



Bridging the Gap: ***Italian Teachers and Middle*** ***Management in Education***

Soprani Marcello

Roma, 30 october 2025

School Principal

and PhD Candidate

Free University of Bozen/Bolzano

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Where are you from?



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Teachers' career, evalua...



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10

10

Choose a question from the list of questions to be presented by the audience using their mobile devices

... and to introduce the topic (1)

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Indicate on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest) the level of social recognition of the teaching profession in your country.

Social recognition level

10
Very low

Very high

Menti

Teachers' career, evalua...

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Where are you from?

Indicate on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest) the level of social recognition of the teaching profession in your country.

10
Very low

Very high

... and to introduce the topic (2)

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Does your Country's education system provide structured career development opportunities in addition to seniority?



Yes



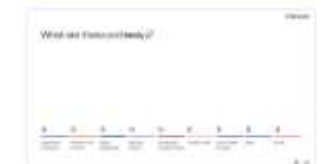
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What are these pathways?

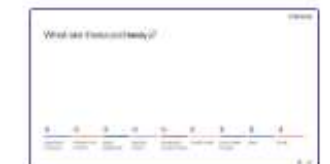


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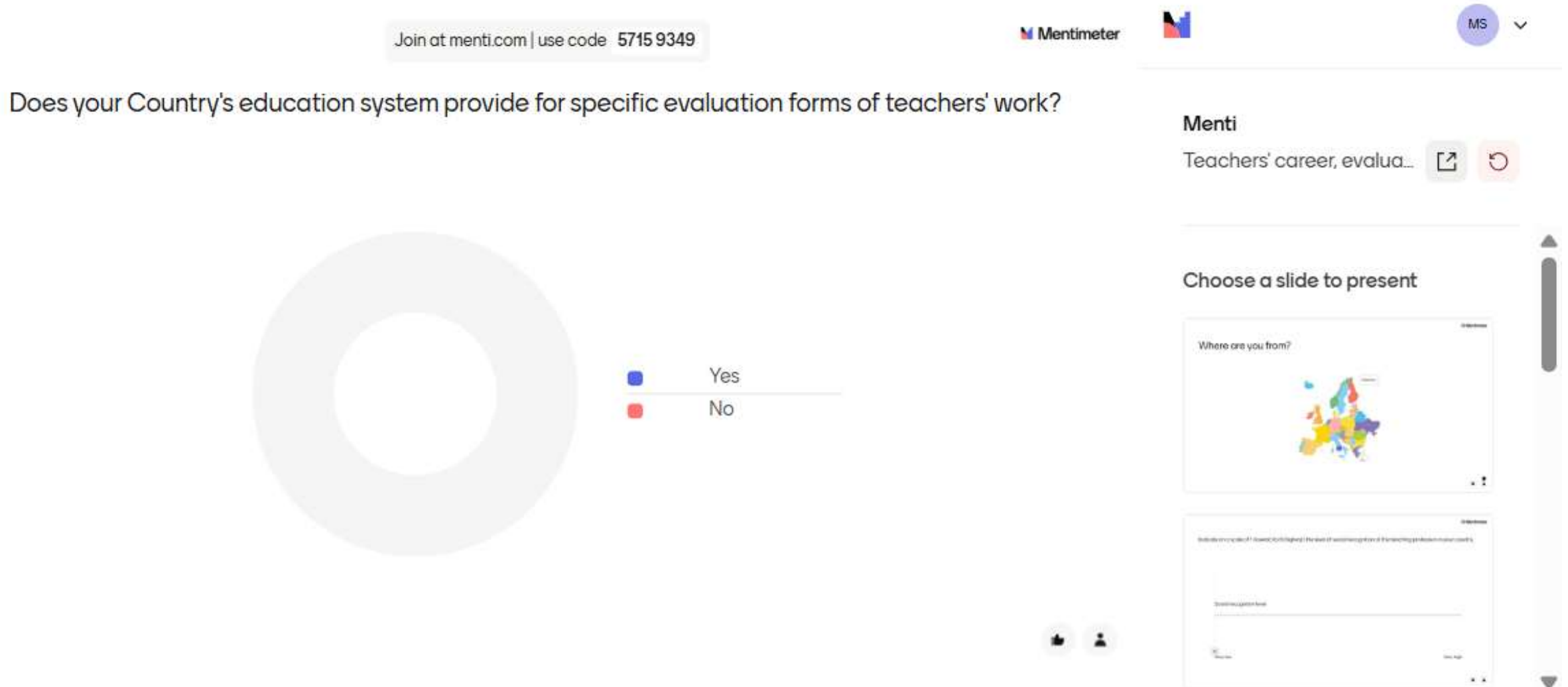
Teachers' career, evalua...



