

## Between History and Historiography

Research on Contemporary Italian University

This volume includes some research papers written originally in English and presented at international conferences and seminars about the history and historiography of higher education and European universities. Each of them is aimed to illustrate certain aspects and features of the Italian university system in the last two centuries. The first chapter, in fact, traces the origins and evolution of the university organization from the unification to the II post-war period while the second highlights the recent and particularly complex and controversial history characterizing the introduction of e-learning and distance education in the Italian university system. The third and fourth chapter present, respectively, an overview of the most recent studies carried out in Italy on higher education and universities in the contemporary age and an analysis of the historical archives and of the sources used in the history of higher education and Italian universities of the last two centuries. Based on a very wide archival and printed material, the volume provides an important and original contribution for the history of higher education and of Italian universities between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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In copertina:  
**Teatro anatomico di Palazzo Bo** (Padova).  
Foto su gentile concessione  
dell'Università degli Studi di Padova.



eum edizioni università di macerata

ISBN 978-88-6056-420-7



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€ 15,00

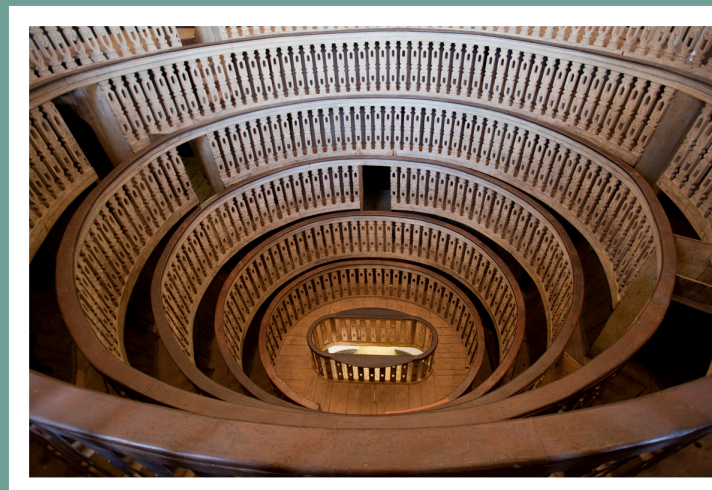
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Luigiaurelio Pomante

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## Biblioteca di «History of Education & Children's Literature».

Collana diretta da *Roberto Sani* e *Anna Ascenzi*

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Luigiaurelio Pomante

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Research on Contemporary Italian University



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Volume pubblicato con il contributo del Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione,  
dei Beni culturali e del Turismo dell'Università degli Studi di Macerata

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«*History of Education & Children's Literature*»

Collana diretta da Roberto Sani e Anna Ascenzi



isbn 978-88-6056-420-7

Prima edizione: dicembre 2014

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<http://eum.unimc.it>

In copertina: Teatro anatomico di Palazzo Bo (Padova).

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## Introduction

*Between History and Historiography. Research on Contemporary Italian University* includes some research papers written originally in English and presented at international conferences and seminars about the history and historiography of higher education and European universities. Each of them is aimed to illustrate certain aspects and features of the Italian university system in the last two centuries. The first, entitled *The Peculiarities of the Italian University System. The Role of Small Provincial Universities from National Unification to Post-World War II Period*, traces the origins and evolution of the university organization from the Unification to the post-World War II period, with a particular attention to the real peculiarity of the Italian system: the so-called «minor universities», *i.e.* small provincial universities, which had a significant role in the establishment and development of the higher education system in Italy, and, in general, had an important role in the cultural and civil growth of populations and in the evolution of the economic and productive systems of the small towns and the more peripheral areas of the peninsula.

At the basis of the choice to investigate, in this volume, the role and the characteristics of these «minor universities» there is, among other things, the need to allow the foreign historians of higher education and universities to fully understand the particular organization and structure of the Italian university system, that, in some cases – in research and contributions by foreign specialists – is described in an imprecise and superficial way.

A similar concern is the basis of the second chapter of this volume, the result of a research carried out on the occasion of

an international study seminar. *The Rise of E-Learning in the Italian University System between the Creation of On-Line Universities and the Innovation of the Educational Processes in Traditional Universities (2003-2013)*, in fact, aims to highlight the recent and particularly complex and controversial history characterizing the introduction of e-learning and distance education in the Italian university system: a process that, in our country, has acquired absolutely unique forms and implications compared to the rest of Europe, with the result to become, in some ways, difficult to be understood by foreign scholars.

The third chapter of the book, *The University as a Historiographical Problem. Studies and Research on Italian Universities and Higher Education Systems in the Last Twenty Years*, offers a real overview of the most recent studies carried out in Italy on higher education and universities in the contemporary age. It is a paper that provides, for the first time in a systematic way, a reconstruction of the research lines and addresses of the sector research in our country, and that, from the point of view of international historiography, allows to make important comparative analysis.

The fourth and final chapter of the work, as the title suggests (*Preserving Memory. The Archives of the Italian Universities and the Organization of Historical Research in Higher Education Field*), focuses on the sources used in the history of higher education and Italian universities and, in particular, on the historical archives of Italian universities, attempting a systematic presentation of them, so that to arouse the interest of European and extra-European scholars and researchers, on the basis of the specialized literature published in the last decades.

This volume is originated from the stimuli received from colleagues and scholars from different European countries and the international discussions about the recent history of the complex – and sometimes very «complicated» (at least in the perception of foreign researchers) – Italian university system, and owes much to scholars such as Manuel Martínez Neira, of the University Carlos III in Madrid (Spain), Victor Karady, of the Central European University in Budapest (Hungary) and Ignacio Peiró Martín, of the University of Zaragoza (Spain); as

well as owes much to the intellectual dialogue and debate on the research topics that, in recent years, the writer had with Roberto Sani and Anna Ascenzi, of the University of Macerata, with Gian Paolo Brizzi, secretary of CISUI and professor at the University of Bologna, with Simonetta Polenghi, Catholic University of “Sacro Cuore” in Milano, and with Alberto Barausse, of the University of Molise. To all of them a warm and sincere thanks.



## Chapter 1

The peculiarities of the Italian university system. The role of small provincial universities from national Unification to post-World War II period

Over the last twenty years, the historiography on higher education and universities in Italy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth century has seen a renewed and growing interest in the so-called «minor universities». For a long time, in fact, the great Italian universities have been the protagonists of the studies on the history of higher education and universities. For their role and their cultural and scientific prestige, in fact, these universities had raised the scholars' interest<sup>1</sup>.

With the passing of the years, however, it was realized that the small universities in the small towns had a significant role in the characterization and development of the Italian educational system and, in general, a primary importance in the cultural and civic population growth and in the development of economic and productive systems of the small towns and of the more peripheral Italian areas.

Not surprisingly, the interest for this particular type of university institutions grew when the historiography on Italian universities in the Nineteenth and Twentieth century began focusing on issues related to the role of universities in the processes of

<sup>1</sup> See in this regard the interesting historiographical annotations in I. Porciani, *La questione delle piccole università dall'unificazione agli anni Ottanta*, in M. Da Passano (ed.), *Le Università minori in Italia nel XIX secolo*, Sassari, Centro interdisciplinare per la storia dell'Università di Sassari, 1993, pp. 9-10.

«nation building» and in the redefinition of the relationship «centre-periphery» and «city-nation» in the unified State, as well as on issues related to the strategic function of universities in the formation of the ruling classes and professional *élites* and in the socioeconomic growth of the territories<sup>2</sup>.

To confirm this, we can recall here the fundamental contributions presented during the two major conferences held respectively in Sassari in 1992 and in Alghero in 1996: *Le Università minori in Italia nel XIX secolo*<sup>3</sup> [The minor universities in Italy in the Nineteenth century] and *Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX)*<sup>4</sup> [Minor universities in Europe (XV-XIX)], as well as some important monographs dealing specifically with this type of university<sup>5</sup>. We can not forget, finally, the valuable

<sup>2</sup> See F. Casadei, *Recenti studi sull'Università italiana dopo l'Unità*, «Italia contemporanea», 192, 1993, pp. 503-510; G.P. Brizzi, *La storia delle università in Italia: l'organizzazione della ricerca nel XX secolo*, in L. Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del convegno. Padova, 27-29 ottobre 1994*, Trieste, Edizioni Lint, 1996, pp. 273-309; M. Moretti, *La storia dell'Università italiana in età contemporanea. Ricerche e prospettive*, in Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca*, cit., pp. 335-381; G. Fois, *La ricerca storica sull'Università italiana in età contemporanea. Rassegna degli studi*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 3, 1999, pp. 241-257; P. Gheda, M.T. Guerrini, S. Negruzzo, S. Salustri (eds.), *La storia delle università alle soglie del XXI secolo. La ricerca dei giovani studiosi tra fonti e nuovi percorsi di indagine. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi. Aosta, 18-20 dicembre 2006*, Bologna, Clueb, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Da Passano (ed.), *Le Università minori in Italia nel XIX secolo*, cit.

<sup>4</sup> G.P. Brizzi, J. Verger (eds.), *Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX). Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi. Alghero, 30 ottobre-2 novembre 1996*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> For example, this is the case of the excellent research in I. Porciani, *Un ateneo minacciato. L'Università di Siena dalla Restaurazione alla prima guerra mondiale*, «Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Siena», 12, 1991, pp. 97-129; Ivi, 13, 1993, pp. 271-288; as well as of the well documented and organic works by M. Moretti, *Piccole, povere e "libere": le università municipali nell'Italia liberale*, in Brizzi, Verger (eds.), *Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX). Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi*, cit., pp. 533-562; G. Fois, *L'università di Sassari nell'Italia liberale. Dalla legge Casati alla rinascita dell'età giolittiana nelle relazioni annuali dei rettori*, Sassari, Centro interdisciplinare per la storia dell'università di Sassari, 1992; Ead., *Storia dell'Università di Sassari (1859-1943)*, Roma, Carocci, 2000. On the Modern Age, see also: G.P. Brizzi, *Le università minori in Italia in età moderna*, in A. Romano (ed.), *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi. Milazzo, 28 settembre-2 ottobre*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 1995, pp. 287-296; Id., *Le università minori in Italia. Identità*

contributions represented by the organic collections of studies about the history of single Italian universities collected, since 1997, in the monographic section of the journal of the Inter-University Centre for the History of Italian universities (CISUI), «Annali di storia delle università italiane»<sup>6</sup>.

The above mentioned research have contributed, first of all, to define the origin and the distinctive features of this peculiar type of academic institutions, as well as to answer the question: what do we exactly mean when we speak of «minor universities» and «small universities» with reference to Italy in the last two centuries? The introduction of a classification and, in particular, of a real hierarchy between higher education institutions and universities, as it is well known, has its roots in the Napoleonic age and is one of the characteristics of the process of reorganization and reform of the university system started in France and in the territories directly and indirectly controlled by Napoleonic Empire<sup>7</sup>.

It is a process that has little or nothing to do with the heterogeneous and varied character of the high education and university system of the old regime society, so that, as Gian Paolo Brizzi effectively underlined, referring to the ancient Italian States

*e autoconsapevolezza*, in Brizzi, Verger (eds.), *Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX)*. *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi*, cit., pp. 169-188.

<sup>6</sup> As is common knowledge, the *Sezione Studi* [Section Studies] of the «Annali di storia delle università italiane», from the beginning of its activity (1997) has been collecting monographs about the history of single Italian universities. For what concerns our discussion, we recommend the files dedicated to the University of Messina (2, 1998, pp. 37-188), Sassari (6, 2002, pp. 17-207), Ferrara (8, 2004, pp. 35-279), Parma (9, 2005, pp. 29-216), Siena (10, 2006, pp. 33-277) and Macerata (13, 2009, pp. 45-283).

<sup>7</sup> See, in particular, P. Del Negro, L. Pepe (eds.), *Le università napoleoniche. Uno spartiacque nella storia italiana ed europea dell'istruzione superiore*. *Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi*. Padova-Bologna, 13-15 settembre 2006, Bologna, Clueb, 2008. See also: R. Bounard, *Expériences françaises de l'Italie napoléonienne*. Rome dans le système universitaire napoléonien et l'organisation des académies et universités de Pise, Parme et Torino (1806-1814), Roma, Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1988; G.P. Romagnani, *L'istruzione universitaria in Piemonte dal 1799 al 1814*, in *All'ombra dell'aquila imperiale. Trasformazioni e continuità istituzionali nei territori sabaudi in età napoleonica, 1802-1814*. *Atti del Convegno*, Torino, 15-18 ottobre 1990, 2 vols., Roma, Ministero per i Beni culturali e ambientali, 1994, vol. II, pp. 536-569; P. Alvazzi del Frate (ed.), *Università napoleoniche negli Stati romani: il Rapport di Giovanni Ferri de Saint-Constant sull'istruzione pubblica (1812)*, Roma, Viella, 1995.

and to the modern age universities, it is difficult to apply «a criterion of classification, a hierarchy of value» to an institution such as the university: «The majority of the operative universities in Italy during the modern age were, in fact, in legal terms, equivalent».

