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Teachers and trade unions: between corporate tradition, professional associations and collective representation

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Summary
This article asks to what extent trade union culture among teaching staff reveals common elements both among teachers and within national contexts. Many elements – the development of school systems, cultural, religious and political distinctions, the differences between teachers' professional backgrounds, and their views of themselves as professionals or as officials – make it awkward to adopt a common reading of their trade union identities and activities. For this reason, national trajectories remain solidly in place. Following the Second World War, however, mass school attendance, the rise in educational levels and the social opening-up of school systems did profoundly alter the organization and culture of teaching activity. Elements of convergence then became apparent amidst the differences between the specific corporate traditions bringing the previously association-based system closer to general trade unionism: the federal structure and potential membership of a confederation; reliance on collective bargaining and negotiations; strikes; concertation and the use of bilateral instruments to manage and reform school establishments.

Résumé
L'article pose la question de savoir dans quelle mesure la culture syndicale des enseignants présentent des éléments communs propres à leurs activités et à la réalité nationale. La construction du système scolaire, les divisions culturelles, religieuses et politiques, les divergences entre les contextes professionnels des enseignants, l'idée qu'ils ont d'eux-mêmes en tant que professionnels ou fonctionnaires, tout cela rend difficile une lecture unique de leur identité syndicale et de leurs expériences. C'est la raison pour laquelle les trajectoires nationales maintiennent une viscosité spécifique. Après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la scolarisation de masse, le relèvement du niveau d'éducation et l'ouverture sociale des systèmes scolaires ont toutefois modifié profondément le contenu organisationnel et culturel du métier d'enseignant. Nous présentons ensuite des éléments de convergence dans la différence entre les traditions corporatives spécifiques qui rapprochent le système basé précédemment sur les associations du syndicalisme en général: la structure fédérale

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et l'éventuelle affiliation à une confédération, le recours aux conventions collectives et à la négociation, la grève, la concertation et l'utilisation d'instruments bilatéraux pour gérer et réformer le système scolaire.

Zusammenfassung
Dieser Beitrag untersucht, inwieweit die Gewerkschaftskultur von Lehrern Gemeinsamkeiten aufweist, sowohl innerhalb dieser Berufsgruppe als auch in den nationalen Kontexten. Viele Elemente, wie die Entwicklung der Schulsysteme, aber auch kulturelle, religiöse und politische Unterschiede sowie die unterschiedlichen beruflichen Hintergründe der Lehrer und ihr Selbstverständnis als Fachkräfte oder als Beamte erschweren eine einheitliche Lesart ihrer gewerkschaftlichen Identität und ihrer Gewerkschaftsaktivitäten. So behaupten spezifische nationale Entwicklungsverläufe zäh ihren Platz. Nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg gab es jedoch grundlegende Veränderungen in der Kultur und Organisation von Lehrtätigkeit, die mit der Entwicklung der Massenschule, dem steigenden Bildungsniveau und der sozialen Öffnung der Bildungssysteme einhergingen. Unter den unterschiedlichen korporatistischen Traditionen traten Elemente der Konvergenz zutage, die eine Annäherung des bisherigen Verbandssystems an das allgemeine Gewerkschaftswesen bewirkten, etwa der föderale Aufbau und die potenziellen Mitglieder eines Gewerkschaftsbundes, Tarifverhandlungen und Streiks sowie Konzertierung und bilaterale Instrumente für die Verwaltung und Reform der schulischen Einrichtungen.

Keywords
Teachers, trade unions, professional association, collective bargaining

A plural identity, a varied geography

Teachers' trade union cultures and professional identities represent a particularly complex issue, owing to the diverse influences and overlaps affecting them. These are a reflection of long-term (e.g. cultural, religious, political, institutional, sometimes purely ethnic, etc.) circumstances, arising out of society – and its conflicts – as a whole, even before work activity in a narrower sense. Even today, these influences define teachers themselves a good deal more in terms of interest representation than is the case for other groups. It would almost seem that cultural and social (as well as professional) pluralism, widely present in trade unionism at the outset, has long been reproduced within this specific category of public service workers and found cohesive elements only in the second half of the 20th century, i.e. much later than happened for the other industrial organizations; but in so doing also rediscovered a source of possible new divisions for the future.

