a sample of history textbooks for upper non-vocational secondary schools, which are attended by 87% of pupils enrolling in secondary schools in Italy (Miur 2021). The paper analyses only history textbooks because the subject is compulsory in the last year of all non-vocational secondary schools. Conversely, only a minority of technical schools include a course of geography, which proved to be relevant to understand the symbolic construction of European identity and the portrayal of the EEC in Italian lower secondary school (Cajani 1994: 392, 404), and presents the EU to French pupils in *Première* (Blanc 2013). Until 2019, civic education was taught by history teachers and had a strong connection with history, thus the analysis considered materials of civic education included in history textbooks.

Political and administrative curriculum decision-making and textbook narratives are investigated in two sections. The first one outlines the development in history syllabuses, focusing on the importance of the history of the second half of the 20th century and the introduction of EEC/EU as a topic. The second one focuses on content, lexical and visual analysis of textbooks. I will argue that the representation of European integration offered to Italian secondary school pupils emerges from two contrasting narratives, which make it ambivalent. For each of these narratives, the question about the position of Italy has been posed, putting into evidence people, factors and events that receive more attention in texts or visuals. On the one hand, a linear and optimistic narrative focuses predominantly on the beginnings of the process and presents it as incontrovertible. On the other hand, the description of present-day limits and crises of the EU does not contextualize them in medium-term developments. Both make little use of updated historiography.

THE EMERGENCE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN HISTORY SYLLABUSES

A brief overview of the evolution of history syllabuses in Italy in the post-war period is necessary to appreciate the introduction of European integration as a topic and the factors that limited its relevance. After the Second World War, there were three waves of change of history syllabuses: in the early 1960s, between the 1980s and the early 1990s, and during the fifteen years 1996-2010. New syllabuses were approved in the early 1960s and in 2010, but changes occurred also in the absence of any formal reform of the secondary school system, because schools introduced 'experimental' programs (Polesel 2005). With regards to history, experimental syllabuses issued at the beginning of the 1990s stressed the importance of understanding history as a discipline and studying contemporary history. According to the national syllabuses for secondary schools in the immediate post-war, teaching should cover the history of the 20th century not beyond the end of the First World War (Ascenzi 2007). The rejection of the preeminent role of contemporary history contradicted not only the Fascist approach (Ragionieri 1952: 334), but also a long-lasting tradition rooted in the Liberal Age. Between 1960 and 1962, the introduction of the study of contemporary organisations for international cooperation in all secondary schools and the rejection of a nationalistic myth were relevant innovations (Silvani 2005: 185). In upper general schools, teachers should open their courses explaining the Restoration instead of the American Revolution to deal with the most recent events (D.P.R. 1457/1960). Moreover, the foreword of the syllabus for technical institutes recommended efforts in teaching contemporary history, in contrast to former habits (D.P.R. 1222/1961). However, a nation-centred view still prevailed, and history teaching continued to be informed by approaches introduced or strengthened during the Fascist regime (Di Pietro 1991). In addition, the 'shift from teacher- to pupil-centred and from expository towards investigative learning' (Cajani 2019: 5) witnessed by Western societies from the 1960s did not occur. Because of the failure of upper secondary school reforms in 1978, 1983 and 1986 (Di Pietro 1991), only educational experimentation, formally introduced in 1974 and thoroughly developed by the newly established Brocca Commission at the end of the 1980s, compensated for the lack of root-and-branch reform.

The documents published by the Commission were intended to guide planning, teaching and, partially, assessment. European integration was introduced as a compulsory subtopic of international politics and economics in three-year courses and mentioned in the syllabus for five-year courses as an example of possible content in the section about *Competition and détente*. The interpretative nature of history and its epistemology received wide attention. During the 1980s, a series of new textbooks published by Bruno Mondadori followed this trend of change in history education and focused on the disciplinary practice of history, including 'history workshops' with critical reading of primary and secondary sources (Cajani 2019b: 127). However, this approach did not become mainstream among teachers, and the Brocca Commission had only an indirect impact on general secondary schooling because of the failure of the reform of the education system. Indeed, in 1993 the end of the shortest legislative session in the history of Republican Italy prevented both the long-awaited law of reform to come into force and a proposal for a European history course presented by the Lega Nord to be discussed². The commission reports inspired the syllabuses for vocational institutes in force between 1992 and 1997, and those for technical institutes issued in 1994 and 1996 (Cajani 2010: 21).