And if, on one hand, it is true that beyond this “legal equivalence” «some formal and organisational differences allowed contemporary observers to establish a classification within the various institutions of higher education», on the other, it is equally true that, during the modern age, the real line of differentiation wasn't related with «the legal and organisational model of the *Studium*», but rather with the fact that «the characteristic functions of the general *Studium*» were also performed by other institutions not immediately related to that model. This gave a hybrid characterization to the higher education system of the ancient Italian States, or, at least, a not easily definable one, in terms of homogeneity and uniformity with the institutional model<sup>8</sup>.

It is sufficient to mention, for example, the peculiar role played on this side by other institutions, along with the real universities (*Studium Urbis*): first of all by the *Studia Ordinum* of the convent, and later, in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, by the *Collegia* of the religious orders (primarily of the *Society of Jesus*) who were authorized to confer academic degrees<sup>9</sup>.

Actually, as above mentioned, the classification and hierarchy categories we should refer to, in order to highlight the meaning and the characteristics assumed in Italy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth century by a typology of higher education institutions such as that of the «minor universities», have their roots in the transformation of the university situation occurred

<sup>8</sup> Brizzi, *Le università minori in Italia. Identità e autoconsapevolezza*, cit., pp. 169-174.

<sup>9</sup> See G.P. Brizzi, R. Greci (eds.), *Gesuiti e università in Europa (secoli XVI-XVIII). Atti del Convegno di studi. Parma, 13-15 dicembre 2001*, Bologna, Clueb, 2002; D. Novarese, *Istituzioni complementari e alternative allo Studium in Italia: presenza e ruolo degli Ordini religiosi (secc. XIII-XVI)*, in G.P. Brizzi, P. Del Negro, A. Romano (eds.), *Storia delle università in Italia*, 3 vols., Messina, Sicania, 2007, vol. I, pp. 137-157.



in Italy during the Napoleonic era and in the following period of the Restoration<sup>10</sup>.

In this regard, Gian Paolo Brizzi drew attention on the work of reorganization and reform of high schools and universities promoted by Pope Pius VII in the Papal State after the 1815 and destined to be implemented with the promulgation, by his successor Pope Leo XII, of the Bull *Quod Divina Sapientia* of August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1824<sup>11</sup>.

When, in the aftermath of the Restoration – wrote the Scholar – Pius VII entrusted the task of reorganizing the school system of the Papal State to a committee of cardinals, the members of the Committee soon reached an agreement: two were the universities to which remained the task of the cultural, technical and scientific education of the new ruling classes: the Universities of Roma and Bologna. It was an unanimous and immediate decision but the next ten years were characterized by the attempt to control the petitions from the cities of the province, claiming the restoration of the *Studium* on the basis of ancient rights, presumed or real. The Commission at the beginning tried to temporize, testing the tenacity of applicants, but could not underestimate the political implications of the issue. [...] Trying to save the form and the substance, it adopted the distinction between the universities of first and second level, reserving a separate status to the universities of Roma and Bologna and confining five universities of the second level in a subordinate role: Ferrara, Perugia, Macerata, Camerino and Fermo, replaced in 1826 by Urbino. [...] This solution established a

<sup>10</sup> «Since the establishment of high schools in Napoleonic age – Brizzi said – the adoption of a hierarchy between the different institutions of higher education allows us to identify the category of ‘minor university’, on the basis of legal-administrative elements. The equivalence with the most important universities that have characterized the small local universities for centuries, shows, now, all its limits» (Brizzi, *Le università minori in Italia. Identità e autoconsapevolezza*, cit., p. 173).

<sup>11</sup> See the Constitutional text *Quod Divina Sapientia* in *Bullarii Romani continuatio*, Prato, Typ. Aldina, 1854, t. VIII, pp. 95-117. On Pope Pius and Leo's reform of high schools and universities in the Papal State see: A. Gemelli, S. Vismara, *La riforma degli studi universitari negli stati pontifici (186-1824)*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1933; F. Gasnault, *La réglementation des universités pontificales au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. I. Reformes et restaurations: les avatars du grand projet «zelante» (1815-1834)*, «Mélanges de l'École française de Roma. Moyen age. Temps modernes», 96, n. 1, 1984, pp. 178-237; M.I. Venzo, *La Congregazione degli Studi e l'istruzione pubblica*, in A.L. Bonella, A. Pompeo, A.I. Venzo (eds.) *Roma fra la Restaurazione e l'elezione di Pio IX. Amministrazione, economia, società e cultura*, Roma-Freiburg-Wien, Herder, 1997, pp. 179-190; R. Sani, «Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam». *Istituti religiosi, educazione e scuola nell'Italia moderna e contemporanea*, Macerata, eum, 2009, pp. 131-204.

clear hierarchy between the different State universities, by introducing a formal administrative legal principle that differentiated between the different components of the university system<sup>12</sup>.

The distinction between «minor» and «major» universities, of first and second level, was based on the nature and the quantity of the funds allocated by the government, on the completeness of their Faculties, on the number of their chairs and on the characteristics of their scientific and educational facilities (libraries, laboratories, botanical gardens, etc.), and it was not an exclusive prerogative of the higher education system of the Papal States. In fact, forms of hierarchical differentiation between universities were introduced in other pre-Unification Italian Nineteenth century States<sup>13</sup>, including the Kingdom of Sardinia, in which, as is well known, the University of Torino was the head of a university system that placed the other State universities in a position of subordination, especially those of Cagliari and Sassari<sup>14</sup>.

After the national Unification, as already mentioned, the Italian «minor universities» were incorporated in the higher education system of the new unitary State, also thanks to the community and local leaders' attachment to «the tangible signs of the ancient city and regional identities, very close to merge in the new national identity»<sup>15</sup>. Most of them asked the legal recognition as «royal university» as in the case of Cagliari, Catania, Genova, Macerata, Messina, Modena, Parma and Sassari<sup>16</sup>, while some of the secondary universities of the former Papal States – Camerino, Ferrara, Perugia and Urbino<sup>17</sup> – by virtue

<sup>12</sup> Brizzi, *Le università minori in Italia. Identità e autoconsapevolezza*, cit., p. 170.

<sup>13</sup> Ivi, pp. 171-172.

<sup>14</sup> See S. Polenghi, *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica (1848-1876)*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1993, pp. 46-49.

<sup>15</sup> Porciani, *La questione delle piccole università dall'unificazione agli anni Ottanta*, cit., pp. 11-12.

<sup>16</sup> Ead., *Lo Stato unitario di fronte alla questione dell'università*, in Ead. (ed.), *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei e il caso italiano*, Napoli, Jovene, 1994, pp. 135-150.

<sup>17</sup> The University of Camerino was recognized «free university» with the R.D. January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1861, no. 4605 (published in «Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia» – from here onwards: GU – February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1861); those of Ferrara and Perugia obtained

of a series of decrees issued between 1860 and 1862, obtained the *status* of «free universities», considered to be more appropriate to protect their cultural and scientific traditions and the connection with the territory they belonged to, although the need to conform to the laws and the general regulations of the new State<sup>18</sup>.

With reference to the debate about the university policy, developed as early as the beginning of the unitary age, Ilaria Porciani rightly underlined:

If in the first months after the end of the ancient governments, the prevailing feeling in the ruling classes and the more widespread *cliché* in the academic rhetoric were built on the trust in an easy palingenesis of high studies, which would rise almost spontaneously with the regained freedom, soon the remarkable fragility of the higher education system inherited from the pre-Unification States became evident. At the same time, the need to strengthen this system by concentrating the available resources in the attempt to give a European breath to the major universities, was revealed<sup>19</sup>.

In such a context, a «new course» in the university policy was promoted by the Minister of Public Education Carlo Matteucci with the Law of July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1862 no. 719, which introduced the equalization of university taxes and redefined the rules concerning the professors' salaries, and with the following *Regolamento generale delle Università del Regno* promulgated by the R.D. September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1862<sup>20</sup>.

the same recognition with the R.D. January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1861, no. 4622 (published in GU, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1861); the University of Urbino, finally, was declared «free university» with the R.D. October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1862, no. 912 (published in GU, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1862). See D. Aringoli, *L'Università di Camerino*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1951; A. Visconti, *La storia dell'Università di Ferrara (1391-1950)*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1950; G. Ermini, *Storia dell'Università di Perugia*, 2 vols., Firenze, Olschki, 1971; and S. Pivato (ed.), *L'Università di Urbino 1506-2006. I: La storia*, Urbino, Quattroventi, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Moretti, *Piccole, povere e "libere": le università municipali nell'Italia liberale*, cit., pp. 533-562.

<sup>19</sup> Porciani, *La questione delle piccole università dall'unificazione agli anni Ottanta*, cit., p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> See, respectively, the Law of July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1862, no. 719 – *Riduzione delle tasse scolastiche e determinazione degli stipendi dei professori delle università governative* [Reduction of tuition and determination of the salaries of university professors governmental], in GU, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1862; also in «Collezione Celerifera delle leggi, decreti, istruzioni e circolari» (1861-1915) – from here onwards: CC – XLI, 136, 1862, pp. 2161-2163 (with an attached table of taxes); and the R.D. September

We have also to remember that with the Law of July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1862, the first measure in this field discussed and approved by the Parliament and extended to the whole country, a specific classification of Italian universities was formally introduced, with which, on the basis of a series of parameters concerning the presence of all the faculties or only some and the number of students enrolled, the State universities were divided into two groups: the «major» of «first level», that included Bologna, Napoli, Palermo, Pavia, Pisa and Torino (the universities of Padova and Roma were added respectively in 1866 and in 1870), and those «minor» or of «second level», which included Cagliari, Catania, Genova, Messina, Modena, Parma, Siena and – even after a long phase characterized by confusion and uncertainty about its actual legal *status* – Macerata<sup>21</sup>. In the classification introduced by the Minister Matteucci's measure, the already mentioned «free universities» of Camerino, Ferrara, Perugia and Urbino were excluded. From a financial point of view, in fact, they were largely dependent on the local authorities and were controlled by the State through the Higher Council of Education which approved their statutes<sup>22</sup>.

The legal and organisational higher education and university structure outlined at the beginning of the unitary season with the Law of July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1862, was repeatedly questioned in parliamentary debates and in the confrontation developed in the public opinion and in the academic environments in order to

14<sup>th</sup>, 1862, no. 842 – *Regolamento generale universitario e di quelli delle facoltà di giurisprudenza, di medicina e chirurgia, di scienze fisiche, matematiche e naturali, e di filosofia e lettere* [General Rules of the University and those of the faculty of law, medicine and surgery, physical sciences, mathematical and natural sciences, and philosophy and letters], in GU, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1862; also in CC, XLI, 166, 1862, pp. 2641-2644.

<sup>21</sup> The Law of July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1862, no. 719 – *Riduzione delle tasse scolastiche e determinazione degli stipendi dei professori delle università governative*, cit. On the sense and importance of this measure and on Carlo Matteucci's university policy in general, see in particular: Polenghi, *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica (1848-1876)*, cit., pp. 240-288; F. Colao, *La libertà d'insegnamento e l'autonomia nell'Università liberale. Norme e progetti per l'istruzione superiore in Italia (1848-1923)*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1995, pp. 110-146; and Porciani, *Lo Stato unitario di fronte alla questione dell'università*, cit., pp. 135-150.

<sup>22</sup> See Ead., *La questione delle piccole università dall'unificazione agli anni Ottanta*, cit., p. 12.

renew the national university system during the last decades of Nineteenth century<sup>23</sup>.

The division of royal universities into two different categories introduced by the Minister Matteucci, however, would be largely nullified, or, at least, seriously questioned, since the second half of the Seventies, by regulations issued by the governments of the Left in favour of the «equalization» of the secondary universities to those of «first level». This was made possible thanks to the local authorities' massive financial intervention realized through agreements with the universities operating on the territory for the creation of special «university consortia».