The goal of teachers' activities – education – is what makes their social function so delicate and at the same time controversial, in that it touches on personal intimacy and human relations, the mechanisms of a civil community as well as the likelihood of success and work, for themselves and for others. And yet there is no direct correlation between the legitimacy of this professional worker, the sharing of his or her function and the spread of trade union practices or the persistence of differentiating elements. The countries taken into consideration here – France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom – are good examples of how difficult it is to trace back the events of teachers' trade unionism to a single, clearly legible logic in time and space.

What is more, it is these cultures and union identities that have moulded the traditional national and sometimes subnational traditions, as well as the specific shapes and trajectories that have led to

the formation and development of individual school systems within state models, that are very different from one another (Green, 1990). One need only think about that model of 'decentralization', the United Kingdom, where England and Wales have a different history from Scotland and Ireland, or else, on the European mainland, about the case of Belgium and more generally the countries of clear-cut linguistic-cultural and/or religious diversity which is reflected in the political and institutional system (Rokkan, 1970; Lovell Evans, 1999; van Voss et al., 2005). Nations with long-standing territorial unity, but characterized by robust and traumatic historical events such as France, responded by pushing forward the central state as from the 1800s, giving it a role in education that would have been unthinkable in other contexts and would serve to legitimize strongly the civil role of the teaching staff (Prost, 1968). More recently unified states such as Italy and Germany have, on the other hand, had to cope with a more irregular geographical layout in their pre-unitarian educational systems, and acted differently to solve the problem of how to establish an institutional architecture for schools that would survive until today: centralized and uniform in Italy; federal in Germany (Ragazzini, 1990; Phillips, 1995). The more or less robust private sector alternative to the public system of education, moreover, is a distinctive marker of union identity categories, especially in North America and in the Anglo-Saxon world, unlike in continental Europe (Urban, 1990).

The range of influences recalled at the start, therefore, has identified one historic reason for the proliferation of differences: namely the power struggle between the centre and the periphery in educational organizations, and between the various levels of competence in national, or subnational, government responsibility for schooling. This distribution is determined by replacement and substitutive public strategies or else by additional and integrative strategies related to social action and to settling cultural conflicts (Archer, 1979). Thus European countries have put forward a vast array of organizational differences that in turn impact on trade union cultures and on professional identities, interlocking internal category distinctions as well as cultural and political divisions. The centre/periphery dynamic casts a spotlight on structures with a variable geometry in time and space, albeit while stressing general phenomena of 'central involvement' after the war until the 1970s (Pearce, 1980). The current and more recent crisis of the nation state has however brought with it the crisis existing in traditional schools, understood as unitary and organic systems: one need only think about the European convergence process and the issue of institutional and social subsidiarity. The cultural and professional outcomes have not quite bedded down as yet (Cobalti, 2006).

A plural labour market, in any event, is quite different from one that is virtually governed in a monopsonic fashion. It is one thing, for the teacher, to be perceived and viewed as a government official (employed by one major national employer), as is the case nowadays in Italy and in France; it is another matter to be employed by a local or regional (not to mention private sector) department, with sometimes obvious territorial differences, as is the case in Germany and the United Kingdom. Above all, it is a condition that is not always constant in time or valid for all categories, as was the case of primary teachers in Italy until fascism took hold – but also in France before the Republic (Jacquet-Francillon, 1999) – who were long dependent on local authorities, unlike secondary-school teachers. The job market has been rather diverse from that of others from the outset, therefore: this has brought about distinct trade union cultures among primary teachers and among secondary-school teachers or university professors (Girault, 1996; Causarano, 2008: 185–188).

Historic internal fragmentation

Teachers therefore demonstrate a multiple internal identity, built on a fragmented working culture consisting of gender, category (between primary and secondary institutions), professional levels

(principals tend to have their own organizations), sometimes on account of territorial and regional contexts, but often in conflicting and disjointed forms within their own ranks.[1] The first modern trade union organization for teachers was the NUT in the UK, which came into being in 1870 for primary schools only, at the time of the first Education Act; it then became a general organization in 1889. After the Great War of 1914–1918 and the growing admission of women into education, the NUT demanded equal opportunities with a view to overcoming very widespread differentiation, also existing in many other countries, which remained in place even well into the 20th century (van Essen and Rogers, 2003). As a result of this initiative, in the early 1920s the NUT underwent a split that we could today define as 'male-dominated', with the birth of the NAMT, later to become the NAS (Oram, 1996). Not until the mid-1970s, in a climate more favourable to equal opportunities, was the NASUWT established as a trade union geared more to secondary schooling.