The re-proposal of a course of European history in 1994 was not examined again, because the new legislative session (the 12th) prematurely ended in 1996. In the following years, the issue of European history emerged with regards to polemics about European identity and 'roots', but no one else submitted a proposal for a course separated from that of general history.

A new phase seemed to begin for history teaching in 1996: a law of school system reform was presented the first day of the legislative session and approved in February 2000 (L. 30/2000). Meanwhile, the left-wing Minister of Education Berlinguer established that history syllabuses for the final year of secondary education should cover only the 20th century, as happened in schools that adopted the experimental Brocca's syllabus. At the time, in the rest of upper general secondary schools, which still followed the 1960 syllabus, teachers covered in the fifth year the period from the 1820s to the 1980s, whereas in technical secondary schools the 1961 syllabus

prescribed to start from 1848. In both cases, teachers were expected to deal with the European communities as the last topic of the year.

Thus, Min. Berlinguer's choice left more time to investigate the European integration process in all secondary schools. As a result, Italy became closer to France and Germany, where the history of the 20th century – including the most recent events – had received more extensive treatment at least since the 1980s. Despite some criticism from right-wing historians, this innovation was maintained. Berlinguer's decree was a turning point for Italian teachers (Silvani 2005: 202), but feasibility of teaching contemporary history remained a topic of controversy (Rinaldi and Ziruolo 2000: VIII) and teachers felt unconfident about how to teach the EU integration or did not deal with this topic at all (Silvani 2001). Moreover, a supranational approach to history was not a relevant criterion to choose textbooks (Silvani 2001).

Few months after the approval of the general reform, Berlinguer's successor, De Mauro, who had been one of the members of the Brocca Commission, designated a committee to write new syllabuses. Some of the most relevant aspects of the Brocca history syllabus were maintained, i.e. the relevance of 20th-century history, the understanding of history as a discipline, and teachers' role in planning in-depth studies during the last three years of five-year courses. Berlinguer-De Mauro's reform was a general reform of all school grades and introduced some crucial changes. Cajani (2019a) thoroughly discussed the failure of this reform, which was abrogated before coming into force in July 2001 by the new right-wing Minister of Education Moratti (Dal Passo, Laurenti 2017: 124). Two main features of this proposal raised a wave of protest, namely the study of contemporary history in the first two years of high school and the shift from a national-Eurocentric to a world perspective. Critics argued in favour of history as a tool for creating collective identity rather than developing disciplinary habits of mind. The idea of history as a grand narrative promoting social cohesion and a sense of belonging gained momentum with regards to the European dimension in education. One manifesto against the reform claimed that Italian identity was part of Western European identity, and Western Europe was 'a civilisation autonomous from Greek-byzantine and Islamic worlds' (Arnaldi Arnaldi and Bevilacqua and Firpo and Fonseca et al. 2001: 111). In this perspective, knowledge of Greek-Roman and Medieval history was crucial for Italy 'but also from the perspective of building a European identity' whose boundaries coincided with a very limited Western Europe.

The authors of this manifesto wrote a very synthetic syllabus. They suggested that during the first two years of secondary school Citizenship education could compensate for knowledge of contemporary history dealing with topics as 'national and European parliamentary institutions, the European Union, parliamentary assemblies (ONU, FAO, UNESCO, etc.)' (Arnaldi and Bevilacqua and Firpo and Fonseca et al. 2001: 111). Despite labelling this subject as 'Citizenship and historical education', this proposal may imply a shift from a historical understanding of the unification process to a knowledge of present-day institutions.

Minister Moratti, elected in 2001, presented a history syllabus that reintroduced the study of the last quarter of the 19th century during the last year of upper secondary school and stressed the role of religion in history. European integration was mentioned among the contents of history but received more attention under Citizenship education. In Citizenship education classes, pupils should learn the principles of the European constitution with regards to 'spiritual and moral heritage of Europe', Europeanism and the roots of contemporary debates about Europe in 'the historical heritage of classical antiquity, Christianity and other religions' (D. Lgs. 17 ottobre 2005, Allegato C2 29). Another government takeover prevented this syllabus from coming into force.