In the *Relazione generale sulle condizioni della pubblica istruzione nel Regno d'Italia* [General Report on the condition of Public Instruction in the Kingdom of Italy], published in 1865 by the Superior Council of Torino, the former Minister of Education and now vice president of the Council itself, Carlo Matteucci, drew a highly problematic picture of the several serious malfunctions that characterized the national university system, stressing that one of the main causes of such a state was the excessive number of universities and the consequent waste of men and money, which prevented it from concentrating the available resources in a few highly qualified academic institutions, capable to compete on a European level:

In Italy, we have – he said – some free universities and many others sustained by the State, and the obtained results do not meet the needs and aspirations of the Nation. [...] With the decline of the upper studies and the weakening of academic disciplines, only a means is recommended by reason and experience to rectify the evils and to begin an improvement, that is, to gather in a few schools those teachers who have good qualities of teaching and fame and all the means of study that the present conditions of the sciences require; teachers and resources that would be unfruitful if dispersed. [...] To demonstrate the effectiveness of this principle, it is enough to transform it into a practical concept, that is, to imagine for a moment that all our higher education institutions were reduced to just two or three schools, in which all the most distinguished teachers and all the means of education, that are now wasted in nineteen universities, were

<sup>23</sup> See, in this respect, I. Porciani, M. Moretti, *La creazione del sistema universitario nella nuova Italia*, in Brizzi, Del Negro, Romano (eds.), *Storia delle Università in Italia*, cit., vol. I, pp. 323-379.

concentrated. In this way, Italy would certainly have two or three schools, sufficient for our number of students, and would be as famous as the better schools of France and Germany. [...] From these considerations we can conclude that the organic law on education that Italy needs today should first of all determine the number and location of the very few institutions that the State must maintain under his direction<sup>24</sup>.

Carlo Matteucci's proposal of 1865, of a drastic downsizing of Italian universities aroused, as we know, strong oppositions, not only locally, but also in the national political class, as to be very soon deserted<sup>25</sup>. However, it is also true, as Ilaria Porciani underlined, that «thereafter the issue of reducing the number of universities will be a recurring theme in the debate in the Parliament and outside of it»<sup>26</sup>. To confirm this, we can only recall here the various projects of reorganization of the university system inspired to this principle and presented in Parliament over the following years, that, however, will be unsuccessful<sup>27</sup>.

The matter of the abolition of minor universities, however, came up again at the beginning of the Nineties, as proved by the bill presented to the House in 1891 by the MP Sebastiano Turbiglio<sup>28</sup> and by the far more organic and comprehensive one developed in the immediately following years by the Minister of Education Ferdinando Martini in collaboration with Carlo Francesco Ferraris, which rightly Mauro Moretti defined as the last and «the most coherent attempt of rationalization of the

<sup>24</sup> *Sulle condizioni della pubblica istruzione nel regno d'Italia. Relazione generale presentata al Ministro dal Consiglio Superiore di Torino*, Milano, Stamperia Reale, Milano, 1865, pp. 190-191, 199-202.

<sup>25</sup> Polenghi, *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica (1848-1876)*, cit., pp. 246-250.

<sup>26</sup> Porciani, *La questione delle piccole università dall'unificazione agli anni Ottanta*, cit., pp. 13-14.

<sup>27</sup> See *Vicende legislative della Pubblica Istruzione in Italia dall'anno 1859 al 1899 raccolte e annotate da Giuseppe Saredo. Introduzione al Codice della Pubblica Istruzione dello stesso Autore*, Torino, Unione Tipografico-Editrice, 1901, pp. 39-177.

<sup>28</sup> See the bill presented to the Parliament on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1891 by the MP Sebastiano Turbiglio, in «Atti Parlamentari» [Acts of Parliament] (from here onwards AP), Camera dei Deputati, Documenti, Leg. XVII, 1890-1891, doc. no. 97.

national university system on the basis of the priority given to the reduction of the seats»<sup>29</sup>.

Actually, when Ferdinando Martini and Carlo Francesco Ferraris gave to the press, for the publishing house of Milano Hoepli, their well-structured plans for a new *Ordinamento generale degli Istituti d'istruzione superiore* (1895), the legal and organisational structure of State universities outlined over thirty years before by Carlo Matteucci with the law of July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1862 was largely changed. In particular, the distinction between first and second level universities, which distinguished the great universities from the smaller ones, despite still formally in force, now appeared meaningless, by virtue of the policy of «equalization» promoted, as we have already mentioned, by the Left of Depretis<sup>30</sup>.

Within a little more than fifteen years, in fact, thanks to the local authorities' (municipality and province) strong economic involvement and, in some cases, even that of the lending institution operating in the area, Italian minor universities could create, through agreements with these lending institutions, special «university *consortia*», by virtue of which they were equalized to those of «first level». With the R.D. December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1885, no. 3570, the universities of Genova, Catania and Messina<sup>31</sup> were equalized; two years later, with the Law of July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1887, no. 4745, it was the turn of those of Siena, Modena and Parma<sup>32</sup>;

<sup>29</sup> See M. Moretti, *La questione delle piccole università dai dibattiti di fine secolo al 1914*, in Da Passano (ed.), *Le Università minori in Italia nel XIX secolo*, cit., pp. 28-31.

<sup>30</sup> «Under the government of the Left and after the Minister of Education Coppino's proposal – Ilaria Porciani wrote – the so-called «equalization» of the universities of second level to those of first began, thanks to the local authorities' financial contributions. They were preceded by a first significant intervention to save the Higher Institute of Firenze: the Law of June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1872» (Porciani, *La questione delle piccole università dall'unificazione agli anni Ottanta*, cit., p. 14). See also S. Polenghi, *Autonomia e decentramento nell'università italiana dalla Destra storica dal secondo ministero Coppino (1859-1878)*, in F. Pruneri (ed.), *Il cerchio e l'ellisse. Centralismo e autonomia nella storia della scuola dal XIX al XXI secolo*, Roma, Carocci, 2005, pp. 57-107.

<sup>31</sup> See R.D. December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1885, no. 3570, in «Bollettino Ufficiale Ministero Pubblica Istruzione» (1887), II, pp. 531-538.

<sup>32</sup> The Law of July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1887, no. 4745 is published in GU, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1887; also reproduced in CC, 42, 1887, pp. 1354-1357.

at the beginning of the new century, finally, the universities of Macerata, with the Law of December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1901, no. 541<sup>33</sup>, and those of Cagliari (Law of June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1902, no. 252) and Sassari (Law of July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1902, no. 253)<sup>34</sup> obtained the equalization.

In our opinion, the story of the «equalization» of minor colleges to those of «first level», already widely analysed from an historiographical point of view, is very interesting, not only to analyse the university policy carried out by the governments of the Left in the last decades of the Nineteenth century<sup>35</sup>, but also to highlight the complex interplay of local interests and aspirations underlying the strong involvement of municipalities, provincial deputations and lending institutions in re-launching their respective universities.

The commitment of administrators and local notables in favour of the protection and development of the local universities, in fact, is a complex and multi-faceted matter. It is justified, on the one hand, by the considerable importance of the small provincial universities – the most of which had centuries-old traditions and were rooted in the history of the city – as a favoured lace for the local *élites*' education and as a symbolic space of the urban cultural identity and of the feeling of belonging to community, on the other, is generated – especially since the end of the Nineteenth century – from local *élites* and administrations' aspiration to connect more and more the life and the progresses of the city and its surrounding areas to those of the nation. It was realized through a symbolic process that gave the small countries a new and stronger legitimacy, after the inevitable decline, following the Risorgimento and the establishment of a unified State, of the ancient and glorious municipal autonomies, working for the conservation and enhancement of an institution, such as the university, that was the only capable

<sup>33</sup> The Law of December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1901, no. 541 is published in GU, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1902; also reproduced in CC, 13, 1901, p. 447.

<sup>34</sup> The Laws of June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1902, no. 252, and of July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1902, no. 253, are both reproduced in CC, 44, 1901, pp. 1441-1444.

<sup>35</sup> See U.M. Miozzi, *Lo sviluppo storico dell'università italiana*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1993, pp. 47-82.



to hold together and to enhance the local cultural and civil traditions and the «national spirit».

A significant confirmation of this attitude – as Roberto Sani underlined – can be seen in the speech of the Dean of the University of Macerata Oreste Ranelletti, during the solemn opening of the academic year 1902-1903, where he «emphasizes how the efforts of the community of Macerata in safeguarding and promoting his ‘glorious and ancient University’ were not only an economic matter but the highest expression of the citizens’ civic and patriotic sense, characterizing their sense of belonging to the nation, through the contribution given to the spiritual and intellectual growth of the whole country»<sup>36</sup>:

The Universities – concluded the Dean Ranelletti – are the centres of the spiritual life of a people, the breeding ground of their intellectual development, the institution from which the living forces of the country, the powerful progress-bearers come from. It protected the idea of national unity through all the struggles, the ruins, the tyrannies, which infested Italy, it generated the first efficient forces of the revolution, which brought us to unity and freedom, it defended the secular thought, who alone can ensure us freedom, and the indefinite progress in the future. All this can be associated only to a University, like that of Macerata, with high scientific traditions and glorious patriotic tradition. When the citizens feel the full moral force of such an institution for such a long time, they fight with very much tenacity and faith for the status it deserves, and they are civil and commendable citizens<sup>37</sup>.

In this respect, if it is true, as Ilaria Porciani and Mauro Moretti pointed out a few years ago, that «in the university sector, a tension between ‘nation’ and ‘city’, State interventions and local bodies’ actions, remains – in the long term and perhaps, even if in a different manner, up to now», it is equally true that the gradual process by which «the directives of the Centre began

<sup>36</sup> R. Sani, *Introduzione. Le relazioni annuali dei rettori per le inaugurazioni degli anni accademici. Una fonte preziosa per la storia delle università*, in L. Pomante (ed.), *L’Università di Macerata nell’Italia unita (1861-1966). Un secolo di storia dell’ateneo maceratese attraverso le relazioni inaugurali dei rettori e altre fonti archivistiche e a stampa*, Macerata, eum, 2012, p. 32.

<sup>37</sup> *Relazione del Rettore Prof. Oreste Ranelletti per la inaugurazione degli studi 1902-1903, IX novembre MDCCCII*, in *Annuario della Regia Università di Macerata*, Macerata, Stab. Tip. Bianchini, 1903, p. 10.

to arrive to the outskirts, making the style of university life, the characteristics of *curricula* and the teaching methods, gradually more and more ‘national’»<sup>38</sup>, ending up making the universities – particularly the minor ones – a not insignificant factor of nationalization of the country and promoting a sense of belonging that goes beyond the narrow horizons of local and regional authorities.

There was a further important redefinition of the role and prerogatives of minor colleges after the reorganization of Italian higher education and university system realized, within Gentile reform, with the R.D. September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1923, no. 2102<sup>39</sup>. It undoubtedly contributed to strengthen the connections between the small provincial universities, the local institutions and the socioeconomic and productive realities operating in the respective territories, also supporting an increasing specialization of the research activities and educational syllabus of these universities, according to their particular economic and productive reality and with the specific needs of the urban and regional labour market.

The rearrangement of higher and university education carried out in 1923 by Giovanni Gentile, on one hand, eliminated almost definitively the hypothesis of a sudden and drastic reduction in the number of Italian universities, through the suppression of the minor ones and of those that did not have all the faculties, hypothesis supported by several parties during Giolitti government and even in the difficult phase of the post-World War I period<sup>40</sup>. On the other, instead, while confirming the polycen-

<sup>38</sup> M. Moretti, I. Porciani, *Il sistema universitario tra nazione e città: un campo di tensione*, in M. Meriggi, P. Schiera (eds.), *Dalla città alla nazione. Borghesie ottocentesche in Italia e in Germania*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1993, pp. 290-293.

<sup>39</sup> See R.D. September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1923, no. 2102 – *Ordinamento dell’istruzione superiore* [Rules of higher education], in GU, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1923, no. 239; also in *Lex. Legislazione italiana. Raccolta cronologica con richiami alle leggi attinenti e ricchi Indici semestrali ed annuali. Anno IX – 1923*, Torino, Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1924, pp. 1449-1484 (quotes from here).

<sup>40</sup> See Moretti, *La questione delle piccole università dai dibattiti di fine secolo al 1914*, cit., pp. 28-31; Id., *La questione universitaria a cinquant’anni dall’Unificazione. La Commissione Reale per il riordinamento degli studi superiori e la relazione Ceci*, in Porciani (ed.), *L’Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei e il caso italiano*, cit., pp. 209-309.

tric structure of the national university system, it reintroduced again a criterion of hierarchical differentiation among Italian universities, classifying the universities into three different types, corresponding to the nature of the financial assistance allocated annually by the State.