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... and to introduce the topic (4)



... and to introduce the topic (5)

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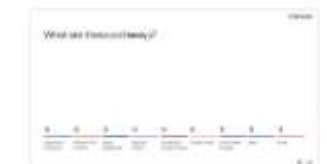
who are the "evaluators"?



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Teachers' career, evalua...

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... and to introduce the topic (6)

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Write three words or concepts that you associate with the term 'middle management'.

fast bold
creative
inspiration leader focus
transpiration

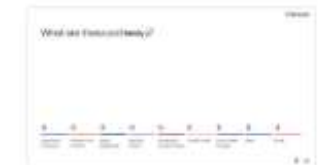


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Teachers' career, evalua...



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... and to introduce the topic (7)

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Write three words or concepts that you associate with the term 'middle leadership'.

fast bold
creative
inspiration leader focus
transpiration

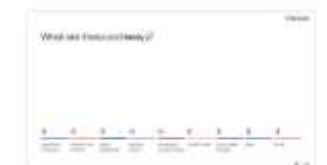


Menti

Teachers' career, evalua...



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The logo of the University of Bergamo (unibz) is displayed on a blue square background. It consists of the word "unibz" in white lowercase letters, with a white horizontal line above and below the text.

unibz

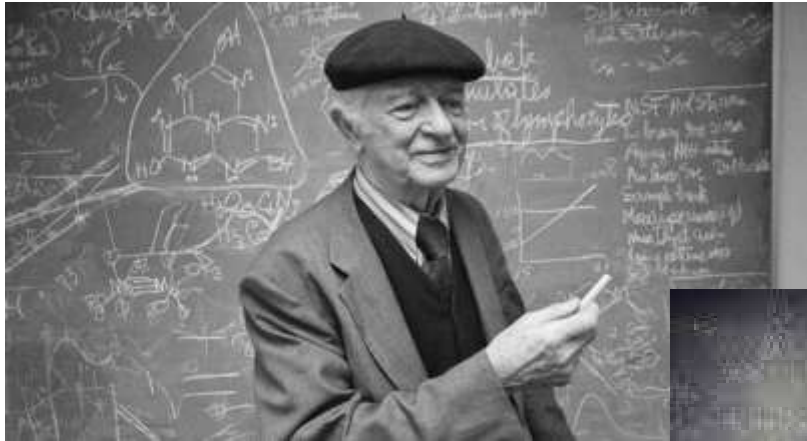
*Social recognition,
professional development,
career and evaluation of teachers.
The views of Lombard teachers
and experts*