Between 2010 and 2012, new syllabuses were issued for all upper secondary schools, and they are still in force in upper general and technical schools. Looking back at the effects of governments' turnovers in the 21st century on Italian school system, a comprehensive reform took place between 2004 and 2012. However, it did not overcome the differences between upper general and technical/vocational education, modify the organisation of upper secondary school nor challenge the Euro-centric approach to history. The history syllabus issued in 2010 for upper general secondary schools includes a general introduction common to all subjects, specific guidelines for each subject and learning objectives. However, it is flexible enough to allow

teachers to construct their own scheme of work. Provided that there is not a fixed list of topics for a national examination in history in Italy, the oral examination at the end of upper secondary school focuses on topics that have been selected by teachers. The guidelines for the reform of technical institutes issued in 2010 (grades 9th and 10th) and 2012 (grades 11th-13th) emphasise that the relevant contents are offered as suggestions for teachers and schools, which are free to plan their educational offer. So, teachers' interpretation of the curriculum is crucial to attribute relevance to one or another topic. During the emergency due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the oral examination temporarily centred around an individual project (Bianchi 2021).

Although the syllabus is a recommendation without a strictly prescriptive character, the version for upper general secondary schools lists some topics claiming that teachers could not leave them aside. Italian and European history constitute two different topics, although the learner profile states that Italian history must be understood in the European and international context (Indicazioni nazionali Allegato A 2010: 3). The history of extra-European countries should be taken into consideration as a general framework, but there is clearly no attempt to include world history.

According to the learner profile for upper general secondary school, relevant historical knowledge refers to events, places, and personalities, whereas processes and concepts are not mentioned. The guidelines for history widen only partially this approach. The epistemology of history as a discipline is ignored and teaching history is equated to the illustration of a succession of events (Grazioli, 2010: 26). With regards to teaching approaches, the learner profile for upper general secondary school limits the use of laboratory to scientific subjects (Indicazioni Nazionali Allegato A 2010: 1).

Thus, the debate of the 1980s and 1990s seems to have had little impact on the formal curriculum. Understanding history as a discipline, the variety of its methods and its dual nature of narrative and research receive little attention. The learner profile includes only a reference to source analysis, even though the text highlights that teachers could complement their work by broadening its scope and method. Here again, guidelines for history open a different perspective, but they adopt tentative language (Indicazioni nazionali 2010: 18). In contrast, the guidelines for the reform of technical institutes argue that teachers should adopt innovation in didactics to improve the quality of learning and are encouraged to apply active learning approaches and laboratory teaching. However, cognitive objectives receive less attention in comparison with upper general secondary school, while the syllabus emphasises the ethical dimension of history and its role in developing citizenship.

An analysis of the polemics about the release of new syllabuses shows that the study of the process of integration, even though not ignored, never attracted much attention. Teachers have had increasing opportunities for devoting time to tackle the issue, but the approach tended to focus on citizenship education. Besides, when the debate questioned the national frame, it put emphasis on world history in contrast with Eurocentrism but results in this direction were poor.

TWO NARRATIVES OF THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

As the previous section demonstrates, there were scarce signs of progress towards a global frame in history teaching in Italy. The shift from national to global perspective failed in France (Hymans 2005: 67) and Germany too (Fuchs 2006), but the analysis of history textbooks in both countries has shown greater attention to the history of European integration in comparison with Italian ones (Challand 2009: 79; Nuhoglu Soysal and Bertilotti and Mannitz 2005: 13). It is worth noting that there is a highly fragmented free market of textbooks in Italy, and the tendency to fragmentation has risen over recent years (Mannelli, Tuccari 2004). Top 10 textbooks for upper secondary school are used by about 40% of students.

Analysing ten among the most adopted Italian textbooks for upper secondary school in half of the cases the percentage of pages dealing with the integration process is between 1.8 and 4.8%, which correspond to a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 40 pages, the others being below. This

datum confirms a growing interest trend in the history of European integration beginning in the 1990s but is still lower than in France and Germany (Challand 2009).