In this regard, State universities of *A type*, entirely dependent on the State budget, were the major universities of Bologna, Cagliari, Genova, Napoli, Padova, Palermo, Pavia, Pisa, Roma and Torino, as well as certain polytechnics and the school of Architecture in Roma; the State universities of *B type*, only in part financially supported by the State, and which required special economic agreements between the government and the local authorities, included small and recent institutions: Catania, Macerata, Messina, Modena, Parma, Sassari, Siena and the newly born universities of Bari, Firenze and Milano, as well as the School of industrial Chemistry of Bologna, the School of naval Engineering of Genova and the Engineering Schools of Milano and Torino. Finally, the universities of *C type* included the already mentioned «free universities», *i.e.* the private institutions (they were the universities of Camerino, Ferrara, Perugia and Urbino, to which would be added after a little time, with the R.D. October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1924, also the Catholic University of “Sacro Cuore” of Milano), that did not involve State financial interventions.

The Gentile perspective was based, as we know, on a rigidly elitist vision of higher education and university, and was connected to a substantial contempt for the small universities of the province, judged by the philosopher of Castelvetro, as well as by Benedetto Croce and the whole neo-idealist group, as a real burden for the Italian university system and one of the main reasons for the poor progress made by the national science. This was originated essentially from the realistic consideration of the insuperable difficulties and resistances that, since the beginning of the Unification period, had been frustrating all the attempts to rationalize higher education through the abolition of the incomplete universities and of the so-called «minor ones».

The Minister of Education was convinced that such difficulties and resistances were far from being definitively overcome,

and, therefore, it was necessary to follow a different path<sup>41</sup> in order to effectively reduce the negative consequences and effects of the traditional polycentric structure of the national university system, recovering the criteria of a «hierarchical differentiation» between Italian universities supported by the Nineteenth-century liberal ruling class. So, a «double-track» was introduced into the university system: it was formally based on the traditional criterion of the degree of State participation in the financial support of the universities but was also intended to be increasingly based on the universities' characteristics and functions.

In other words, if on one hand the Gentile Reform conferred to all the universities and high schools in general the task to «promote the progress of science and to provide the scientific knowledge necessary for the exercise of the jobs and professions»<sup>42</sup>, on the other it created the conditions to allow the minor universities – *i.e.* those that the R.D. September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1923 identified as *B type* – to develop their own specialization in relation to the specific needs of their territories and to the education and cultural activities of the local *élite*, in order to favour the «involvement» and the necessary financial contribution of organizations and private institutions for their «support and functioning»<sup>43</sup>.

The «double-track» suggested by Giovanni Gentile, without calling into question, at least from a formal point of view, the legal and institutional uniformity that characterized Casati's higher and university education system, was aimed at a redefinition and a qualification – through the differentiation of the functions and objectives of the universities of different dimen-

<sup>41</sup> See Colao, *Tra accentramento e autonomia: l'amministrazione universitaria dall'Unità a oggi*, in Brizzi, Del Negro, Romano (eds.), *Storia delle Università in Italia*, cit., I, p. 296.

<sup>42</sup> *Capo I. Del fine dell'istruzione superiore e degli Istituti nei quali s'impartisce. Art. 1*, in R.D. September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1923, no. 2102 – *Ordinamento dell'istruzione superiore*, cit., p. 1449.

<sup>43</sup> *Capo VIII. Dell'amministrazione delle università e degli istituti superiori. Art. 79*, in *ivi*, p. 1466.

sions and geographic location – of the traditional polycentric structure of the national university system<sup>44</sup>.

The meaning of such a strategy was fully understood by the subjects of the university reform of 1923, as demonstrated by the policies of «repositioning» and the attempts to encourage a greater specialization of the educational syllabus and a redefinition of the scientific and cultural initiatives, in line with the characteristics and needs of the respective territories, pursued by many Italian minor universities. As an example, it is sufficient here to recall the speech the Dean of the University of Macerata Paolo Greco made in November 1933, which, retracing the path followed by the university a decade after the Reform, pointed out:

In relation to its cultural and educational functions, our University fulfilled the program to give the greatest impetus to the study of law and of agricultural economics, fully respecting the university policy of Gentile Reform: that is, to favour, in the various Italian universities, the trend towards specialization, so as each University could find its particular characteristic and task<sup>45</sup>.

We can add that, especially since the years of the post-World War I period, the minor universities were intended to have a specific «social function» in relation to the increased demand for higher education coming from the middle classes and the urban bourgeoisie, *i.e.* to present themselves more and more as the reference university centres for the intermediate categories of the society that had long been excluded, in the course of the Nineteenth century, from the access to higher education and university.

In this regard, Roberto Sani has rightly drawn attention on the debate developed in a small university like Macerata, about the need to cope with the «gradual expansion of the social base

<sup>44</sup> See G. Gentile, *Lo spirito informatore della riforma*, in Id., *La riforma della scuola in Italia*, in H.A. Cavallera (ed.), *La riforma della scuola in Italia*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 1989, pp. 431-435 and *passim*.

<sup>45</sup> *Inaugurazione dell'Anno Accademico 1933-1934. Relazione del Pro-Rettore Prof. Paolo Greco letta nella cerimonia inaugurale dell'11 novembre 1933*, XII, in *Annuario della Regia Università di Macerata*, Macerata, Stab. Tip. Bianchini, 1934, pp. 10-11.

of the student population in virtue of the access to the universities of a growing number of young bourgeois», who chose the minor universities to complete their higher studies, even if only for reasons of geographical proximity and the lower cost of life of the provincial cities compared to the large urban centres<sup>46</sup>.

In this respect, the comments of the Dean of the University of Macerata Riccardo Bachi on the occasion of the inauguration of the academic year 1923-1924 were particularly significant, especially because they showed the development of a specific awareness of the role that small universities were required to play in relation to the incipient transformation of the traditional student base:

A very informative but unfortunately difficult statistical research – said Bachi – could try to verify the social and economic status of the families with children in our classrooms. Such research would show almost certainly that the majority of our students comes from the middle class, that is from the petty bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie with no very substantial financial means, provided with fixed incomes or not very variable ones, often with a public job, is the class that most widely contributes to the formation of the intellectual workers, and it is the class that more suffered the war effects in economic terms, it is the social class that suffered the effects of currency devaluation, the increase in taxes. We, the professors, know that the presence of some of our disciples at our lessons means serious sacrifices for them and we know how many of our disciples should willingly combine study with paid, sometimes humble, jobs<sup>47</sup>.

It is true that the process of redefinition of the Italian university system promoted by the Gentile reform was intended to produce partial and very limited effects, also because of the real turnaround occurred at the beginning of the Thirties<sup>48</sup>, culminated then with the measures introduced in the middle of the decade.

<sup>46</sup> Sani, *Introduzione. Le relazioni annuali dei rettori per le inaugurazioni degli anni accademici. Una fonte preziosa per la storia delle università*, cit., p. 60.

<sup>47</sup> *Inaugurazione dell'Anno Accademico 1923-1924. Relazione del Rettore Prof. Riccardo Bachi letta nella cerimonia inaugurale dell'11 novembre 1923*, in *Annuario della Regia Università di Macerata*, Macerata, Stab. Tip. Bianchini, 1924, pp. 19-20.

<sup>48</sup> See Miozzi, *Lo sviluppo storico dell'Università italiana*, cit., pp. 90-94.

The reorganization of higher education promoted by the Minister of National Education Cesare De Vecchi with the R.D. June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1935, no. 1071<sup>49</sup>, in this regard, led in fact to the «absolute centralization» of the national university system: the distinction between the royal college of first and second level, reintroduced by Gentile, was abolished and the teaching and organisational autonomy given to the single universities by the reform of 1923 was also eliminated. With the following R.D. May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1936, no. 882<sup>50</sup>, moreover, De Vecchi reorganized the *curricula* and the study plans, aiming at a general uniformity of the educational syllabus that reduced significantly, even on this side, the possibility of intervention and self-characterization of the courses to the single faculties<sup>51</sup>.

The process of centralization of the Italian university system promoted by the Minister De Vecchi, therefore, if on one hand, thanks to the restoration of the equalization of all State universities, gave economic stability to the universities of the smaller towns, ensuring continuity and adequacy of financial resources, now completely at the expense of the State, on the other simply restored the polycentric structure of the national university system in force until the early Twenties, denying any possible form of functional differentiation of the universities on the basis of the socioeconomic needs and the specific cultural vocations of the territories.

The characteristics of the Italian university system established by the ministerial decrees of the mid-Thirties, which is a highly centralized administrative and teaching system and, at the same time, a polycentric institutional structure, would have survived, of course, the fascist regime itself and would

<sup>49</sup> R.D. June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1935, no. 1071 – *Modifiche e aggiornamenti del T.U. delle leggi sull'istruzione superiore* [Amendments and updating of the T.U. of the laws on higher education], in GU, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1935, no. 154.

<sup>50</sup> R.D. May 7<sup>th</sup> 1936, no. 882 – *Sostituzione delle tabelle allegate al R.D. 28 novembre 1935, n. 2044* [Replacement of tables attached to R.D. November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1935, no. 2044], in GU, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1936, no. 272.

<sup>51</sup> See G. Ricuperati, *Per una storia dell'università italiana da Gentile a Bottai: appunti e discussioni*, in Porciani (ed.), *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei e il caso italiano*, cit., pp. 311-377; E. Signori, *Università e fascismo*, in Brizzi, Del Negro, Romano (eds.), *Storia delle Università in Italia*, cit., vol. I, pp. 381-423.

be inherited, in the aftermath of 1945, by the democratic and Republican State.

Since the trends emerged in the Constituent Assembly – and then converged to a large extent in the measures in the field of higher and university education endorsed by the Constitution of 1948<sup>52</sup> – until the unlucky projects of reorganization and general reform of the Italian university system presented in Parliament in 1951 by the Minister of Education Guido Gonella<sup>53</sup> – and, fifteen years later, in 1965, by Luigi Gui during the so-called «centre-left season»<sup>54</sup> – the legislator's attention was focused, almost exclusively, on the first of the two features above mentioned, the question of the administrative and teaching centralism. It represented, in this area, a real turnaround, testified by the constitutional recognition of university autonomy and the following measures, in which the issue of decentralization and of a fully autonomous characterization of the national university system has come gradually more and more intertwined with issues related to its democratization and to the final overcoming of its traditional elitist and classist connotation<sup>55</sup>.

Conversely, the polycentric institutional organization of the Italian university, far from being the subject of debates and oppositions as occurred several times in the past, was intended to arouse general consensus and to experience an additional and unexpected development since the Fifties and Sixties,

<sup>52</sup> See Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *La scuola italiana dal 1946 al 1953*, Roma, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1953.

<sup>53</sup> See The Minister Guido Gonella's bill presented to the Chamber of Deputies on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1951 with the title *Norme generali sull'istruzione n. 2100* [General rules for higher education no. 2100], now reproduced in G. Gonella, *Cinque anni al Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, I. La rinascita della Scuola dopo la seconda guerra mondiale*, 3 vols., Milano, Giuffrè, 1981, vol. I, pp. 315-328.

<sup>54</sup> See the Bill no. 2314, entitled *Modifiche all'ordinamento universitario* [Amendments to the university system], presented to the Chamber of Deputies by the Minister Luigi Gui on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1965, in AP, Camera dei Deputati, Documenti, Sessione 1965, Doc. n. 2314, *Modifiche all'ordinamento universitario*, seduta del 4 maggio 1965.

<sup>55</sup> See S. Sani, *La politica scolastica del Centro-Sinistra (1962-1968)*, Perugia, Morlacchi Editore, 2000, pp. 75-141.



coinciding with the advent of the «consumer society» and the start of decentralization and expansion of local autonomies<sup>56</sup>.

It is sufficient to refer here to the real proliferation – unrelated to any form of central programming and planning and essentially connected to the pressures of powerful groups and local governments of the Republic – of a growing number of small universities, developed very often as «branch offices» and «decentralized poles» of existing universities or as «free universities» destined to become autonomous institutions and to obtain, within a few decades, the nationalization<sup>57</sup>.