PhD Thesis Presentation

Nowadays in Italian state schools there are
no career paths apart from seniority



We also have the oldest teachers in Europe



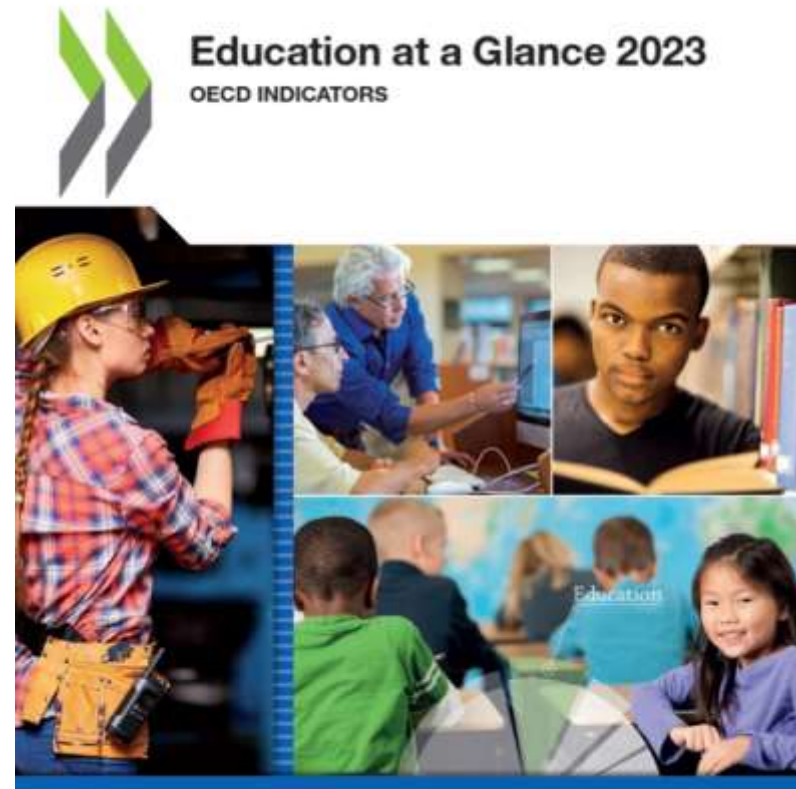
- **And most of them are women**

On top of that...

low salaries ➤ low attractiveness
for the brightest graduate



Italian Education Minister says:
«We must restore prestige to the
teaching profession»



But how? There were attempts in the past, but they all failed

«**Good school reform**»



**1999 - Berlinguer's
«Super-Exam»**

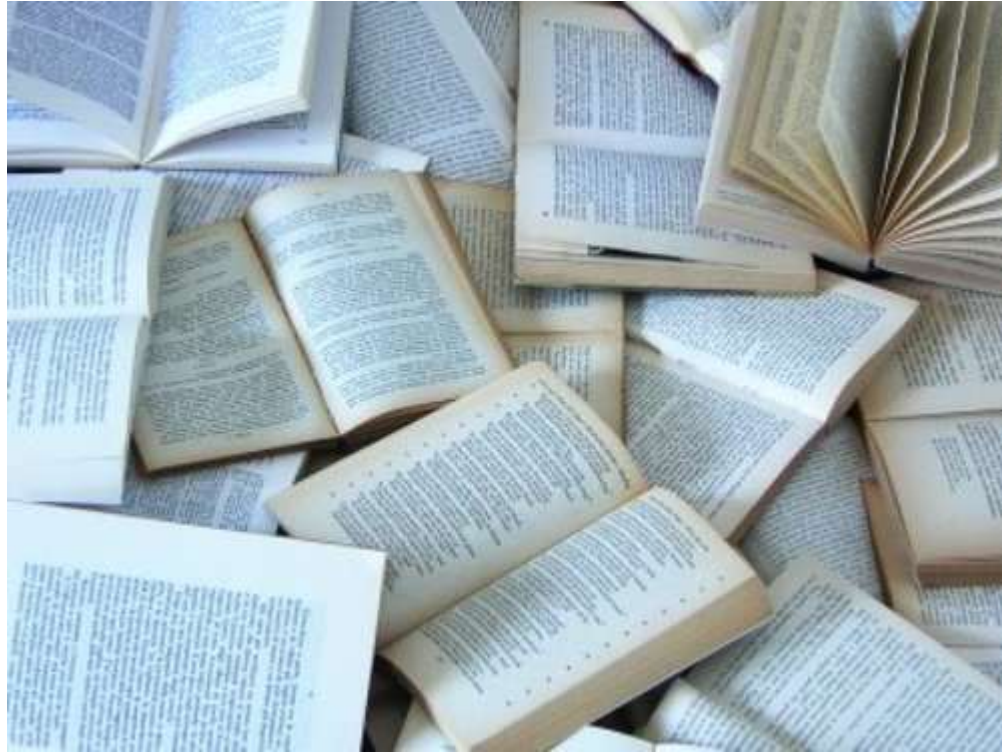


Hence the initial search query:

- **What are the Italian teachers'**
- **perspectives and sentiments about:**
 - **Social recognition**
 - **Professional enhancement**
 - **Career**
 - **Evaluation**



No significant answers
to this question have been found so far in the
literature



a field research is necessary

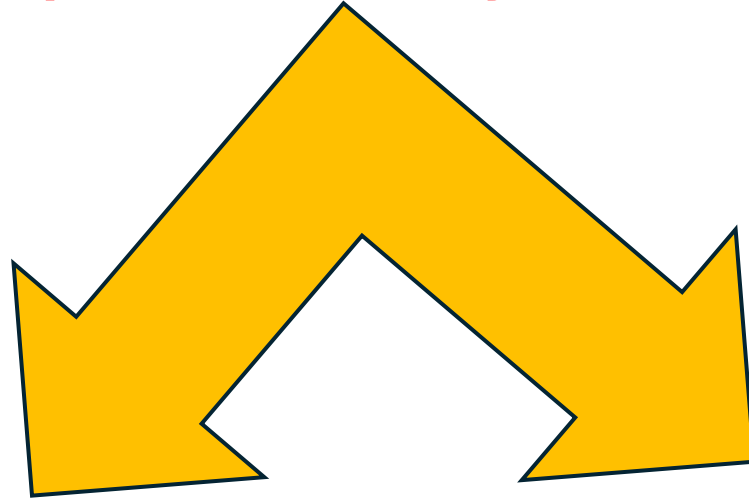
- **STEP 0 - What school concept**
- **School as complex organization: loose coupling** (K.E. Weick – P. Romei)