The fact that the current syllabus for upper general secondary schools suggests considering Italian history in the second half of the twentieth century as a topic on its own may contribute to explaining the overall low percentage of pages dedicated to the European construction. Indeed, most textbooks combine European and global history, leaving aside national history and devoting one or two chapters to it. Only a couple of cases isolate the European dimension and take the integration process as the frame of developments in Western European countries. One single book, even though among the most appreciated by teachers in technical institutes, includes national history in a European frame. International comparison of textbooks for lower secondary schools showed that textbooks usually have two distinct narratives for national and European history. They leave to teachers and pupils the task of relating the two levels (Pingel 2000: 36), and often they do not have a distinctive chapter for the process of integration. Italian secondary school textbooks conform to this European trend and exacerbate it.

A second factor to be considered is that ancient and modern history maintain more relevance in Italian syllabuses than in other countries. A recent paper that considered seven textbooks in widespread use in upper secondary school concluded that the balance between pages dealing with the first part of the twentieth century is usually around 55%, reaching a maximum of 68% (Marcellini, Portincasa 2020). The fact that the prescription of covering only the 20th century during the last year of secondary school has not shifted the balance towards the second half of the century affects the teaching of the integration process.

Looking closer at how integration is portrayed, I suggest identifying two different narrative strands. The first one may be called the narrative of success, the second one the narrative of frustration. The narrative of success presents European integration as a succession of steps that outline a linear path towards an enlarged and stricter union offering advantages to its members. The narrative of frustration focuses on the failures of the European Union to deal with 21st century crises. The narrative of frustration does not necessarily express an overall negative judgment on the process of integration. Rather, it focuses on the last 20-25 years and points out the weaknesses of the EU as a matter of fact, conveying the idea of an unfulfilled potential, whose failure is not fully explained. There is typically a gap in the discourse of the textbooks, which ignore the developments of the Communities from the 1960s to the 1980s or summarise them without prompting any reflection.

As emerged in other studies which have examined different narrative strands in this specific literary genre, the two narratives 'do not appear as distinct semantic configuration. Rather, they tend to be tightly interwoven and not easily distinguishable' (Klerides 2010: 33). So, Italian textbooks represent integration as a long and difficult process, slowed down by national egoism, but the only difficulties they actually analyse date back to the 21st century, with some exceptions (Castronovo 2017; Brancati and Pagliarini 2015; Bresciani and Palmieri and Rovinello and Violante 2019). The portrayal of the Union as an economic giant but a political dwarf, which is common in French and German textbooks (Sakki 2014: 41-42), applies only partially to the Italian case because the economic crisis of the 2010s puts into question the economic success of the integration too.

If we apply the centre/periphery framework to the narratives of success and frustration, the position of Italy appears different in the two cases.

The first way to give importance to Italy in the process of integration is by stressing the relevance of the contribution of Italian federalism at its beginnings. A reference to federalism is always present, and Spinelli is a figure mentioned in seven out of ten cases (Calvani 2016; Fossati and Luppi and Zanette 2015; Gentile and Ronga 2017; Castronovo 2017; Brancati and Pagliarini 2015; Bertini 2015; De Luna and Meriggi 2018), an excerpt of *Manifesto of Ventotene* is offered to pupils for source analysis (Calvani 2016; Fossati and Luppi and Zanette 2015; Brancati and Pagliarini 2015; Bertini 2015; De Luna 2018a), and sometimes he is represented in a picture (Fossati and Luppi and Zanette 2015; Gentile and Ronga 2017). Federalism in the 20th century emerges as an Italian contribution because only one author mentions federal movements outside Italy (Gentile and Ronga 2017: 352). All textbooks apart from one (Borgognone and Carpanetto

2017) list Alcide De Gasperi among the supporters of European unity. This approach, which emphasises the ideal of integration, is indebted to the first phase of Italian historiography and the history of political thought. It distinguishes Italy from the other members of the Union, whose textbooks usually do not include an illustration of federalism (Hartmann and Montlahuc and Rogozi and Stergers 2017: 15).

Although this approach highlights an Italian contribution to the process of integration, it is not enough to speak about a central role of the country. Indeed, even if textbooks mention De Gasperi, nothing is said about how he acted in favour of the integration process. For instance, the European Defence Community receives little attention in four books (Bertini 2015, Calvani 2016; Bresciani and Palmieri and Rovinello and Violante 2019; Castronovo 2017) – the others not mentioning it at all. Only one book incidentally refers to the project of a political community promoted by De Gasperi (Castronovo 2017). In addition, when they deal with the history of post-war Italy, most textbooks exclusively focus on domestic politics. Apart from the choice of Atlanticism made by Christian-Democrats, only two textbooks illustrate Italian foreign policy after the Second World War (see below).