We can add that, as in the above mentioned case of the administrative and teaching decentralization policy and the establishment of university autonomy, also the triumph of the polycentric system of higher education, proven by the rise, in a relatively short time, of a network of small State universities, was destined to be legitimized by the desire to enhance the university education and to encourage – with the geographical proximity of the universities and the multiplication of the faculties and of degree courses – the access of the lower classes to higher education.

The times in which the senator Carlo Matteucci (1861) postulated the abolition of the «incomplete and smaller universities»

<sup>56</sup> G. Luzzatto, *I problemi universitari nelle prime 8 legislature repubblicane*, in M. Gattullo, A. Visalberghi (eds.) *La scuola italiana dal 1945 al 1983*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1986, pp. 166-218; and Id., *L'Università*, in G. Cives (ed.), *La scuola italiana dall'Unità ai nostri giorni*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1990, pp. 68-85.

<sup>57</sup> It is the case, for example – only to refer to the first phase of a process of expansion that will affect the second half of the Twentieth century – of the University of Lecce, established as a free university in 1959 and nationalized with the Law of March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1967; of the University of Ancona, at the origin of which is the creation, by virtue of the Presidential Decree February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1960, of the branch of the Faculty of Economics and Commerce of Urbino, later made autonomous and, shortly thereafter, nationalized with the Presidential Decree January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1971 and, finally, of the universities of L'Aquila and Chieti-Pescara in Abruzzo, the former established as a free university by virtue of the Presidential Decree August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1964 and nationalized in 1982-1983, the latter officially recognized as free university of the University “Gabriele D’Annunzio” with the Presidential Decree May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1965 and nationalized in 1982. On the academic geography in contemporary times, see M. Moretti, *Sulla geografia accademica nell'Italia contemporanea (1859-1962)*, in L. Blanco, A. Giorgi, L. Mineo (eds.), *Costruire un'Università. Le fonti documentarie per la storia dell'Università degli Studi di Trento (1962-1972)*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2011, pp. 59-100.

inherited from the ancient pre-Unification States were very far away. As he pointed out, they merely represented a burden for the State, preventing the creation of a system based on a few large universities able to compete with similar excellent institutions in Germany and France<sup>58</sup>.

However, we can affirm that Matteucci's ideas and intentions, soon set aside but then reemerged in the various proposals for the abolition of small universities gradually presented by the public opinion and in the Parliament until Gentile Reform of 1923, have guided much of the recent historiography on Italian university, its characteristics and its development in the post-Unification season.

About this, we can refer to the so-called «centralist precondition» that influenced a lot of the historiographers' evaluations and judgments in this field, in relation to an extremely complex reality such as the one of the «minor universities» in unified Italy. A «centralist precondition» that, from a historiographical point of view, heavily influenced not only the reconstruction of the specific routes that characterized the various minor universities, but also the way in which consider, and therefore assess, the peculiar role played by a similar higher education institution in Italy, in the Nineteenth and Twentieth century.

Not surprisingly, the point of view adopted in order to assess the sense and role of «minor universities» in the history of higher education after Unification, re-proposed the «statist centralism» typical of the Nineteenth century, according to which the provincial dimension of the universities, their roots in the city life and in community traditions, the role played in the formation of local *élites* and so on, far from being a resource for the new unitary State, were considered an obstacle to the growth and modernization of the national university system.

<sup>58</sup> *Progetto di legge presentato al Senato dal senatore Matteucci preso in considerazione nella tornata del 14 giugno 1861* [Draft law presented in the Senate by Senator Matteucci considered in the session of June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1861] in AP, Documenti, Sess. 1861, II, pp. 150-151.

Hence the need for a new historiographical approach, which, starting from the local perspective (the history of the individual minor universities within their context and in a dialectical relationship with the centre), is able to go beyond the above described limits and to provide a full analysis of this particular type of university institutions established in the small towns of the province, in order to highlight both the national and the local dimension, in its several and varied aspects<sup>59</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> Recent contributions with this approach: Porciani, *Un ateneo minacciato. L'Università di Siena dalla Restaurazione alla prima guerra mondiale*, cit; A. Mattonne (ed.), *Storia dell'Università di Sassari*, 2 vols., Nuoro, Ilisso, 2010; L. Pomante, *Per una storia delle università minori nell'Italia contemporanea. Il caso dello Studium Generale Maceratense tra Otto e Novecento*, Macerata, eum, 2013.



## Chapter 2

The rise of e-learning in the Italian university system between the creation of on-line universities and the innovation of the educational processes in traditional universities (2003-2013)

The distance education in Italian universities is a phenomenon whose evolution is very difficult to be retraced. This is not only because of the shortage and fragmentary nature of the available documentary sources and the absence of specific research and studies on this topic, but also because the strategies and processes connected to the development of higher and university education in our country between 2003 and 2013 have been characterized by too many debates and ideological and political conflicts to be examined with the critical detachment that the historiographical approach necessarily requires.

It also true, however, that the recent and controversial case of the development of the e-learning in the Italian university system is a very important chapter in the national university policy, revealing the importance of the ruling class's choices and the background inspiring the strategies of the Italian government in this field in the last decade. In fact, the specific forms and characteristics of e-learning in the Italian higher and university education system, symbolically reflect – as we will demonstrate later in this paper – the totally inadequate and contradictory approach typical of the so-called «Second Republic» political classes and governments in the field of higher and university education, heavily influenced by a constant prejudice toward public universities and their role in the recent history of our country<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See, in this regard: P. Potestio, *L'università italiana: un irrimediabile declino?*,

We will examine this issue later in the paper. Now it is important to focus our attention on the origins of what we have called, in the title of this paper, «the rise of e-learning in the Italian university system».

The first significant legislative measure in the field of e-learning and university distance education is the Ministerial Decree of April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 issued by the then Minister of Education, Universities and Research, Letizia Moratti, in agreement with the Minister of Innovation and Technology, Lucio Stanca, which established the *Criteria and Procedures for the Official Recognition of Distance Education in the State and non-State Universities and in the Academic Institutions Qualified for the Conferring of the Academic Degrees Specified in the art. 3 of the Ministerial Decree of November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509*<sup>2</sup>. This decree was the result of a legislative process and of a series of experimentations in the academic field, started at least a decade before, and at the same time, for the particular configuration which it attributed to the distance education in the Italian university system, a real watershed in relation to the projects and initiatives undertaken in the previous period.

It is necessary to retrace the major steps – although rapidly and broadly – of what could be defined as a real «decade of preparation», both from the legislative point of view, and from that of the projects and experimental initiatives carried out in the academic field, in order to fully understand the importance of the Ministerial Decree of April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (Moratti-Stanca)

Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2009; M. Regini, *Malata e denigrata. L'università italiana a confronto con l'Europa*, Roma, Donzelli, 2009; A. Graziosi, *L'università per tutti. Riforme e crisi del sistema universitario italiano*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2010; S. Boffo, E. Rebeggiani (eds.), *La Minerva ferita. Crisi e prospettive dell'università in Italia*, Napoli, Liguori, 2011; P. Prodi, *Università dentro e fuori*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 – *Criteri e procedure di accreditamento dei corsi di studio a distanza delle università statali e non statali e delle istituzioni universitarie abilitate a rilasciare titoli accademici di cui all'art. 3 del D.M. 3 novembre 1999, n. 509* [Criteria and procedures for the official recognition of distance education in the State and non-State universities and academic institutions qualified for the conferring of the academic degrees specified in the art. 3 of the Ministerial Decree of November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509], in «Gazzetta Ufficiale» (from here onwards: GU), 98, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2003, pp. 29-33.

and the meaning of the changes introduced by it into the Italian university system.

The art. 92 of Presidential Decree July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1980, no. 382, containing provisions on the *Reorganisation of university teaching and education, as well as of didactic and organisational experimentation*, established that «Universities and other high education institutions are allowed to experiment [...] new teaching methods aimed at making the teaching activity more fruitful». This objective should be achieved by the universities through the creation of «inter-university *consortia*», and «agreements [...] with other public or private authorities, possibly grouped in *consortia*». Finally, «decentralized auxiliary educational facilities with also audio-visual aids» could be established in the Italian universities «to facilitate the students' knowledge»<sup>3</sup>.

However, although the emphasis on the opportunity of «new teaching methods», able to «make the teaching activity more fruitful», the introduction of forms of distance education in the Italian university system was far from being put in practice. It is true, however, that the innovations introduced by the Presidential Decree of July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1980, no. 382 on the didactic and organisational side, would be recovered on the occasion of the launch of the first «initiatives of distance education by Italian universities».

In this regard, the Law of November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1990 no. 341, containing provisions for the *Reform of the Italian university system*, in the section establishing the rules concerning the educational autonomy of the universities, stated: «Taking into account the proposals of the universities, approved by appropriate authorities, the financial support to the initiatives of distance education promoted by the universities, also in the form of a *consortium* or with the participation of other public and private authorities, as well as programs and national research struc-

<sup>3</sup> Presidential Decree July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1980, no. 382 – *Riordinamento della docenza universitaria, relativa fascia di formazione nonché sperimentazione organizzativa e didattica* [Reorganisation of university teaching and education, as well as of didactic and organisational experimentation], in GU, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1980, no. 209, supplemento ordinario.

tures related to the same field, may be provided as a part of the university development plan»<sup>4</sup>.

The establishment of appropriate university *consortia* for the development of distance learning and the beginning of the first experimental initiatives of «distance education in the universities» were encouraged by the financial appropriations specially intended for the e-learning and distributed in the context of the plans for the development of the national university system for the three-year periods 1994-1996, 1998-2000 and 2001-2003<sup>5</sup>.

In this regard, in 1984, the CUD (Consortium for the University Distance Learning) was born, sponsored by the University of Calabria in collaboration with the Polytechnic of Milano and Bari, the universities of Trento, Padova, Siena, Bari and “La Sapienza” of Roma, Confindustria (the Confederation of Italian Industries), the public companies RAI, Telespazio and SIP (later Telecom Italia), the private enterprises Olivetti, IBM and CRAI (Consortium for Research and Applications of Information Technology). Since the Nineties, CUD has been promoting first level distance courses (university diploma) in the field of information technology and economics, also providing modules and lessons for the training of professionals in the field of commu-

<sup>4</sup> Law of November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1990, no. 341 – *Riforma degli ordinamenti didattici universitari* [Reform of the Italian university system], in GU, 274, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1990, pp. 6-17.

<sup>5</sup> See: art. 12 of Presidential Decree October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1991, *Approvazione del piano di sviluppo delle università per il triennio 1991-1993* [Approval of the development plan of the university for years 1991-1993], in GU, 256, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1991, pp. 9-21; art. 6 of Presidential Decree December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1995 – *Approvazione del piano di sviluppo dell'Università per il triennio 1994-1996* [Approval of the development plan of the university for the three years period 1994-1996], in GU, February 29<sup>th</sup>, 1996, no. 50, pp. 18-24; art.1, paragraph 1, letter *b* of Ministerial Decree March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1998 – *Obiettivi del sistema universitario per il triennio 1998-2000* [Objectives of the university system for the three years period 1998-2000], in GU, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1998, no. 83, p. 78; art. 18 of Ministerial Decree June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1999, no. 313 – *Programmazione del sistema universitario per il triennio 1998-2000* [Planning of the university system for the three years period 1998-2000], in GU, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1999, no. 253, pp. 26-31; art.1, paragraph 1, letter *a* of Ministerial Decree December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000 – *Determinazione degli obiettivi del sistema universitario per il triennio 2001-2003* [Determination of the objectives of the university system for the three years period 2001-2003], in GU, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2001, no. 48, p. 49.



nication and for the professional updating of secondary school teachers<sup>6</sup>.

A few years later, in 1992, *consortium* Nettuno (NETwork Televisivo UNiversitariO: university television network) was established. It included the polytechnics of Torino and Milano, the universities of Bologna, Padova and Siena, RAI, IRI and Confindustria, and it was committed to provide distance education through the use of the satellite Olympus by means of RAI-SAT<sup>7</sup>. The *consortium*, originally characterized by great expectations, had to downsize its ambitions very soon:

The NETTUNO had planned (with the support of the three-year plan of development of the universities in favour of projects intended to establish centres of multimedia technologies and on-line education for the courses of university diploma) to implement, and broadcast by means of the satellite, some courses of U.D., particularly those of automation and computer engineering and telecommunications engineering. The broadcasts could be received also by private citizens (with satellite), but they were first intended to decentralized classrooms equipped with equipment for collective viewing and overseen by tutors. In fact, the loans obtained (2.5 billions of lire for 1992) were far lower than the estimated costs and the Olympus satellite had suffered damages and was about to fall. So, they fall back on a studio recording of lectures without an audience, and its use in equipped classrooms, as well as its transmission from RAI stations during the night<sup>8</sup>.

