



## Pre-Service Music Teachers' Education and Training in the Italian Context: Changes and Challenges from a Legislative Perspective

Giovanna Carugno

Conservatory of Castelfranco Veneto, Italy

### Abstract

*The paper aims at providing an overview of the national legal framework on music teachers' education and training as a pre-service experience. More in details, the research will address the legislative development from the Nineties to the present times by a brief comparison of the different system of initial teachers' training, such as SSIS, TFA, PAS and FIT. The research will also consider the changes occurred through the establishment of master's degrees in music education at the Conservatories, as higher education institutions. Relevant changes occurred by means of Law n. 508/1999 and subsequent legal reforms, due to the harmonization frame built within the Bologna process. Therefore, it will be analyzed the current pathway proposed to pre-service music teachers and the requirements to apply for a teaching qualification course.*

**Keywords:** *Music teaching; pre-service training; legislative framework.*

### 1. Introduction

The regulatory framework on the initial training for music teachers in public schools within the Italian context is a complex issue of current interest for both music pedagogues and legal scholars. Indeed, the design of the initial training courses returns the legislative perspective on how to train teachers who wish to inspire young people through music. This is a crucial point which implies the consideration of various aspects encompassing the philosophical and education dispute on the nature of musical knowledge (practical – theoretical) and the social function that music plays within the society. Thus, the divide between music as recreational activity or cultural and artistic enrichment strongly emerges. The teaching and learning of music at the public-school level becomes a controversial and questioned topic [1], which demands adequate scientific importance.

In this perspective, pre-service training is debated as one of the most “confused aspects of the whole Italian school system” [2]. In general terms, initial training is a necessary step to obtain a qualification for teaching music to students attending the secondary school of first and second grade.

Music is taught by teachers specialized in this subject only at a secondary school level. At the kindergarden and the primary school, music education is taught by teachers with generic training, lacking specific musical skills. In fact, the five-year Master program in Scienze della Formazione Primaria presents only two music courses.

The secondary school of first grade is articulated in a general pathway, in which music is taught for two hours per week, and in a music-oriented secondary school (Scuola Media a Indirizzo Musicale - SMIM), that offers musical instrument courses in addition to the lessons of music literacy.

The secondary school of second grade devoted to music is named Liceo Musicale e Coreutico. The course of study is divided into two sections: the Music Section and the Dance Section. The learning goals of the Liceo Musicale e Coreutico are listed in the Ministerial Decree n. 211 of October 7, 2010 – Annex E (Sezione Musicale All. E1; Sezione Coreutica All E2). The curriculum of the Music Section is directed toward the theoretical and practical learning of music [3], and it comprises the following subjects: Performance and Interpretation; Theory, Analysis and Composition (TAC); History of Music; Laboratory of Chamber Music; Music Technology.

Teaching music in secondary schools requires a master's degree, issued by a State Music Conservatory or University. While Conservatories focus on performance-based practice, University courses specialize in theory-based subjects. In both cases, these higher education institutions prepare the students to get access to the recruitment as music teachers in the public schools, with an important difference; in fact, only the Conservatory courses provide a preparation in singing and in playing a musical instrument at the professional level. For this reason, to teach such



practical subjects the Second-Level Academic Diploma (equivalent by law to a master's degree [4]) is an essential requirement. That is to say that the teachers of SMIM and of the Liceo Musicale that are responsible of the musical instrument classes must hold a corresponding Diploma (e.g., a Second-Level Academic Diploma in Violin, Piano, etc.). Moreover, a qualification for teaching (*abilitazione all'insegnamento*) is needed. Pre-service training courses are included in this framework.

## 2. Pre-service music teachers' initial training from the Nineties to present times

At the very beginning of the Nineties, the recruitment of music teachers was carried out through qualifying competitions, the last organized in the school year 1999-2000. The winners were given not only the teaching qualification, but a permanent contract of employment in a public school.

The Italian legislator pays a remarkable amount of attention to the Initial Teacher Training and establishes specialization schools for secondary teaching (SSIS – Scuole di Specializzazione per l'Insegnamento Secondario). Law n. 341/1990 and the subsequent D.P.R. n. 470/1996 draw consideration to the necessity for a pre-service teacher to acquire theoretical background, as well as practical skills to reach a qualified teaching profile. Relevant literature observes that, for the first time through a national law, initial teachers' training was structured on three pillars: a) subject-related knowledge; b) pedagogical and psychological expertise; c) training experience [5]. SSIS had some disadvantages; for this reason, it would have been useful to enhance some aspects, such as the provision of a greater connection between the school environment and the upgrading of teaching skills. SSIS was opened to those candidates that passed a competitive examination. The training course included various activities in the psycho-pedagogical and methodological-educational fields, and 300 hours of teaching internship. By passing the double final exam (written and oral), the candidate gained access to provincial permanent lists (*graduatorie a esaurimento – GAE*), from which the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) draws for 50% of the available teaching jobs. SSIS courses were carried out over two-year cycles between the academic years 1999-2000 and 2008-2009. The courses were offered at the university level, in the context of the musicology and performing arts departments. The main difficulties and uncertainties of SSIS in the music area involved the contiguity of the subject matter with the scope of music Conservatories.