A second approach, derived from economic history, emerges as a background of some narratives when they deal with the 1950s. They emphasise the role of Italy as a driver of economic recovery in Europe. This second strand points out the economic 'miracles' of Italy and Germany (Calvani 2016; Gentile and Ronga 2017; Fossati and Luppi and Zanette 2015), makes scarce (Gentile and Ronga 2017; Calvani 2016) or no reference to France (Fossati and Luppi and Zanette 2015), and shows a lack of interest towards the Franco-German relation. In this case, regarding the 1950s, Italy is portrayed as a leading country at the centre of the process.

The purpose of establishing a new basis for the relation between France and Germany seems to be irrelevant in some textbooks that, despite mentioning Schuman, simply list the succession of ECSC, EEC (Lepre and Petraccone and Cavalli and Testa, L. et. al. 2015) and eventually Euratom (De Luna and Meriggi 2018) without any reference to the foreign policy of the two countries. This is strikingly different from the representation of the process in French and German textbooks, which are France-centered or adopt the Franco-German relation as a key topic (Sakki 2014). Instead, these textbooks do not identify a centre or driver of the process of integration.

The use of impersonal forms or the lack of explicit agents when the authors describe events that are stated to be turning points materialise the abstract character of the integration process and contribute to depicting it as external to national politics and, somehow, lacking an active agency. For example:

The great results achieved by the ECSC encouraged the Six [personified agent] to continue in the way of complete integration of their economies resolutely. In a few years, a crucial turning point in the process of European economic unification took place [impersonal verb]: the institution of the European Economic Community in 1957 [process]. (Calvani 2016: 484)

From a lexical point of view, the process seems irresistible: the ECSC was 'not temporary', set up 'not by chance'; it was 'a great project' which had 'triumphal developments' and reached results so good to be 'inconceivable' (Calvani 2016: 485). In the following decades, the establishment of the EMS, the direct elections of the MPS, and the Single Act's approval are not attributed to any agent pursuing any interest: they merely took place.

This linear and optimistic interpretation of the integration process is supported by the choice of pictures and their captions: for instance, the Six are represented riding a tandem bicycle 'because they ought to pedal in synch' (Calvani 2016: 484). Other pictures include a poster in favour of 1995 enlargement, the ECNR and the euro symbol. As in German textbooks of the 1990s (Challand 2009: 75), the support for European integration appears unconditional and there is no discussion of oppositions or alternatives. This approach can open up to unresolved ambivalences. For instance, another textbook describes the process of integration as 'complex' (it. *intricato*, De Luna and Meriggi 2018: 429), but to make sense of this adjective pupils can refer only to the fact that in the 1990s 'the economies of different countries ought to become more similar' to introduce a single currency and to 'growing difficulties in achieving a political dimension' (De Luna and Meriggi 2018: 464-465) in the 21st century. Nothing in the 'steps'

between 1979 and 2004 is described as posing significant challenges: Western Europe went through an 'economic rise' and became 'an economic colossus' (De Luna and Meriggi 2018: 464).

The contrast between a long period of expansion and development, without opposition and rest, and present-day crises that 'open a future of uncertainties' (De Luna and Meriggi 2018: 465) characterises other textbooks, especially those with short narratives. A sense of predetermination emerges, because until the 1990s, the integration is a destiny that ambiguously intertwines the federalist and functionalist projects (Bertini 2015: 280). Although some textbooks mention 'difficulties' in the process of integration, the only period analysed at most is the end of the 20th century.

Conversely, three textbooks, which devote more space to the topic, give wider attention than the others to the events from the 1960s to the 1990s and support the narrative with a picture of Kohl and Mitterand at Verdun (Brancati and Pagliarini 2015; Bresciani and Palmieri and Rovinello and Violante 2019; Castronovo 2017) and one symbolising the Erasmus project (Bresciani and Palmieri and Rovinello and Violante 2019; Castronovo 2016). The authors stress the role of the Franco-German relations to shape the effective form of integration in 1951, sidelining Italy despite the usual mention of De Gasperi. However, they deal with Italy in different ways. One of them gives preeminence to the Franco-German relations in the whole process (Bresciani and Palmieri and Rovinello and Violante 2019); another focuses on Franco-English conflicts in the 1960s and Franco-German tandem in the 1980s (Brancati and Pagliarini 2015), the third one recalls the relations between European and national scale both in the chapters about integration and in the ones about national history (Castronovo 2017: 733). The difference emerges more clearly looking at the treatment of Italian foreign policy.