The gender gap has not, however, always been so marked. It often corresponded merely to educational and professional hierarchies that were more implicit than explicit: during the 20th century, women tended to focus on primary education while men held on in secondary schools, within a complex yet increasingly obvious process of growing feminization of teaching staff that began in the previous century (Albisetti, 1993). By the end of the 20th century, this phenomenon had been broadly established in Europe (Eurydice, 1997: 175–176).[2]

In France and in Italy, for most of the past century, primary teaching unions were clearly and formally distinct from secondary-school teachers' organizations, creating a professional 'cleavage' that had marked effects on internal relations, on political and trade union strategies and on the role of teachers in educational reform, even when they had coexisted for a long time in a single federation, such as the French FEN. One of the major problems of trade unionism in the 20th century is whether – and, if so, how – to found a single, federal and universal union, to serve the various professionals linked to the school: a union capable of understanding and safeguarding them in all of their differences, boosting their action by setting up alliances; or else whether – and how – to keep autonomous, corporately strong, organizations linked to the specific defence and promotion of their professional identity rather than to the general function, without weakening their operational efficiency.

Another highly relevant internal division, from this point of view, relates to the status and role of secondary-school teachers: those operating in general-education school institutions (British fee-paying *public schools*, Italian *ginnasi-licei*, French *lycées*, German *Gymnasien*, etc.). These establishments are normally attended by students planning to continue studying for a long time and

1 CFCT – Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens; CFDT – Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail; CGT – Confédération Générale du Travail; CGIL – Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro; CISL – Confederazione Italiana Sindacati dei Lavoratori; DBB – Deutscher Beamtenbund; DGB – Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund; FEN – Fédération de l'Éducation Nationale; FGE – Fédération Générale de l'Enseignement; FIS – Federazione Italiana della Scuola; FO – Force Ouvrière; GWE – Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft; FSI – Fédération Syndicale Unitaire; NAMT – National Association of Male Teachers; NAS – National Association of Schoolmasters; NASUWT – National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers; NUT – National Union of Teachers; SGEN – Syndicat Général de l'Éducation Nationale; SINASCEL – Sindacato Nazionale della Scuola Elementare; SISM –Sindacato Italiano della Scuola Media; SNASE – Sindacato Nazionale Autonomo della Scuola Elementare; SNI – Syndicat National des Instituteurs; SNES – Syndicat National des Enseignants du Second Degré; SNSM – Sindacato Nazionale della Scuola Media; TUC – Trade Union Congress; UIL – Unione Italia del Lavoro; UNSA – Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes.

2 Wage differentials also help to explain the different attraction of teaching across the two sexes (Ladd 2007: 202–203).

coming from the middle classes, who often feel different from those attending the more working-class, vocationally biased, lower-rank secondary schools, technical colleges and higher vocational schools. The German 'dual system' is exemplary from this angle in placing schools, their pupils and their staff into a hierarchy for the whole of the 20th century between general culture disciplines and vocational schools, and has remained that way until today (Greinert, 1994). It is a model that, in various forms, even if not so clearly plain and defined, was present throughout Europe in the first half of the 20th century, within the 'conservative modernization' that characterizes the early post-war period in the educational arena (Galfré, 2002). This distinction, although not necessarily reflected at trade union level as happens in Germany or in the United Kingdom, certainly does affect members' perception of themselves and of the fragmentation of the teaching profession.

After the Second World War, however, something changed, especially as from the 1950s–1960s onwards. Following the first wave of literacy education (with variable age brackets from one country to another), lower secondary-school cycles began to adopt a general tendency, albeit controversial and sometimes hard-fought, to unify and de-professionalize curricula, except in Germany and the German-speaking countries. The idea was to democratize training opportunities and access to the right to post-elementary studies (Robinson and Thomas, 1980). Consequently, this initially entailed an overlap (and sometimes competition or conflict) between various types of teaching staff within the new unified school curricula. The problem was manifest in the lower secondary-school cycle, but also emerged during the transition phase within upper schools, where partial or total unification of specialized disciplines was achieved, such as in the case of the British 'comprehensive schools' between the 1960s and 1970s, as a result of policies promoted by the local authorities, overcoming the traditional separation between élite fee-paying 'public schools', middle-class 'grammar schools' and the more open, working-class 'modern' and 'technical schools' (Hake, 1974).