- **STEP 0 - What school concept**
- **Shared Leadership and P.L.C.**
Professional Learning Community (A. Paletta)



Empirical research, was based on mixed methods
and was carried out through
these two complementary and converging paths



- **Semi-structured interviews**

- **Questionnaire application**

- **STEP 1**

Semi-structured interviews

with 11 school experts from different backgrounds



2. STEP:

Questionnaire application
to a representative sample
of 400 lombard teachers

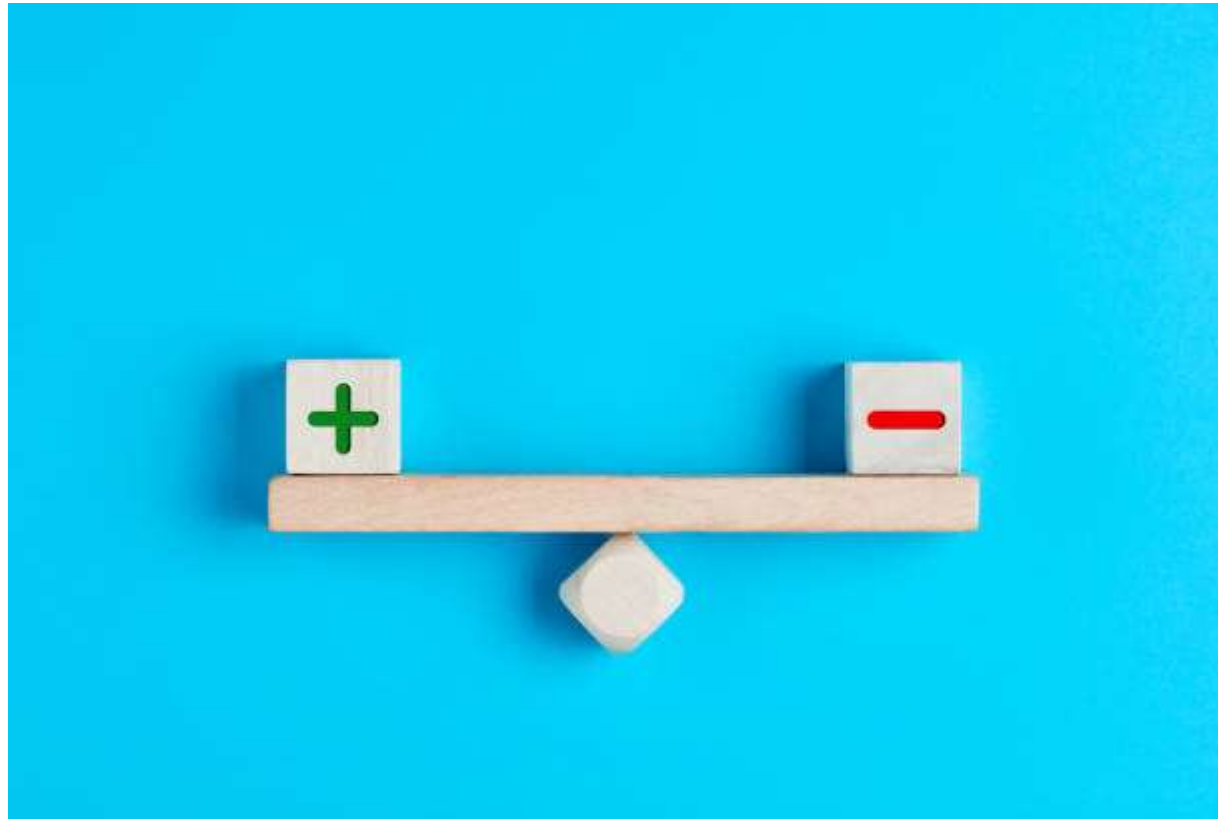


Expected results

- **1) take a reliable «picture»**
of teacher opinions, ideas and expectations
about career and evaluation