As stated above, the very existence of a subparagraph about this topic is significant. In the chapters about national history, the textbooks of the sample mention the efforts to enter the eurozone, but only one of the three longest explains the foreign policy of the government led by Bettino Craxi and relates it to integration (Castronovo 2017: 733). No one investigates the whole issue of the existence of a national élite adopting an externally-imposed economic discipline to overcome domestic political impasse – i.e. 'external constraint'/'vincolo esterno' (Ginsborg 1997; Dyson, Featherstone 2007). So, recent research in international relations does not constitute a reference for the narrative of integration in secondary schools. Italy is usually represented as lacking an agency in foreign policy and, specifically, in the process of integration, with a single exception.

These findings align with the results of textbook analysis on the representation of Italian domestic policy during the age of Berlusconi (Brusa 2021). With regards both to domestic and international dynamics, recent historical debates do not shape the discourse of textbooks, which tend instead to echo polemics on national media. The most detailed textbook provides, at the same time, evidence of the limited interaction established between global, European, and national scales. In this case, the use of punctuation deserves some consideration: in the section about the process of integration, the author uses brackets to add links with Italian history. On the one hand, this is the longest chapter about the European integration among those considered and the author always pays attention to stress the contribution of different countries and the variety of forms of European construction. Although the author includes a double page of discussion about Germany as the economic 'motor of Europe' and its controversial political leadership, which puts the country at the center of EEC/EU, he offers a balanced exposition (Castronovo 2017: 650-651). Indeed, when dealing with the 1940-50s he evaluates the Benelux, ERP, Council of Europe and ECSC, EDC; in the 1960s, he discusses Fouchet's plan and De Gaulles' politics; in the 1970s he relates the European currency snake both to the devaluation of the dollar and to domestic economy. When dealing with last forty years, the paragraphs about domestic policy in UK, West Germany and France are included in the chapter about the European integration, marking a difference with other textbooks. Also, this is the only case in which the will of international political rehabilitation explains the pro-European choice of Italian government. On the other hand, brackets show that the writer is adding extra content, less important than the rest of the sentence.

With regards to the developments in the integration after Maastricht, all textbooks put Italy at the margin. They depict it as a country affected by the process rather than an active force (Calvani 2016; Fossati and Luppi and Zanette 2015; Gentile and Ronga 2017; Lepre, Borgognone and Carpanetto 2017; Bertini 2015) or simply ignore its position (Bertini 2015; Brancati and Pagliarini 2015; De Luna and Meriggi 2018). Thus, when dealing with the 21st century, in some textbooks, Italy is mentioned because it is one of the 'least virtuous' countries (Gentile and Ronga 2017: 629; Bresciani and Palmieri and Rovinello and Violante 2019: 727; Castronovo 2017: 654, 663), has had a precarious financial situation comparable to that of Greece and has suffered from the measures of austerity (Borgognone and Carpanetto 2018: 818).

When textbooks look at and beyond the borders of Europe, the external relations of the EEC/EU remained a topic mostly ignored and limited to current urgencies. Some textbooks report objections to the admission of Turkey, claiming that religious differences and poor respect of human rights are the main obstacles to its membership (Bertini 2015: 501) and adding considerations about geography (Borgognone and Carpanetto 2017: 781) or international relations with the USA (Castronovo 2017: 662). Moreover, a few textbooks include scattered references to recent international crises in Syria and Ukraine (Gentile and Ronga 2017: 631; Bertini 2015: 505; Bresciani and Palmieri and Rovinello and Violante 2019: 714). The relations between the EU and Africa are considered only with regards to migratory pressure, as far as it affects Italy as 'the gateway to Europe' (Lepre and Petraccone and Cavalli and Testa, L. et. Al. 2015: 550) and points out the ineffective management by the EU (Gentile and Ronga 2017: 630).