The pronounced social pressure towards an expansion of unitary lower secondary education was then followed by mass attendance at upper secondary schools where – now that reading and writing had been mastered in the countries under scrutiny here – school attendance rates rose from around 50–60 percent in 1965 to 75–80 percent 10 years later (Draghicchio, 1980: 65).[3] In upper secondary establishments, except in the United Kingdom, however, (explicit or implicit) internal specializations remained, but there was a clear reversal of the hierarchies connected with the relative volume of staff involved in providing technical and vocational education. These staff grew proportionately more than those working in general-education schools: their social and cultural origins were often different, crossing over with manual labour training. In Italy, teachers of 'classic' schools still accounted for approximately 30 percent of all secondary tutors in the 1950s, whereas by the 1980s they had fallen to less than 10 percent (Causarano, 2004: 188). This fact makes one wonder why the traditional concept of education and the socially restricted idea of its own purpose, splitting up the internal hierarchies between various categories of teachers allocated by type of school, were never questioned. The usual coexistence in unitary school trajectories, in both lower secondary schools and in the early years of upper education, once fully up and running, would give added space to the spread of ideas and new attitudes leading also to new forms of trade union conduct (Bottani, 1994).

3 The gradual raising of the school-leaving age to at least 14–15 years, or even higher, between the 1920s and the second post-war period, is a relevant component in this upward shift.

Political splits and the problem of social differences

The major political and ideological splits of the 20th century played their part in this field too. They began by dividing secular and left-wing organizational categories from those linked to religion or moderation. They then went on to introduce the problem of relations with the socialist and working-class movement and their organizational forms (and splits), even in the first half of the 20th century. This became part of the greatest social question: class confrontation and the position of the professional middle classes (Ozga and Lawn, 1981). Should their distinctive, professionally based autonomy be preserved as intellectual workers? Should they, or should they not, join the widespread industrial unionism confederations? And if so, which ones, under what conditions and in what form? To what end? The fact that teachers' organizations have always prided themselves on their effective administration and also on reforming the institutions in which they worked, i.e. to a certain extent as protagonists not just of union rights but also of civil duties, distinguishes them from mere representation and defence of category interests, but also exposes them to the diversity of cultural and political models that stirred up European society between 1800 and 1900 and clashed with one another specifically around the political, social and cultural roles of schools and education.

As for Italy, the major intellectual historian Gaetano Salvemini – justifying the creation of the first secular teaching organizations, in which he was personally involved – referred emphatically to the 'academic proletariat' (Causarano, 2008: 195). Yet this social duality was not necessarily regarded as positive – indeed, he often expressed implicit fear of 'proletarization' – and nor did it constitute the strong link of teachers' union identity in relation to parties and trade unions working especially in opposition to fascism, at least in countries such as Germany and Italy between the two wars (McClelland, 1991; Dei, 1994). The Christian organizations, what is more, had always tackled the secular, left-wing bodies from the outset, playing not only on their cultural and ideological aspects but striving ever more to defend the distinctive identity of middle-class teaching staff, especially secondary teachers (Barbagli and Dei, 1969; Chapoulie, 1987). The United Kingdom is a telling exception, where the existing splits were purely professional in nature, not political or ideological.

The initial promotion of teachers' status (despite its internal hierarchization) and then its defence, constituted one of the principal impulses for widespread unionization of the category even amidst its characteristic pluralism, between the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th. In France, the first teachers' associations emerged in the 1880s but – owing to formal statutory constraints in respect of the public sector – did not manage to evolve into properly representative bodies until the 1920s. In Italy such organizations were hatched in the early 20th century. In Germany, associations already came into being half way through the 19th century in some of the regional states and then became more widespread immediately after unification. But the way in which this impulse to arrange representation – originally by way of a professional association, sometimes guilds, and with strong traces of corporatism – arose within similar public and service sector unionism, as well as in conjunction with a reallocation of the middle classes compared with other social groups, and in particular with the working class and its organizational methods, represents a very complex phenomenon.