Finally, in the second half of the Nineties, the *consortium* FOR.COM. (Education for Communication) was established, sponsored by the University of Roma “La Sapienza” in collaboration with the universities of Torino and Macerata, the South-

<sup>6</sup> On the origins and the first developments of the CUD (Consortium for the University Distance Learning) see the references in the work of L. Cecconi, L. Piria, *Open and distance learning in Italy*, in A.R. Bartolomé, J.M.D. Underwood, *Technology Enhanced in Open and Distance Learning*, Barcellona, University of Barcellona press, 1998, pp. 23-31 (in particular pp. 24-25), that we bear in mind while speaking about the other university *consortia* engaged in the distance learning. See also A. Costa, *Didattica universitaria a distanza con la telematica e la televisione*, «Tecnologie Didattiche», I, n. 2, 1993, pp. 38-39.

<sup>7</sup> On the origins and developments of the NETTUNO [university television network], see: Cecconi, Piria, *Open and distance learning in Italy*, cit., pp. 25-26; <<http://www.consorzionettuno.it/it/info-istituzionali.aspx>> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Costa, *Didattica universitaria a distanza con la telematica e la televisione*, cit., pp. 38-39.

ampton Institute of Higher Education, the Polytechnic University of Tirana, the Centre d'Études Franco-Italiennes (CEFI-CNRS) of the Université de Savoie (Chambéry), the Interuniversity Centre of Research for the Developing Countries, and the Inter-University Centre for History and Theory of Literary Genres of the University "La Sapienza" of Roma<sup>9</sup>. The *consortium* FOR.COM, interested mainly in liberal arts and in legal, social and communication sciences, was characterized by an extensive educational syllabus, including masters and postgraduate specialization courses as well as distance learning professional refresher courses<sup>10</sup>.

Along with the work of *consortia* between universities and public and private companies, we should also mention the work carried out, in the Eighties and Nineties, by those universities committed to establishing and promoting independently and in a pioneering way, distance learning specialization courses and learning modules placed within traditional university courses. It is the case, for example, of the Department of Education of the Faculty of Education of the University "La Sapienza" of Roma (later, of the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the University of Roma Tre), which, in the academic year 1986-1987, under the leadership of Benedetto Vertecchi, established the first of a series of distance learning courses of specialization on education assessment, on general and special pedagogy, on educational technologies and on school orientation, resulted in numerous subscriptions and a great success<sup>11</sup>.

Finally, the first distance learning modules within traditional university courses, as well as one of the first specialized research centres in the field, the CARID (Centro di Ateneo per la Ricerca e l'Innovazione Didattica) [University Centre for Research and Educational Innovation], established at the University of Ferrara

<sup>9</sup> On the origins and developments of the FOR.COM. see <<http://www.forcom.it>> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> See Cecconi, Piria, *Open and distance learning in Italy*, cit., pp. 26-27.

<sup>11</sup> See B. Vertecchi, *Insegnare a distanza*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1988. But see also the references in: A. Battaglini, L. Acciaroli, *Istruzione a distanza*, in M. Laeng (dir.), *Enciclopedia pedagogica*, 6 vols. and *addendum*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1989-1994 and 2003, vol. IV, cc. 795-796.

in the academic year 1996-1997<sup>12</sup>, were activated thanks to the collaboration between the Department of Educational Sciences of the University “La Sapienza” of Roma and the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Ferrara and the Faculty of Education of the University of Genova.

Along with the rise of inter-university *consortia* and the beginning of the first experiments carried out in the universities, a broad interdisciplinary scientific debate on the issues of distance learning<sup>13</sup> developed during the Nineties in Italy, in which particularly relevant aspects were analysed. Antonio Calvani, with reference to the specific developments of the theoretical reflection of this period, effectively stressed:

The awareness of the presence of the distance education as an independent field of education arose only from the Eighties. [...] However, it is only in the Nineties that distance education increased exponentially, thanks to the Internet, both from the point of view of practical applications in organizations and of the combination with the theoretical speculations about the nature of knowledge and education. The spread of computer networks calls for a reshaping of the models of self-education and distance learning, progressively placing them within a negotiation, cooperative and multicentric idea of learning that neither the book nor the other traditional forms of distance education may permit. In recent years, a field of theoretical reflection on on-line education is arising, named in various ways (*on-line education, on-line learning, e-learning, computer mediated distance learn-*

<sup>12</sup> In 1988, the CATTID (Centro per le Applicazioni della Televisione e delle Tecniche di Istruzione a Distanza: Centre for the Applications of Television and Distance Education Techniques) was founded at the University “La Sapienza” of Roma. In the academic year 1996-1997, another highly specialized laboratory, the CTU (Centro di Tecnologie per l'apprendimento) [Centre for Learning Technologies] was established at the University of Milano, which is also intended to play a very important role in this first phase of development of distance education in our country. See: Cecconi, Piria, *Open and Distance Learning in Italy*, cit., pp. 26-27.

<sup>13</sup> See for example: Vertecchi, *Insegnare a distanza*, cit.; D. Palomba, *Università a distanza. Una prospettiva per l'Europa*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1988; B. Vertecchi (ed.), *Thesaurus dell'istruzione a distanza*, Napoli, Tecnodid, 1991; D. Keegan, *Foundations of Distance Education*, London, Routledge, 1990 [trad. it. *Principi di istruzione a distanza*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1994]; A. Scaringella, *Internet nell'Università. Servizi ipermediali e didattica a distanza interattiva*, Roma, CATTID, 1997; G. Bocca, *Oltre Gutenberg. Prospettive educative dell'istruzione a distanza*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2000; A. Calvani (ed.), *Innovazione tecnologica e cambiamento dell'Università: verso l'Università virtuale*, Firenze, Firenze University Press, 2001; C. Scurati (ed.), *E-learning per una nuova Università. Esperienze e prospettive*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2002.

ing, *web-based learning*), with the prevalence of the use of the term *e-learning*. [...] The increasing diffusion of distance education runs parallel to the spread of the Internet and the development of a conceptual and regulatory framework.

The «conceptual and regulatory framework» Calvani refers to is the one typical of the last 15-20 years, and has brought to new challenges for the scholars, related to the creation of the «knowledge society»:

A «knowledge society» – writes the Scholar – has to face complex and growing cognitive needs. The problem concerns, in particular, the higher education (university and postgraduate) systems, subjected to a great transformation in the last thirty years characterized by the passage from a limited number of full-time students, of the same age and the same cultural background, to a great numbers of Students, of all ages and from different cultural and social backgrounds, with different employment or residential status or belonging to categories with special needs. In order to satisfy these needs, some new concepts or fields develop or start to acquire a particular importance, such as the *social capital* and *knowledge management*, along with others more specifically related to the education process, focused on the subject and with a broader and more articulate educational syllabus (*open, flexible learning, lifelong learning, e-learning*). In particular, the concept of *lifelong learning*, i.e. the idea of an education beyond the spatial-temporal limits traditionally imposed by the educational system and extended during the whole life, becomes a sort of paradigm. [...] During the Nineties, the issue of knowledge, considered as one of the most important values in the society in which we live, and the reflection on how to produce, store, transfer and acquire it, are at the heart of the EU policies that, starting from the Lisbon Council in 2000, have the aim of making Europe 2010 the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy<sup>14</sup>.

The European Union, since 1992, with the publication of the *Memorandum on Open and Distance Learning*, urged the member States to invest energies and resources in the development of these new technologies for distance education<sup>15</sup>, and with the *Council Resolution of July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2001 on E-Learning*

<sup>14</sup> A. Calvani, *Dall'Educazione a distanza all'e-learning*, pp. 5-6 (<[<sup>15</sup> European Commission, \*Open and Distance Learning\*, COM 91/338 Bruxelles, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1991. See \*Tecnologie per la formazione a distanza\*, Lecce, Pensa MultiMedia, 2000.](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/dall-educazione-a-distanza-all-e-learning_(XXI_Secolo)></a>), last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014).</p>
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further contributed to the development of the field in our country<sup>16</sup>. The document prepared by the Council of the European Union invites the member States to:

i) to continue their efforts concerning the effective integration of ICT in education and training systems, as an important part of the adaptation of the education and training systems requested by the Lisbon European Council Conclusions [...]; ii) to capitalise on the potential of Internet, multimedia and virtual learning environments for a better and faster realisation of lifelong learning as a basic educational principle and for providing access to educational and training opportunities for all [...]; vii) to encourage the development of high-quality digital teaching and learning materials to ensure quality of on-line offers [...]; xiii) to foster the European dimension of joint development of ICT-mediated and ICT-complemented *curricula* in higher education, by encouraging further common approaches in higher education certification models and quality assurance (following the Sorbonne/Bologna process) [...]; xiv) to enhance research in e-learning<sup>17</sup>.

It is not surprising, then, that at the beginning of the new decade, the second Berlusconi government, installed in June 2001, starting from ongoing experimentations in distance education carried out in the various universities and specific *consortia*, has felt the need to urgently define «appropriate criteria and adequate techniques to ensure the quality of education through the use of the modern technologies of e-learning». In this regard, the article 26 of the Law of December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002, no. 289, containing *Provisions for the formation of the annual and multi-annual State budget (Finance Act 2003)*, in defining the measures taken in the field of technological innovation, established that a following «Decree of the Minister of Education, University and Research, in collaboration with the Minister for Innovation and Technologies» would have determined «the criteria and procedures for the official recognition of distance education courses and academic institutions qualified for the conferring of academic degrees, under the rules of the decree

<sup>16</sup> See A. Masia, M. Morcellini (eds.), *L'Università al futuro. Sistema, progetto, innovazione*, Milano, Giuffrè, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Council of the European Union, *Council Resolution of July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2001 on e-Learning* (2001/C-204/02), «Gazzetta Ufficiale dell'Unione europea», July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2001, pp. 3-5.

of the Minister of Universities and Scientific and Technological Research of November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509».

It also established that, «to acquire the authorization to confer academic degrees», the above mentioned institutions must have adequate organisational and managerial resources able to:

a) present a flexible system, and able to use adequately the various technologies for the management of interactivity, while preserving the principle of their usability; b) encourage the coherent and educationally valid integration of the range of services to support the teaching; c) ensure the selection, planning and drafting of appropriate learning resources for each courseware; d) ensure adequate interaction contexts for administering and managing the learning contents, also through a structured teletutoring service; e) ensure adequate assessment procedures in relation to the certification of the skills acquired; f) provide for the research and development of innovative e-learning systems able to support the flow of media data related to the range of the offered learning products<sup>18</sup>.

The Law of December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002, no. 289, stated the need to establish specific criteria and procedures for the official recognition of distance education university courses, and defined in an organic way the organisational and management resources that the «academic institutions» authorized to confer academic degrees should have had. It was vague, instead, about the nature and major characteristics of the «academic institutions» in which the distance education courses would be activated. It is true, however, that the experiments carried out until that moment by specific university *consortia* and by certain traditional universities already successfully engaged in the field of technological innovation and education (it is the case, for example, of a big university like “La Sapienza” of Roma, of the two polytechnics of Milano and Torino, etc.), let suppose the advantage of using already established organisational and institutional models (in particular the *consortium* one, based on public/private partnership, which had already proved to be

<sup>18</sup> Art. 26, paragraph 5 of the Law of December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002, no. 289 – *Disposizioni per la formazione del bilancio annuale e pluriennale dello Stato (Legge finanziaria 2003)* [Provisions for the formation of the annual and multi-annual State budget (Finance Act 2003)], in GU, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2002, no. 305, ord. suppl. no. 240.

successful), to which possibly add the creation of a new public on-line university on the model of the Spanish UNED (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia), established in 1972, or of the Portuguese UAB (Aberta Universidade de Portugal), founded in 1988 – only to mention two of the most successful distance education institutions in Europe<sup>19</sup>.

Actually, the solution proposed few months later with the already mentioned Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 issued by the then Minister of Education, Universities and Research, Letizia Moratti, in agreement with the Minister of Innovation and Technology, Lucio Stanca, would have been very different and would have profoundly changed the features of the Italian university system, becoming a real watershed with respect to the previous period.