2) discover facilitating or hindering aspects in order to



introduce a career-evaluation model
in the Italian school system

Final aim:

- Offer guidelines and indications to the policy makers



Main findings

- Survey results confirm that

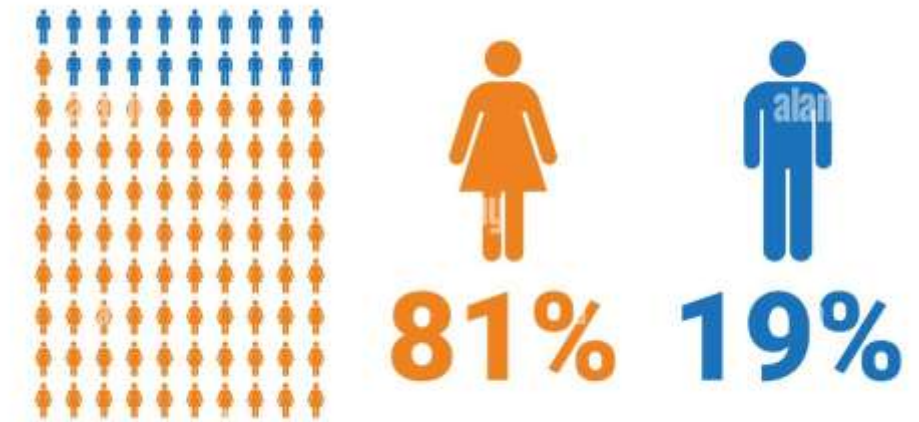


- a large majority of Lombard teachers are really and firmly interested in the introduction of forms of evaluation (69%) and career development (86%)

The respondents' profile (1)

- Average age 47 years (national 50,2)

	Fino a 34 anni	Da 35 a 44 anni	Da 45 a 54 anni	Oltre 54 anni
Italia	5,35%	20,25%	36,3%	38,1%
Lombardia	7,7%	22,6%	36,6%	33,1%
Campione	14%	26,8%	31,5%	27,7%



	Donne	Uomini
Italia	77,8%	22,2%
Lombardia	79,6%	20,4%
Campione	80,7%	19,3%

- Sex

- 46% performs other duties besides teaching

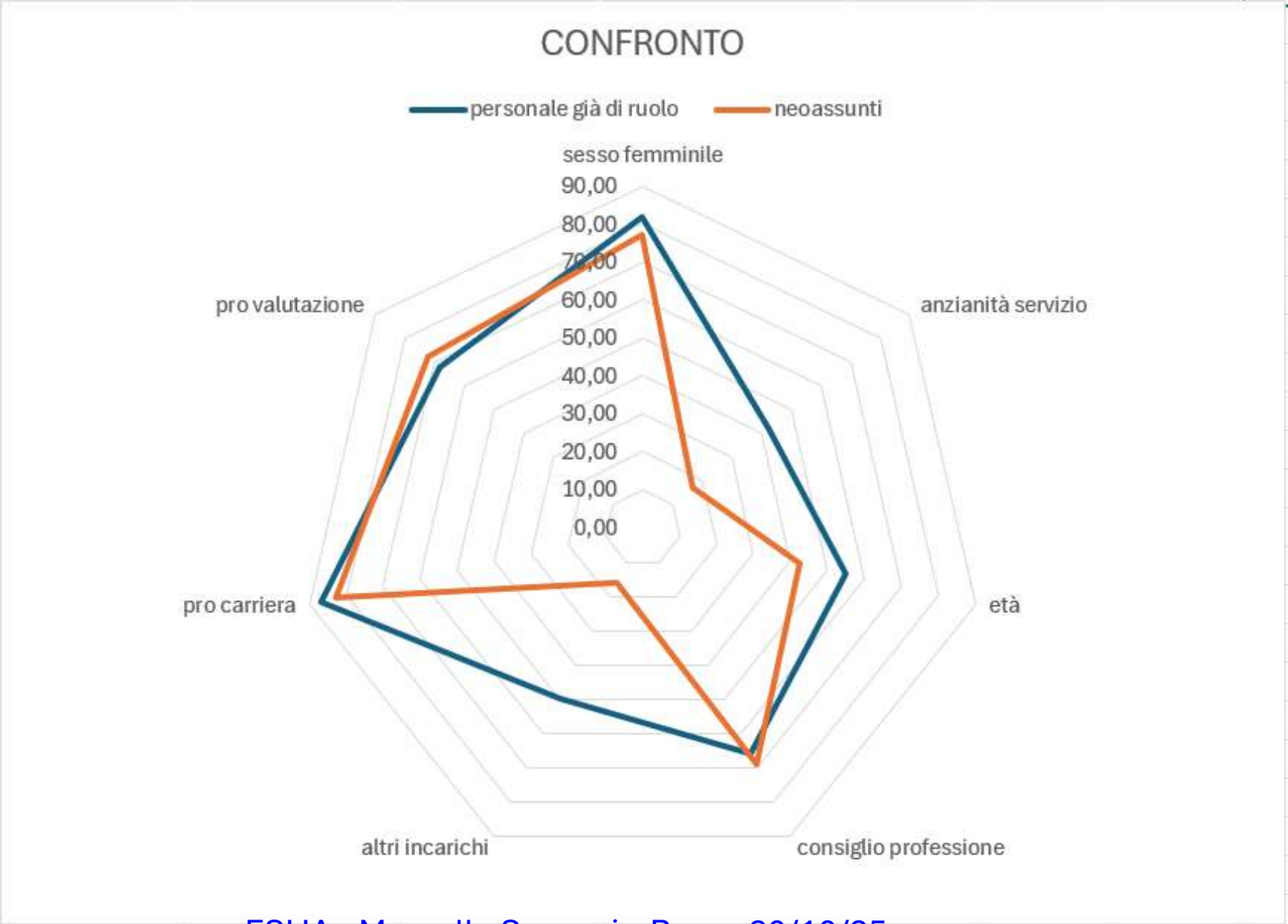
The respondents' profile (2)