The solutions, between the two wars, were highly diverse, determined largely by political events. In Germany, for instance, one need only think about the mounting involvement of teaching staff with Nazism in the early 1930s, filtered by nationalism (Lamberti, 2004: 196–244). Divided, after denazification, Germany had in particular to pay the price of ideological confrontation with the Cold War (Braunthal, 1990; Lansing, 2010). France, on the back of its experience with the

Front populaire, tried out a mechanism for reinstalling the democratic and federal trade union among teaching staff, by founding the FGE (FEN after the Second World War), a body closely connected with health insurance and social security (Dreyfus, 2001). Yet in France too, where the major teachers' unions belonged to the CGT between the two wars, a key distinction existed between the SNI (*instituteurs*, primary-schools teachers) and the SNES (*professeurs*, secondary-school teachers), within the FGE; this tension was set to re-emerge subsequently. The end of the FEN at the start of the 1990s was symbolic, moreover, caught midway between trade union disputes deriving from various political conflicts (including Communist ones) and amounting to a re-emergence of tension between primary- and secondary-school teachers (Frajerman et al., 2010). The persistence of ideological fractures – if we exclude the United Kingdom, not relevant here – was to determine, perhaps more than in other sectors, the trade union life of European teachers during the 20th century, sometimes justifying much less remarkable internal splits. In France, during the 1930s, the other large teaching union, the SGEN, joined the Christian confederation CFTC (CFDT after the war), once others had joined the CGT.

What happened during the political and social crises of the 1920s and 1930s does not perfectly match what happened after the Second World War (Sylos Labini, 1974). The questions of interest representation and safeguards, the teachers' institutional and social role, the relationship with trade unionism in general – even though these issues arose importantly and at times dramatically straight after the Great War – cropped up again in the same way after the Second World War, following the fascist experience. But the expectations and contexts varied from one national context to another, while a process of convergence within diversity emerged in the era of the so-called 'affluent society' after the Second World War.

The greater or lesser economic gain from teaching activity compared with that of a manual worker, in a climate where across-the-board working relations became stabilized and standardized from the 1950s until the 1980s, is indicative of the various sentiments that influence teachers: half way between hope and disappointment. In Italy, for instance, the teaching profession tends to be relatively deprived in terms of remuneration compared with manual work and with its new protection, acquired between 1969 and 1974. This phenomenon was similarly present in the United Kingdom, albeit to a lesser extent; in France and Germany, however, teaching staff somehow managed to ensure themselves a relatively stable position on the differential pay scale (Draghicchio, 1980: 45–49, 72–73). This may also explain some of the specific trade union dynamics of these countries in that period, which pushed their organizations towards a strategy of more striking, albeit delayed, involvement in all-round unionism than elsewhere.[4]

The trade union splits between teachers, along general fault lines (e.g. between religious unions and secular or left-wing unions, between reformists and radicals) and not necessarily only along internal professional lines, have however remained a constant in many continental European countries until today and have led to the possibility of a federal union of professional associations. Whereas in France FEN was already a confederal member of the CGT before the war, in Italy – once free trade unionism re-emerged after fascism in 1944–45 – the primary and secondary staff organizations SINASCEL and SNSM, both united in the FIS, joined the unitary CGIL. The breakdown in antifascist unity and the start of the Cold War in 1948 brought about a similar solution in France and in Italy. To safeguard the trade unionism of the teaching staff,

4 For example, the NUT, highly politicized in those years, only joined the TUC in 1969. In Germany, the specific post-war events led to much earlier union membership. Whereas the GWE joined the DGB, secondary-school teachers were more naturally inclined to join the public sector union DBB.

their organizations withdrew from CGT and CGIL, and remained autonomous without joining any other confederation. In France, this guaranteed the long-term survival of the secular FEN until 1992, which then had to institutionalize its own internal components. In Italy, however, SINASCEL's joining of the Catholic CISL in the mid-1950s (and the subsequent birth of the secular, left-wing SNASE) and then the newborn SISM at the start of the 1960s, led to the end of trade union unity among teachers. Paradoxically, teachers' federational characteristics are more apparent amidst the Catholic-inspired trade unionism in these countries (CFCT, then CFDT, and CISL) than amidst the secular, left-wing variety, which claimed its autonomy from the other confederations in Italy (CGIL and UIL) until the 1970s and in France (CGT and FO) until today (Causarano, 2008: 199–200).