Among the qualifying features of the Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (Moratti-Stanca), that implemented the art. 26, paragraph 5 of Law December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002, no. 289, we have to highlight those concerning the definition of distance learning courses and of on-line universities (art. 2), the determination of the criteria and requirements for the recognition of the study courses (art. 4), regulation of the procedures for the official recognition of distance education university courses (art. 6), the establishment of a committee of experts called to express reasoned opinions about the requests of recognition of the distance education university courses (art. 5). and, finally, the provisions concerning the effects and limits of validity of the

<sup>19</sup> See the news reported on website of UNED (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia), born in 1972, and on website of UAB (Universidade Aberta de Portugal), established in 1988 ([www.portal.uned.es](http://www.portal.uned.es); last checked: September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014; and [www.uab.pt](http://www.uab.pt); last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014). See, in particular, the in-depth analysis of E. Valentini, *Università in rete. Esperienze e punti di vista tra innovazione normativa e dibattito internazionale*, «Centro Interuniversitario per le Ricerche sulla Sociologia del Diritto e delle Istituzioni Giuridiche» (Quaderni della Sezione: Diritto e Comunicazioni Sociali – Working Paper), 28 ([www.cirsdig.it](http://www.cirsdig.it), last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014), which, in relation to the development of e-learning in the universities, rightly points out that «at an European level, public initiative has prevailed, but not in Italy, where the on-line universities were created mainly by private entities» (pp. 20-21). By the same author, see also: Id., *Università nella rete-mondo. Modelli teorici e casi di e-learning nelle università straniere*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2008.

recognition, specified in the art. 6, that «enables the university to activate the distance education courses» (art. 7)<sup>20</sup>. The art. 2, paragraph 2 of the decree was particularly interesting, for the significant effect it had on the entire higher and university education system, clothed. In fact, it stated that «the academic degrees of the art. 3 of the Decree November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509», and all the degrees issued by Italian universities (bachelor's degree, degree, postgraduate degree and Ph.D), «may be issued by universities, promoted by public and private entities and recognized in accordance with the criteria and procedures established in this Decree. The above mentioned institutions shall be named 'On-line Universities'».

The Moratti-Stanca Decree, establishing the criteria and requirements for the recognition of the study courses, in the art. 4 stated that traditional State and non-State universities and on-line universities were required to:

a) clarify the methods, curricula, rules of the services through a Service Charter exposing the teaching methods used and the levels of the service offered; the Charter itself must be available on-line before the beginning of the activities and it must: identify the technological standards and descriptive diagrams, such as metadata of the content and the tracking records of personal data, used to describe the on-line course materials, the registered users, and the parameters of tracking; establish the time and the way in which the certifications and/or assessment of the students' learning activities will be stored, just like a traditional university course; b) provide for the drafting of a specific contract with the student for the subscription to the services offered by on-line universities, also specifying the conditions of termination of the contract, if requested by the student, ensuring, in any case, to the students the completion of their training course; c) provide for the certification of the educational material and of the services offered by a special committee of professors; d) ensure the protection of personal data, taking all security measures established by current regulations; e) ensure the highest flexibility in the use of the courses, allowing both the selection

<sup>20</sup> Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003, *Criteri e procedure di accreditamento dei corsi di studio a distanza delle università statali e non statali e delle istituzioni universitarie abilitate a rilasciare titoli accademici di cui all'art. 3 del D.M. 3 novembre 1999, n. 509* [Criteria and procedures for the official recognition of distance education in the State and non-State universities and academic institutions qualified for the conferring of the academic degrees specified in the art. 3 of the Ministerial Decree of November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509], cit.



of the maximum number of credits per year and the distribution of these credits in more years.

The art. 4, moreover, stated that the distance education courses of traditional State and non-State universities and on-line universities would be «regulate in accordance with the current teaching regulations», *i.e.* according to the Ministerial Decree November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509, establishing the rules concerning the curricular autonomy of universities<sup>21</sup>; and that the teaching and research staff of on-line universities with open-ended contracts, like that of traditional universities, would have been employed according to the Law of July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1998 no. 210, establishing the provisions for the employment of researchers and university professors<sup>22</sup>.

In order to evaluate the requests for the official recognition of distance education university courses presented by traditional or on-line universities, the art. 5 of Moratti-Stanca Decree, as already mentioned, stated that the «decree of the Minister of Education, Universities and Research, in collaboration with the Minister for Innovation and Technology» established a «Committee of Experts, with adequate technical professional qualifications in the field of technological innovation and distance learning». This Committee, intended to be in charge for three years and made up by «seven members, including three appointed by the Minister for Education, Universities and Research, and three by the Minister for Innovation and Technologies», had to express, on the basis of the criteria and requirements established by the same decree, reasoned opinions about the «requests of recognition of distance education courses».

Finally, determining, with the art. 7, the effects and the limits of the recognition of distance education courses, the Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 established that, in the case of a request

<sup>21</sup> Ministerial Decree November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509 – *Regolamento recante norme concernenti l'autonomia didattica degli atenei* [Regulation concerning the curricular autonomy of universities], in GU, 2, January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2000, pp. 13-18.

<sup>22</sup> Law of July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1998, no. 210 – *Norme per il reclutamento dei ricercatori e dei professori universitari di ruolo* [Provisions for the employment of researchers and university professors], in GU, 155, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1998, pp. 4-8.

presented by an on-line university, the «recognition process» implemented by «a decree of the Minister of Education, Universities and Research, with the opinion of the national university council and after the reasoned opinion by the Committee [of Experts]», not only allowed «the above mentioned University to activate distance education courses», but also approved «the statute of the on-line University itself» and authorized it «to issue academic degrees at the end of the distance learning courses». This academic degrees were equalized («they have the same legal value») to those issued by traditional universities, in accordance to the already mentioned Ministerial Decree November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509<sup>23</sup>.

In fact, the Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 affected significantly the evolution and future developments of distance education in the Italian universities, especially for what concerned the creation of a new type of university, the so-called on-line universities, that in relation to the establishment and activation of study courses and the conferring of academic degrees with legal value were equalized to the traditional public and private universities, such as to have – and this is very important – a profound effect also on the physiognomy of the national university system.

The National University Council (CUN), a few months later, on June 13<sup>rd</sup>, 2003, giving its opinion on the Moratti-Stanca decree «concerning the recognition of distance education courses» to the Minister of Education, Universities and Research, while, on the one hand, emphasizing «the positive intervention of the art. 26 of the Law December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002 no. 289 that finally brings out a subject of such great importance from a fragmentary stage of experimentation», on the other hand, expressed serious doubts about the fact that the academic degrees could be issued by «new universities promoted by public or private subjects, named ‘on-line universities’»:

<sup>23</sup> Ministerial Decree November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509 – *Regolamento recante norme concernenti l'autonomia didattica degli atenei* [Regulation concerning the curricular autonomy of universities], cit.

While it is clear from the provisions of the decree – we can read in the relation expressing the opinion of the CUN – that it allows the university institutions qualified to issue degrees to turn also to the field of distance education, the Article 26, paragraph 5 of Law 289/2002, in the implementation of which the decree has been adopted, does not seem to explicitly authorize the establishment of a new type of university with the characteristics of an independent channel, in parallel to the existing system. The measure is therefore outside any planning of the university system and of the related procedures for the identification of the purposes and of the instruments for their implementation, as prescribed by Presidential Decree 27/01/98 no. 25. Moreover, the decree does not mention the compatibility and coordination of the new on-line universities with the three years development plan, the assessment of their coherence with the objectives of the university system, with the educational syllabus and with the requests of the labour market; all requirements for which the opinion of the Parliamentary Committees is requested (Article 2 par. 3 letter. Presidential Decree 25/1998 of a).

And also:

The CUN is concerned about the risk of a proliferation of new universities established, according to the decree, without any cost for the State but that could later affect the already meager financial resources of the national university system. Another concern is represented by the measure, contained in the decree, according to which, for the experimental and laboratory activities, the on-line universities could use the laboratories of affiliated State and non-State universities, with the risk of legitimating the existence of institutions lacking the essential requirements.

Due to these serious inconsistencies, it was necessary, according to the CUN, a «further regulatory and corrective intervention», establishing clearly that «the on-line universities, being part of the national university system, must possess the legal requirements that characterize academic institutions, being subject to the general rules and principles of the national university system as prescribed by the law»<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> National University Council, *Parere generale n. 94 approvato nell'adunanza del 13 giugno 2003 sul Decreto Interministeriale 17-04-2003, pubblicato sulla GU n. 98 del 29 aprile 2003 concernente l'«Accreditamento dei corsi di formazione a distanza»* [General Opinion n. 94 approved at the meeting of June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003 on the Inter-Ministerial Decree 17.4.2003, published in the GU, 98, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2003, concerning the «Recognition of distance education courses»] in <[http://www.cun.it/uploads/3730/par\\_2003\\_06\\_13\\_n1.pdf?v=>](http://www.cun.it/uploads/3730/par_2003_06_13_n1.pdf?v=>) (last checked: September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

Actually, not only the «further regulatory and corrective», intervention urged by the CUN was never prepared, but the serious concerns expressed by the advisory body of the Ministry of Education, University and Research in relation to the establishment, with the Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003, of «a new type of university with the characteristics of an independent channel in parallel to the existing system», although constantly repeated over the following years in an increasingly worried way<sup>25</sup>, went unheard<sup>26</sup>. The new phase which began with the implementation of the decree Moratti-Stanca, moreover, was characterized by a real explosion of requests for the establishment and recognition of new on-line universities in our country.

In this regard, the Ministerial Decree August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004, no. 262, on the university system planning for the three years period 2004-2006, art. 10 («Establishment of new non-State on-line universities») established, by a decree of the Minister of Education, University and Research with a consultation with the National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (CNVSU), «the guidelines for the development of higher education institutions provided for the decree [the Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003] and qualified for the conferring of academic titles, in accordance with the specific EU initiatives in the field of e-learning».

<sup>25</sup> See: National University Council, *Mozione Università Telematiche, Adunanza del 25 maggio 2010* [Motion On-line University, Meeting of 25 May 2010] Prot. no. 1056, <[http://www.cun.it/media/105345/mo\\_2010\\_05\\_25-pdf](http://www.cun.it/media/105345/mo_2010_05_25-pdf)> (last checked: September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 2-3; National University Council, *Parere generale n. 10 approvato nell'adunanza del 17 dicembre 2010 sullo Schema di Decreto «Linee generali d'indirizzo della Programmazione dell'Università per il Triennio 2010-2012»* [General Opinion no. 10 adopted at the meeting of December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010 on the Decree «General guidelines for the Planning of the Universities for the three years period 2010-2012»], <[http://www.cun.it/uploads/4082/dossier\\_cun\\_2012\\_11\\_01\\_pdf?v=](http://www.cun.it/uploads/4082/dossier_cun_2012_11_01_pdf?v=)> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 3-4.

<sup>26</sup> In the resolution approved on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2003 «on the activation and recognition of on-line Universities», the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI) expressed «a strong opposition to the inclusion in the Italian university system of a parallel channel that, if not properly regulated, could lead to a proliferation of subjects driven by economic and commercial interests». See the text of the resolution in C.R. Alfonsi, M. Carfagna, D. Pedreschi (eds.), *E-Università: facciamo il punto*, Roma, Fondazione CRUI, 2005, pp. 331-332.

It also established that «the recognition of on-line universities authorized to confer degrees with legal value» was decided by a Decree of the Minister of Education, Universities and Research «with the approval of the University statute and educational regulation»; and that the «maintenance of the recognition» was subject «to the provisions of art. 7, paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003».

The on-line universities, finally, were also subjected to the provisions of art. 9 («Establishment of new non-State universities legally recognized»), according to which «at the end of the third, fifth and seventh year of the academic activity of the University, the CNVSU should have «assess the results achieved». Only after the «positive evaluation by the Committee at the end of the fifth year of activity» the contributions provided for the Law of July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1991, no. 243 and for the article 5, paragraph 1, letter c) of the Law of December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1993, no. 537»<sup>27</sup>, or those «granted within the limits established by this Law, to the non-State universities and higher education institutions legally recognized which have obtained the authorization to confer university degrees with legal value» and those related to the «funding of specific initiatives, activities and projects, including the financing of new educational initiatives»<sup>28</sup> could have been granted to these universities.

In the first half of 2004, in fact, after the positive opinion of the Committee of Experts<sup>29</sup> the first two on-line universities

<sup>27</sup> Ministerial Decree August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004, no. 262 – *Programmazione del sistema universitario per il triennio 2004-2006* [University system planning for the three years period 2004-2006], in GU, 277, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004, pp. 12-22.