On October 22, 2002, upon conversion of Decree Law n. 212, containing modification to Law n. 508 1999 (*Riforma delle Accademie di belle arti, dell'Accademia nazionale di danza, dell'Accademia nazionale di arte drammatica, degli Istituti superiori per le industrie artistiche, dei Conservatori di musica e degli Istituti musicali pareggiati*) were approved an amendment to art. 4, par. 2, of the aforementioned Decree, recognizing the four-year Diploma in Music Education issued by the Conservatories as an habilitation qualification for the teaching of music in schools and for admission to the related competitions at the national level. Through the Decree of the Minister of Education, University and Research n. 137 of September 28, 2007, the course of Music Education was redefined through the establishment of a two-year course with a didactic focus, whose final exam has qualifying value. It was also granted the possibility to each Conservatory to activate additional courses for music instrument competition classes (77/A), equally with qualifying value for teaching in secondary schools.

The initial training for the general music competition classes (31/A - Music Education in Secondary Education Institutes, and 32/A - Music Education in Middle School) were accessible through two different qualifying paths: the university pathway within the Music and Performing Arts orientation of the SSIS, and the Conservatory pathway within the Schools of Music Education, to which only those who hold a diploma or had passed a specific examination were admitted. In this scenario, from the school year 2007-2008, at the Conservatories were instituted biannual courses named BiForDoc. (*Biennio abilitante per la formazione dei docenti di strumento musicale*). These courses aimed at train music teachers in 77/A competition classes and were regulated by the Ministerial Decree n. 137/2007. Thereafter, the SSIS were replaced by a one-year course, known as TFA (*Tirocinio Formativo Attivo*), which was effectively activated only for two annual cycles, in the school years 2011-2012 and 2014-2015. This legislative development occurred with the enactment of Ministerial Decree n. 249/2010.

At the same time, in 2013 were established the PAS (*Percorsi abilitanti speciali*), reserved to teachers with a working experience of at least 180 hours for three different school years. The training pathway of PAS was similar to that of TFAs. The only substantial difference was the inexistence of a selection for the enrollment in the course.

In recent times, Law n. 107/2015 (*La Buona Scuola reform*), through the Legislative Decree n. 59/2017 (*Riordino, adeguamento e semplificazione del sistema di formazione iniziale e di accesso nei ruoli di docente nella scuola secondaria per renderlo funzionale alla valorizzazione sociale e culturale della professione*) profoundly reformed the access to the teaching career: it abolished the TFA and



established the FIT (Initial Training and Internship). The pre-service training for music teachers consists in a short course of 24 CFU or CFA (university or academic credits) in anthropo-psychopedagogical subjects, teaching methodologies and technologies. The enrollment in that course requires a master's degree in music. After completing this course, any aspiring music teacher should participate in a public competition based on qualifications and examinations. Once passed the competition, the music teacher should be admitted to the three-year program of FIT (Formazione Iniziale e Tirocinio). The first year provides a total training of 400 hours, accompanied by study activities and the final examination with the obtainment of a specialization diploma. In the second year, the teacher could start to work in public schools for short term teaching activities of maximum 15 days. In the third and last year of FIT the working time has a length of the entire school year. A salary is paid in the first two years, increasing in the final year. Only at the end, with successful completion of the pathway, a permanent employment of teaching in the public sector could be expected. It is also necessary to mention the Ministerial Decree n. 18/2018 on the introduction of master's degrees courses in Music Education and Musical Instrument Teaching, without any habilitation value for starting a career as a teacher in the public school.

### 3. Conclusion

The legislative evolution shows the tendency at unifying initial teachers' training and process of recruitment, as two sides of the same coin.

The pedagogical literature underlines the inability of the 24 CFU/CFA system to properly train teachers and to equip them to work in the school environment with music.

A new scenario is represented by the entrance in force of the Law n. 79/2022 with the aim to train teachers as one of the primary goal of the Mission "Education and Research" within the post-pandemic Italian recovery and resilience plan (PNRR - Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza). This reform provides an initial education for secondary school's teachers through a 60 CFU/CFA habilitation pathway administered by universities and Conservatories. The course will be activated in line with the availability of music teaching jobs, and it will be concluded with passing a final test. When fully implemented, this will be the only route allowed for aspirants to obtain the teacher qualified status, in different fields, including the music one.

### References

- [1] Montecchi G., "Si può vivere felici studiando o insegnando musica?", *Musica Domani*, n. 132, 2004, p. 13.
- [2] Ferraris M., Persico D., "The Italian school system", in T. Schuler (edited by), "The World Yearbook of Education – Assessment and Evaluation", Abingdon, Routledge, 2006, p. 165.
- [3] Cfr. Cambi F., "Per un nuovo liceo musicale e per un 'uso formativo personale' della musica", in G. La Face Bianconi, F. Fabbroni (edited by), "Educazione musicale e formazione", Milano, Franco Angeli, 2008, pp. 49-60.
- [4] See art. 1, comma 103, Law n. 228/2012.
- [5] Sabaino D., "La formazione degli insegnanti di musica tra passato prossimo, presente e futuro", *Musica Docta. Rivista digitale di pedagogia e didattica della musica*, 2017, p. 11. See also, by the same author, the paper "Sulla formazione dei docenti di discipline musicali della scuola secondaria: un (breve) discorso accademico-politico", *Musica Docta. Rivista digitale di pedagogia e didattica della musica*, 2019, pp. 77-84.