Convergence within difference

In short, to cite Steven Brint, all the industrialized countries built up educational systems between 1800 and 1900 and then invented agents to staff this service – teachers – as socially diffuse and legitimate persons. It is equally obvious, however, that this convergent development followed rather diverse paths, undergoing a huge variety of circumstances and influences, resistances and initiatives. Their symbolic and material values diverged widely, affecting and submitting to the state's economic development mechanisms and varied models of social intervention, but also determining the diverse degrees of social legitimization of these persons (Cipolla, 1969; Brint, 1998; Vincent, 2006). Many typical elements of this process of convergence within difference only became established in the first half of the 20th century, but then changed, especially after the Second World War, as a result of a social and structural, as well as functional, opening-up, especially at secondary-school level, with quick and widespread criss-cross reforms (Lawn, 1985; Walls, 1985).

One of the main elements of convergence that, despite all their differences, unites the school systems of industrialized countries is therefore made up of the steady expansion in their organizational networking, progressing at differing times and speeds. This convergence was visible overall after the Second World War, in particular from the 1950s onwards, when within European welfare systems mass school attendance became one of the major drivers of social policy that characterized those countries that, after the war, developed a significant degree of public activism, referred to by Andy Green as the 'developmental state' (Green, 1997). Whereas at the end of the 1930s very few countries (among them only the United Kingdom) managed to spend 4 percent of their GDP on public sector education, it was only from the 1970s onwards that other nations – e.g. France and Germany, but not Italy which only reached that point in the 1980s – were able to surpass this threshold. A broad realignment of public sector expenditure on education occurred only in the mid-1990s at around 5 percent of GDP (Tanzi and Schuknecht, 2007: 32–34). The diversified distribution of this public spending between the centre and the periphery, on education-related functions and resources, confirms the coexistence of diverse national models within this European convergence (Page, 1991: 18–19).

Similar quantitative evidence exists in the numbers of teachers serving in the school system, who in the mid-1990s came to constitute – albeit in different employment and dependence environments – one of the most substantial departments of public employment and service, alongside health provision. Taking into account 100 teachers operating in primary and secondary schools (first and second levels) in 1960, the quantitative growth was exponential and evident: the greatest increase goes from Italy in 1976 to 177 and in 1995 to 194 – to the minimum existing in the United Kingdom – to 124 in 1976 and to 126 in 1995 (Draghicchio, 1980: 220, 244, 273, 303, 340;

Eurydice, 1997: 175–176). In the mid-1990s, the average registered age of school teachers at each order and grade in the European Union countries (15 countries) was over 40 years for two-thirds of them, and over 50 for a quarter of the total. In Germany and the Scandinavian countries, 70 percent to 80 percent of teachers are aged above 40 years old, whereas teaching staff in Belgium and Austria are a lot younger. In Italy, France and the United Kingdom the average percentage reaches 60 percent to 65 percent of the total, but in Italian and German secondary schools many more than 70 percent of teachers are aged over 40 (and a good third of them are over 50), whereas in France there are slightly fewer of this age in primary schools (Eurydice, 1997: 118–119).

We are therefore dealing as a rule with teachers who began working in schools between the years 1970 and 1980, most of whom were born between the end of the Second World War and the years 1950–1960, i.e. children of the post-war demographic and economic boom period. Their job opportunities were closely linked to the upsurge in mass school attendance of the 1960s and to the institutional transformations in the school system following the crisis of 1968. Thus these teaching staff were at the peak of their professional careers, but at the same time they represented generations who had broadly been socialized (rather than just trained) into educational work in different ways from previous generations. Hence they had a better-rounded idea of their own duties, and were capable of taking into account new institutional orders and social factors, as well as pedagogical and didactic structures, to transform into school systems (Gattullo, 1988). During the 1990s, nevertheless, generational turnover in the teaching profession marked time and was affected by the demographic decline in the major European countries and hence – albeit in the presence of persistently high attendance rates – of a reduced rate of absolute registrations. The 'baby boomers' were therefore relevant protagonists of mass education, first as students and then as teaching staff, and were at the same time victims of the demographic decline in European society.

When quantity becomes quality

All of this brought about a dynamic shift in teachers' circumstances and so inevitably also in their forms of representation and protection, altering the professional surroundings and context in which they operated, above all during the 1950s–1960s, a phenomenon that was summarized in the differences outlined at the start of this article. Teachers, especially in secondary establishments, have always wished to be regarded as professionals (today we would call them 'reflective practitioners'), but they have been obliged on a daily basis to tackle the institutional organizational dimension of their working lives so as to measure their professional skills in terms of exercising more or less material and symbolic autonomy in carrying out their own activity and in determining its forms and contents (Etzioni, 1969; Schon, 1983; Robert, 2004). Schools, or rather educational systems, have in European countries and the developed world turned above all into enormous, complex administrative and bureaucratic organizations, and should be regarded as such: 'Schools as Organizations' (Shipman, 1968: 148–165).