- Almost 60% have been teaching for more than 10 years, 31% for more than 20!

Anni di servizio	frequenza	percentuale
1-5	65	16,3%
6-10	98	24,5%
11-20	113	28,2%
Più di 20	124	31,0%
Totale	400	100%

- 22% are in their induction year

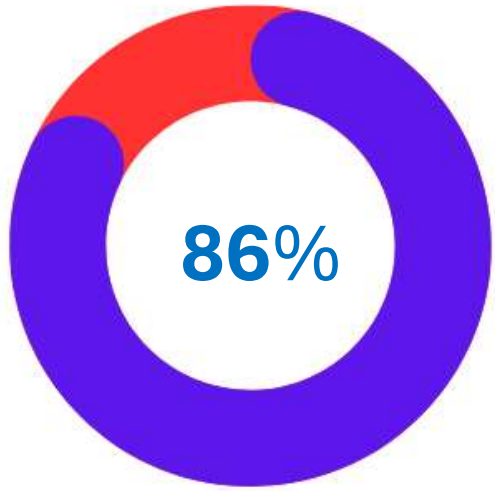
Comparison between newly recruited staff and “old” one



SOCIAL Recognition (measured on a scale from 1 to 6)

- **95% assigned values from 1 to 4**
- **Only 5% values 5 and 6**
- **The main reasons are:**
 - The difficulty in making the teacher's hidden work visible and appreciable (94%);
 - The lack of attention to education/teaching by the political class (93.5%) and public opinion (90%);
 - The role of trade unions (55%);
- Otherwise it is not perceived badly (unlike by literature and experts) the huge number of teachers – almost 1 million (22%);