Overall, the role of the EU as a global actor is represented as marginal. Deeper cooperation in the common foreign and security policy appears desirable, as in French and German textbooks (Sakki 2014: 44), but little or no discussion of this aspect exists. For instance, one textbook comments on an excerpt of the Treaty of Maastricht arguing that 'Among the principles of the Treaty, the EU has pursued only the economic one. Indeed, the EU has not been able to develop a common foreign and security policy nor a judiciary and penal system' (Borgognone and Carpanetto 2017: 780). This sentence is intended to elicit 'interpretation and reflection' from pupils, but the exercise does not include any material to evaluate or discuss the topic.

The approach to enlargements is another interesting example of the contrast between a pre-21st century linear and optimistic narrative and a 21st-century troubling one. Some textbooks reach the highest point of synthesis by providing only non-commented maps showing the progressive enlargement of the EEC/EU. Few cases refer to British negotiations or divergence of economies in the 1980s: only 2004 and 2007 enlargements posed some challenges for the vast majority. Migration and economic crisis, with the euro described as 'an economic and political bet' that has not achieved its results, are blamed for putting the EU in a crisis of system, which Brexit symbolises.

The withdrawal of the United Kingdom shows that the EU is 'in danger' as clearly stated by the closure of one chapter: 'The challenge of the European Union seems to be at a crucial point, with a concrete risk of failure which, for the very first time, puts its existence into doubts' (Gentile: 631). This very negative outlook deserves attention. Ten years ago, an analysis of the representation of European construction in French, German and Italian textbooks claimed that 'Europe's existence, both as a political entity and as an idea or discourse, is widely asserted, acknowledged and sometimes taken for granted' (Challand 2009): after the economic crisis of 2008, taking the Union for granted did not seem obvious anymore.

The great emphasis on the present-day crisis, on the one hand, may be an attempt to match learners' interests and involve them in the learning process with positive results. On the other, however, provided that the historical perspective is limited, and the controversial turning points are not explored, this approach falls behind critical understanding of current problems.

CONCLUSION

The representations of European integration that Italian students are likely to meet in upper secondary school tend to present it as a process detached from national history and with poor

effects on global scale. The vicissitudes of history syllabuses at the beginning of the 1990s showed that, despite volatile proposals of introducing a course of European history, European integration remained a secondary topic in history textbooks. The role of Italy in the integration appears limited to the very beginning, consisting in an ideal contribution that has been overcome by events or in an economic boost that has long run out. This is not because Italy is portrayed as a proper periphery of the integration process, but rather because the process of integration itself is presented as an inevitable and linear path whose developments cannot be explained by the interests of clearly identified agents. Despite a few cases that explain the role of Franco-German relations and some of the interests of other countries, both history of international relations and history of the policies of the EU find little reception in Italian textbooks. The functioning of European institutions is described to provide information to future citizens, but their originality and limitations are not explained on the basis of historical contextualisation. As a result, although Italy is claimed to be a driver of European construction and poses itself at the centre of the process at its origins, the evolution of European integration appears to be abstract, and the country is a passive subject in the process. This is true especially with regards to the passage from EEC to EU. Since the negotiations of the Treaty of Maastricht Italy attracts attention as far as it belongs to the economic periphery of the EU, and textbooks stress its difficulties in coping with the financial parameters.

Some of the problems in teaching EU integration are the same that characterise the teaching approach to the whole second half of the 20th century. For instance, the understanding of history as a discipline, which gained momentum between the end of the 1980s and the 1990s, gave way to a greater emphasis on narrative. Despite the increasing presence of sources in textbook exercises on EU integration as well as other topics, their role is more that of illustrating the narrative rather than providing materials for history workshops. At the same time, a focus on present-day issues without a longer historical perspective favours teaching approaches that pursue objectives of citizenship rather than historical education. As a result, the process of integration is not investigated in its complexity throughout the decades nor from the perspective of different countries involved. Rather, it is briefly described focusing on few turning points that are weakly related to each other.

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ENDNOTES

¹ The scope of the present paper is limited to textbooks dealing with the second half of the 20th century and adopted in the final year of secondary school. It might be worth extending the research to investigate the approach used in textbooks toward Italy's European and international role when dealing with previous periods of history. In this case, textbooks for the last three years of secondary school should be analysed.

² Since 1989 the different regionalist parties and movements established in Northern Italy had supported the European integration to oppose Roman centralism (Fazzolari 2019).

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