Adapting to this new dimension, common to all teachers despite the systemic differences, has been difficult and there is a lot to explain their trade union developments and intense changes, sometimes genuine ups and downs as happened in the 1960s, as part of the broader social, political and institutional transformations recalled above. One of the convergences within difference relates not so much, or not only, to the relationship with the structures of European trade unionism (a federation with confederal organizations), often governed by factors of political and cultural identity, as we have seen, especially on the continent; rather, the adoption of collective methods of dispute – such as the strike, with relevant exceptions e.g. in Germany, which is somewhat lukewarm in this

regard – and the assumption of general prospects for negotiation, such as concertation and collective bargaining (Robert and Tyssens, 2008; Frajerman et al., 2005).

The dilemma that teachers' organizations find themselves confronting, especially in view of the huge expansion in secondary education, is this: is teaching a job (in the sense of 'craft'), a profession or a public function? The magisterial tradition refers to teaching as a practical activity requiring didactic skills, whereas the professional attitude seeks to cling on to professionalism based on high-level theoretical disciplinary training. This status distinction is based on differential training trajectories that have only abated in recent years. The post-Second World War organizational transformation of school systems, the administrative bureaucracy and formal procedures of the educational process in ever more standardized arrangements (guidance, curricula, didactic and testing methodologies, etc.), clearly display the educational identity of the 1960s–1970s. Thus the distinctions disappear – in various forms and modes and with delays obvious in Italy – around the fact that everyone does the same work; often, after similar training and other instruction, teachers now pursue a professionalized university strand of education (Causarano, 2008: 191–194).

Minimizing internal differences does not necessarily make the distinctive trade union traditions disappear, not least because pay differentials do not disappear. The differences within larger federations remain, as a rule, in the form of membership associations for specific categories of teachers, but their distinctions are reduced compared with before; the exception being France. Italy, where unionism among teaching staff has historically been weaker, has followed its own trajectory since the end of the 1960s: it saw a rapid break-up of the historic form of autonomous associations, with a large-scale reorganization within the general school federations (and hence not only those representing teachers), belonging to the main confederations that make up the Italian scenario (the social-communist CGIL, the Catholic CISL and the secular-reformist UIL). Thus historic school-related labels dating back more than 10 years disappeared, and completely new names such as 'CGIL Scuola' have emerged since 1967. Something similar also happened in the Italian health service. The idea of overall representation of everyone working in schools clearly relied, in Italy, on the hegemony of a recently established form of universal and industrialist trade unionism. The resilience of this universalist concept, within an incipient 'tertiarization' of trade union disputes in the services sector, would be put to a severe test during the 1980s–1990s by the re-emergence of corporately fragmented representation (Bordogna, 1994).

The Italian case, however, is characterized by a peculiar feature of the labour market and the fact that basically there is only one work provider, who creates uncertainty when offering work – at least rather more so than in other national contexts. The huge upsurge in mass school attendance in Italy, between the 1960s and the 1970s, occurred with the use of casual, temporary work (at percentages of up to 50 percent of all employees): a genuine 'intellectual reserve army'. This guaranteed that, in the 1970s, a huge trade union movement emerged, very radical in its goal of stabilizing its role, which explained the universalist characteristics of representation in the Italian school system of that period and its strong fighting spirit, but likewise in highlighting the movement's subtly corporate dimension, which was to erupt more forcibly in the next decade (Causarano, 2008: 194–197).

Something similar and yet different happened with the upsurge of the French FEN in 1992–93 and a shift in the organizational arrangements towards still autonomous but differentiated federations, in terms of both political-cultural sensitivities and the relative weight of the category elements (FSI, albeit out of balance with the CGT and spurred on by SNES's expulsion from the FEN; UNSA-Éducation, in which the SNI had a key role); at the same time as this internal split in the historic unitary tradition among French teaching staff, there was evidence of growing trade unionism in some minor federations of teachers known for their original membership of general unions, such as the CFDT and FO (Mouriaux, 2004).