are in favour of the introduction of forms of CAREER

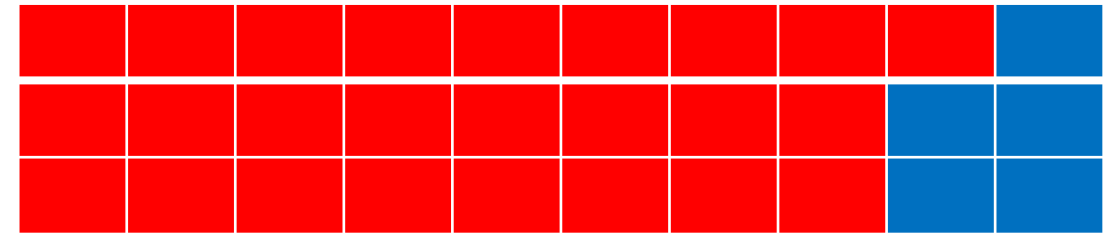
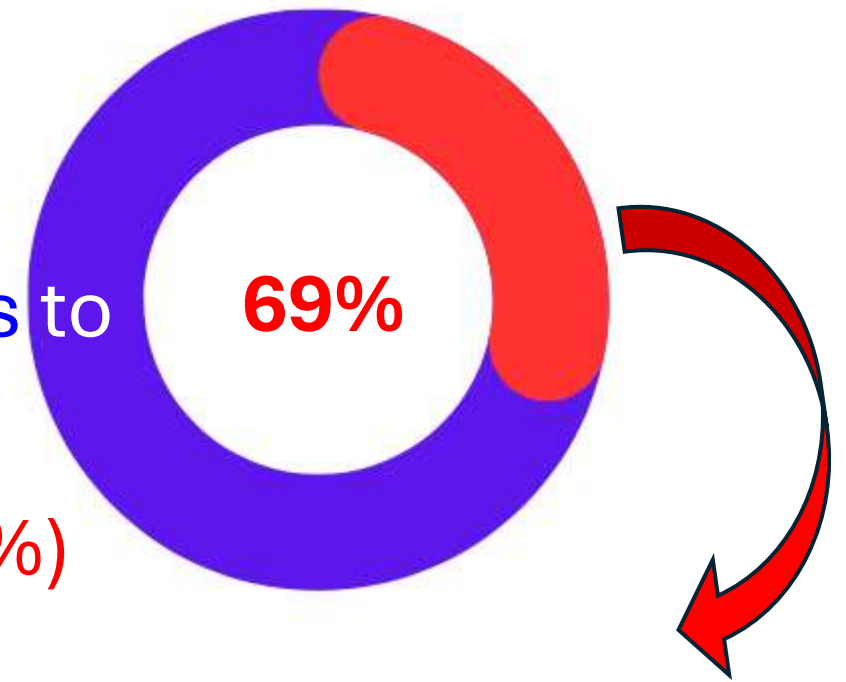


- **Among the most popular career options are:**
 - **Establishment of middle management (84%);**
 - **Recognition of the role of tutor, coach and trainer of other teachers (82%);**
 - **Establishment of specialist teachers for specific areas such as orientation, inclusion, life skills...(81%);**

More sensitive is the issue of **teacher's evaluation** the percentage falls to

Reasons for disapproval include:

- No objective assessment possible (83%)
- Fear of favouritism (77%)
- Loss of serenity and cooperation among teachers (76%)



On the other hand,
the most appreciated forms of evaluation are:

- **Self-evaluation supported by experts and/or colleagues (79,6%)**
- **Student assessment (79,6%)**
- **Headmaster's evaluation (81,8%)**



INTERVIEWS WITH THE 11 EXPERTS

CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

THE 4 MACRO CATEGORIES

1) CAUSES OF LOW SOCIAL RECOGNITION

**2) HOW TO ENHANCE AND RESTORE PRESTIGE
TO THE PROFESSION**

3) ABOUT CAREER

4) ABOUT EVALUATION



CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS (1)

CAUSES OF LOW SOCIAL RECOGNITION

Job insecurity and distorted recruitment methods 7

Reduced/distorted social visibility of teachers 7

Social and cultural changes 5

Conflictual school-family relations 5

Reduced pedagogical competence of teachers 5

Teaching as second choice 5

Modest remuneration level 5

Excessive number of teachers 4



CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS (2)

HOW TO ENHANCE AND RESTORE PRESTIGE TO THE PROFESSION

Increasing the external visibility of teachers' work 6

Enhancing pedagogical and teaching skills 6

Introducing more rigorous and selective forms of recruitment 6

Reforming the school system OO.CC. and legal status 5

Increasing self-awareness of one's role 4

Differentiating wages for the socio-economic context 2



CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS (3)

ABOUT CAREER ...

First small signs (e.g. orientation tutor)
absolutely to be expanded and strengthened 7

recognise roles and assignments on a voluntary basis
even for limited periods of time 7

Particular need to recognise key roles and middle management 7

Wrong directions of not real career development,
such as for incentive training (e.g. Law 36/2023) 5

Possible different careers but without giving hierarchy 4



CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS (4)

ABOUT EVALUATION ...

Trade union objections and expert replies about the atypical teaching profession and competitive logics alien to schools 8

Many proposals and reflections on what, how, why and by whom to evaluate (e.g. basket of different indicators) 7

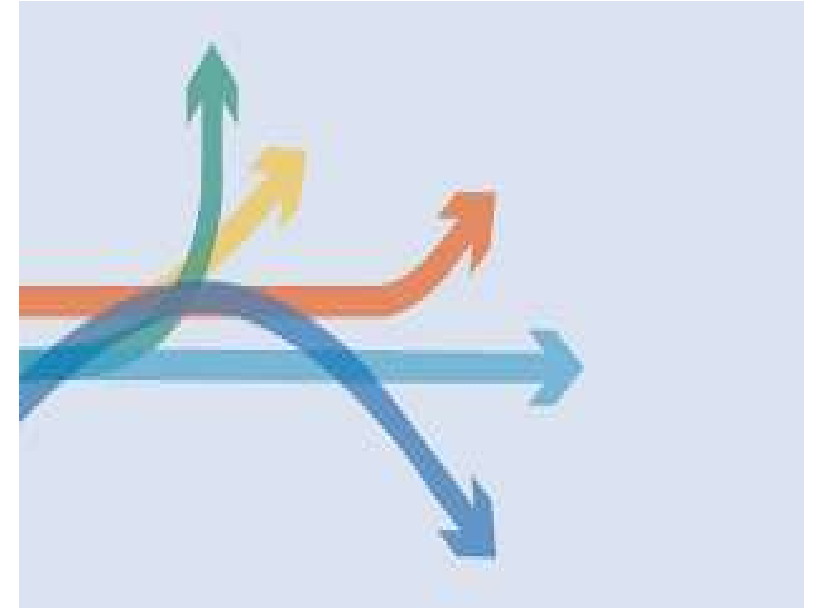
Examples of reputational evaluation already implicitly present in schools 3

Connection with the issues of (excessive) mobility of teaching staff and (desired) and direct call of teachers by schools 3



Conclusions and perspectives:

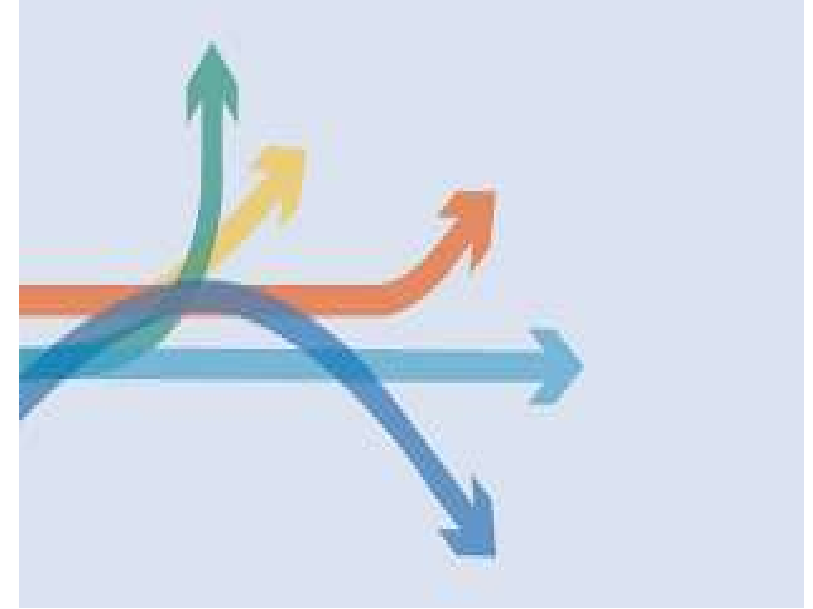
- The time is ripe and attitudes are changing. In fact, teachers showed a real interest and willingness to engage with career development and assessment.
- Literature, survey and interviews with experts all agree that the introduction of a career development and evaluation system can contribute to restoring the prestige and social recognition of the teaching profession and to improving the school system.
- However, it is clear that a bottom-up approach must be followed, involving all stakeholders and focusing more on what unites rather than on what still divides (e.g. middle management).



Conclusions and perspectives:

Finally, with regard to possible further developments in research, it could continue through:

- Extension of the questionnaire administration to teachers in other Italian regions and other school types;
- Organisation of focus groups with teachers from several schools to discuss, comment on and analyse the results of the questionnaire; ;
- Extension and deepening of the comparative analysis of international experiences, with particular reference to school systems similar to the Italian one;



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Thanks for your attention!



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TO DISCUSS



○ What is your opinion about teachers' career and appraisal?

○ Do you have any advice for improving Italian situation?

○ Do these topics have some impact on teaching-learning process and how?

Workshop reflection survey round 3 - Bridging the Gap: Italian Teachers and Middle Management in Education

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