The toolbox: a few concluding remarks

In conclusion, it is only possible to examine trade union cultures and professional identities if one attempts to separate out what differentiates them from what brings them together. As we have seen, one crucial transition occurred from the 1950s to the 1970s, and afterwards the crisis followed by the 1968 breakdown in educational democratization and school policies (Ventura, 1998: 15–97). This transition applies equally to the Anglo-Saxon area, more watchful of social transformations through local operational policies and less rigidly structured school systems: in the United Kingdom, for instance, with its gradual experimentation with 'comprehensive schools' in the 1950s and in general with its reform policies introduced after the 1944 Education Act, where the trade unions and in particular the NUT were protagonists (Manzer, 1970). Their activism became ever more defensive under Thatcherism, however, in response to an enhanced centralization of trade union relations. From this point of view, the stakes changed in the 1980s, when the welfare state became a matter of debate, even though mass school attendance was now taken for granted (Ironside and Seifert, 1995: 18–65).

The changes of the 1960s and 1970s were sufficient to modify the trade union landscape, its modes of expression and its types of struggle in many countries, resulting in outcomes that were not always convergent in respect of interest representation. The altered relationship with strikes as an instrument, compared even with the 1950s, is nevertheless a good example of trade union advancement from the old manner of trade union representation: from the 1970s onwards, strikes in public sector school institutions have become a regular phenomenon in Italy, France and the United Kingdom, but rather less so in Germany, even though the category was generally notable for typical moderation in its action strategies (Frajerman et al., 2005: 70–71).

The closing of the gap with industrial-style unionism during the 1960s and 1970s, albeit problematical because of the links with generational turnover, pushed the old, traditionally corporate, association-style independent 'guilds' to dissolve or merge with larger trade union organizations almost everywhere in Europe, even with their relevant distinctions and exceptions, both internal and international (e.g. in France). All of this happened within a broader, concentrated and simplified phenomenon of union representation that constitutes the framework within which teachers have to operate (Waddington, 2005). Even where this process rapidly slowed down, such as in Italy from the 1980s onwards with the resurgence of corporate forms of representation (Baldissera, 1988: 81–137), the newly emerging independent models of unionism retained a keen unionist character. Exceptions aside, they did not repropose – or at least did so only marginally, as in the case of the Italian trade union Gilda – the simple autonomous model of professional association, without any affiliation and alliance strategies.

To conclude, one quite specific element that highlights convergence in teachers' trade union culture is the fact that collective bargaining has fully entered into their organizations' toolbox, whatever their type and relevance, even if they operate differently physically and time-wise. Of course, the centre/periphery dimension recalled at the start of this article is a very clear factor of polarization, and the forms of co-management and bilateral bodies deriving from it are also affected by it. In the United Kingdom, where teachers' terms and conditions are firmly restricted by the fact that they are not civil servants as in continental Europe and are essentially dependent on educational establishments and the Local Education Authorities, the situation evolved from the 1920s onwards around the Burnham Committee in which the trade unions, LEA and government negotiated referential safeguards and remuneration for a highly fragmented institutional system: it was a trade unionist model that the Conservative government had terminated in the 1980s (Coates, 1972; Thornton, 1982). Germany, immediately after the second post-war period, saw membership,

of various kinds, of the larger union organizations, both secular and religious but also autonomous. These bodies regulated union relations according to the country's federal structure and the competition between regions, at least until the end of the 1960s when the central government took on a better-defined coordinating role, especially regarding pay. In France and in Italy, where after the Second World War regulation was generally enacted by law, collective bargaining erupted in the 1970s, described as 'participatory negotiation' by Mimmo Carrieri (Frajerman et al., 2010: 46–65; Carrieri and Ricciardi, 2003).

The delicate but simultaneously basic impediment to the identity of teachers' trade unionism – which runs like a leitmotif throughout the 20th century until the present day – consists of its relationship with the public service, broadly speaking, and the consequences for teachers. This leads to an acute sense of responsibility towards this very particular duty and its users, who are so defenceless. Once again it is education, the outcome of their activity, which defines the social specifics of this figure and then restricts, and sometimes obstructs, full trade union activity on account of demands for a distinctive quality at professional level, even in the absence of institutional ethical codes (Trivellato and de Francesco, 1999: 29–31). Disputes in this sector, even when they are particularly tough, have never achieved the intensity nor ever used the extreme types of struggle deployed in other public services, such as transport.

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