<sup>28</sup> See art. 2 of the law of July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1991, no. 243 – *Università non statali legalmente riconosciute* [Non-State universities legally recognized], in GU, 183, August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1991, pp. 3-5; and art. 5, paragraph 1, letter c) of the law December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1993, no. 537 – *Interventi correttivi di finanza pubblica* [Corrective actions of public finance], in GU, 303, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1993, ord. suppl. no. 121.

<sup>29</sup> The Committee of Experts, appointed by Ministerial Decree June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003 and established in accordance with the art. 5 of the Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 was chaired by Fabio Roversi Monaco, Professor of Administrative Law at the University of Bologna, and included Ivo De Lotto, professor of Systems of information processing at the University of Pavia, Pierluigi Della Vigna, Professor of Computer Engineering at the Politecnico of Milano, Bruno Fadini, Professor of Computer Science at the University of Napoli “Federico II”, Donato Antonio Limone, Professor of Law of Computer Science at the University of Lecce, Roberto Maragliano, Profes-

were established and recognized, respectively, with the Ministerial Decree March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 and the Ministerial Decree May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004: the University “Guglielmo Marconi”, sponsored by the Foundation TERTIUM, which originally included the above mentioned inter-university *consortium* FOR.COM., The National Association of Immigrant Families (ANFE), the Savings Bank of Roma, the Savings Bank of Bologna (San Paolo Group), and the companies Wind Telecomunicazioni s.p.a. and Nuove Tecnologie Informatiche s.r.l.<sup>30</sup>; and the University TEL.M.A. Sapienza, sponsored by the homonymous *consortium* which originally included the University of Roma “La Sapienza”, the Formez P.A., the University of Palermo, the Italian Post Office spa, the National Academy of Medicine (ANM) and the National Association of Immigrant Families (ANFE)<sup>31</sup>.

A few months later, also in this case after the approval of the Committee of Experts, with the Ministerial Decree October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2004 the on-line University “Leonardo Da Vinci” was established, promoted by the University “Gabriele d’Annunzio” of Chieti-Pescara and by the homonymous Foundation, to complete the educational offer of the University and develop research in the field of Information and Communication Technology<sup>32</sup>.

In 2005, the on-line University Uninettuno (Ministerial Decree May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005) was established, supported by the above mentioned *consortium* NETTUNO and having among the founders the Polytechnic of Torino, RAI, Telecom Italy SpA and Confindustria<sup>33</sup>. After the Ministerial Decree April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005 replacing the Committee of Experts with the National Commit-

tee of Didactics and Technologies of education at the University of Roma Tre and Antonio Mathis, lecturer of Automatic controls.

<sup>30</sup> On the origins and first developments of the on-line University “Guglielmo Marconi” see <<http://www.unimarconi.it>> (last checked: September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> On the origins and first developments of the on-line University TEL.M.A. see <<http://www.UnitelmaSapienza.it/ateneo>> (last checked: September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>32</sup> On the origins and first developments of the on-line University “Leonardo Da Vinci” see <<http://www.unidav.it/index.php?goToZone=welcome>> (last checked: September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> On the origins and first developments of the on-line University Uninettuno (UTIU) see <<http://www.Uninettunouniversity.net/it/informazioni.aspx>> (last checked: September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

tee for the Evaluation of the University System (CNVSU)<sup>34</sup>, the Italian University Line – IUL (Ministerial Decree December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005) was established, consisting of a *consortium* including the National Institute of Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research of Firenze, a group of public and private universities (Bicocca of Milano, those of Firenze, Macerata, the LUMSA of Roma, those of Palermo and Catania) and the company De Agostini Scuola SPA<sup>35</sup>.

The process for the establishment and recognition of the on-line University E-Campus, always in 2005; sponsored by the homonymous foundation supported and funded by Francesco Polidori, the patron of the European Centre for University Preparation (CEPU) was more difficult, but equally successful. Although the negative opinion expressed by CNVSU<sup>36</sup>, the Minister of Education, Universities and Research, Letizia Moratti, gave the approval to the establishment and recognition of the new on-line university, with the Ministerial Decree January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006<sup>37</sup>.

In 2006, finally, five other universities of the same type were established: the on-line University “Giustino Fortunato” (Ministerial Decree April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006), supported by the non-profit organization EFIRO, created by the business man

<sup>34</sup> With the Ministerial Decree April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005 the Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (Moratti-Stanca) was modified. In particular, the Committee Of Experts, established with art. 5 of this decree, was replaced by the CNVSU. See: Comitato Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario, *Analisi della situazione delle Università Telematiche. Gennaio 2010* [Analysis of the situation of on-line universities. January 2005], Doc 04/10, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11682](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11682)> (last checked: September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014), p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> On the origins and first developments of the on-line University Italian University Line – IUL see <[http://www.iuline.it/ambiente/index.php?pag=corsi&id\\_corso=4](http://www.iuline.it/ambiente/index.php?pag=corsi&id_corso=4)> (last checked: September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> On November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the CNVSU approved a set of criteria for the evaluation of the proposals for the activation of on-line universities (Doc. n. 10/05). See Comitato Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario, *Criteri per l'accreditamento delle Università Telematiche e dei corsi di studio a distanza delle Università. Luglio 2005* [Criteria for the recognition of on-line Universities and of distance education course. July 2005], Doc 10/05, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11289](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11289)> (last checked: September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 1-4.

<sup>37</sup> On the origins and first developments of the on-line University E-Campus see <<http://www.uniecampus.it/ateneo/index.html>> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

of Benevento Angelo Colarusso, patron of other educational institutes for vocational training and the recovery of university exams<sup>38</sup>; the on-line University Pegaso (Ministerial Decree 20 April, 2006), established as a joint stock company by Danilo Iervolino, owner of the homonymous private schools in Napoli<sup>39</sup>; the on-line University Unitel (Ministerial Decree May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006), later renamed San Raffaele (2010)<sup>40</sup>, consisting of Unitel Ltd., which originally saw included the Foundation “Renato Dulbecco”, Fininvest Gestione Servizi s.p.a, Mediolanum Comunicazione SpA, Tosinvest Italia s.a.s. of Angelucci family and prof. Claudio Cerruti, a researcher in Biomedical Technologies in the CNR of Milano<sup>41</sup>; the on-line University “Niccolò Cusano” (Ministerial Decree May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006), promoted by businessman Stefano Bandecchi from Livorno, patron of *Universitalia*, an institution for the recovery of university exams, and a *consortium* of companies and cooperative societies operating in the field of education<sup>42</sup>; and, finally, the on-line University *Universitas Mercatorum* (Ministerial Decree May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006), commissioned by the Italian Chambers of Commerce System<sup>43</sup>.

Undoubtedly, the 11 on-line universities established and recognized in Italy during the 2004-2006, in addition to being a

<sup>38</sup> On the origins and first developments of the on-line University “Giustino Fortunato” see <<http://www.unifortunato.eu/ateneo/>> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>39</sup> On the origins and first developments of the on-line University Pegaso see <<http://www.uniPegaso.it/website/ateneo/chi-siamo>> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> The new name of the on-line università Unitel (San Raffaele) and the relocation of the offices from Milano to Roma were authorized by MIUR Circular April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, no. 1240.

<sup>41</sup> On the origins and first developments of the on-line University Unitel (then San Raffaele) see <<http://www.unisanRaffaele.gov.it/universita/ateneo.html>> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> On the origins and first developments of the on-line University “Niccolò Cusano” see <<http://www.unicusano.it/ateneo/chi-siamo>> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>43</sup> The initiative involves forty institutions belonging to the network of the Italian Chambers of Commerce including: Unioncamere, DINTEC – Consorzio per l’Innovazione Tecnologica, Istituto di Formazione per Operatori Aziendali (IFOA), Istituto “Guglielmo Tagliacarne”, and MondoImpresa. On the origins and first developments of the on-line university *Universitas Mercatorum* see <<http://www.unimerceatorum.it/ateneo/chi-siamo/>> (last checked: September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014).



unique case in Europe from the quantitative point of view, were an expression of very heterogeneous environments, persons and projects: from conventional universities to large financial and banking groups, from publishing companies to public and private companies operating in the field of information technology and communication, from *consortia* for the development of new technologies to large networks of private institutions for the recovery of the school years, vocational training and support to university study.

We can add that the 11 on-line above mentioned universities, subjected to a process of recognition based on «too generic» criteria to be truly suitable for the purpose<sup>44</sup>, were established and activated without considering the «consistency with the university system programs and the procedures for the identification of the objectives and instruments for their implementation, as prescribed by Presidential Decree January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1998, no. 25»<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> The opinion of the National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (CNVSU) to the Minister of University and Research, in relation to the increasing requests for the establishment of on-line universities, in the early months of 2006, stated that: «It is a particularly relevant and dynamic phenomenon, which, in our opinion, raises some concerns. In fact, the current regulation encourage the approval of certain initiatives whose quality cannot be ensured; the critical points are the following: the law established the assessment of prearranged proposals for the activation of on-line universities; this assessment is therefore based on the 'promise' that, once established, universities effectively equip themselves with personnel and facilities. [...] The problem is further accentuated by the fact that, against the opinion of the CNVSU, new courses were recognized in universities that did not have the necessary resources to ensure a minimum standard to the courses already in operation. The set of elements to be considered in the evaluation is very limited. [...] The law allows universities to re-propose the projects that have received a negative opinion without interruption. [...] On these points, the CNVSU considers a change in the current regulation very useful» Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, *Commissione di studio sulle problematiche afferenti alle Università telematiche istituita con D.M. 429 del 3 giugno 2013. Relazione*, [Ministry of Education, University and Research, Study Commission on the problems related to the on-line Universities established by Ministerial Decree 429 of June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013 Report], <[http://www.istruzione.it/allegati/relazione\\_conclusiva\\_commissione\\_studio\\_universita\\_telematiche.pdf](http://www.istruzione.it/allegati/relazione_conclusiva_commissione_studio_universita_telematiche.pdf)> (last checked: May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014), p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> See, in this regard, the considerations expressed in *ivi*, pp. 14-16. The provision on the university system programs above quoted is the DPR January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1998, no. 25 – *Regolamento recante disciplina dei procedimenti relativi allo sviluppo ed alla programmazione del sistema universitario, nonché ai comitati regionali di coordina-*

In the following years, to the inconsistencies of the process of establishment and accreditation of on-line universities would be added those characterizing the phase of consolidation and development of these institutions.

According to art. 9 of the already mentioned Ministerial Decree August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004, no. 262, on the university system planning for the three years period 2004-2006, the National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (CNVSU) between 2009 and 2011, began the assessment of the results achieved by on-line universities at the end of the first three years of activity<sup>46</sup>. This was an undoubtedly important assessment, focusing on the characteristics and the developments of the new universities in the first phase of activation and, more particularly, on fundamental aspects such as those relating to the «financial sustainability» of the universities and the «sustainability» and «quality» of their «educational offer».

In this regard, it is very important to examine the documented and analytical reports prepared by CNVSU, starting from the one published in June 2009 concerning the on-line University “Guglielmo Marconi”. After pointing out that, after three years from its activation, the university had «a wide and varied educational offer», including «seven faculties, for a total of 10 undergraduate and 12 postgraduate courses, including 1 single-cycle degree course» the CNVSU, noted that there seemed to be «no reason for concern about the financial sustainability of the initiative», but also underlined the major problems found, first of all those concerning the number of teachers, which seemed to

*mento, a norma dell'articolo 20, comma 8, lettere a) e b), della legge 15 marzo 1997, n. 59* [Regulations on the procedures related to the development and programs of the university system, as well as on regional coordinating committees, in accordance with Article 20, paragraph 8, a) and b) of the Law of March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1997, n. 59], in GU, 39, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1998, pp. 8-12.

<sup>46</sup> The Art. 9, paragraph 4, of the Ministerial Decree August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004, no. 262 – *Programmazione del sistema universitario per il triennio 2004-2006* [University system planning for the three years period 2004-2006], cit., stated: «At the end of the third, fifth and seventh year of academic activities of the University, the Committee carried out an assessment of the results achieved. Only after the positive evaluation by the Committee at the end of the fifth year, the contributions provided by the Law of July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1991, n. 243 and Article 5, paragraph 1, letter c) of the Law of December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1993, no. 537 can be granted to the University».

be insufficient and «definitely not consistent with the programs and therefore not properly meeting the needs», but also that of the limited research projects developed within the University, mainly focused «on the issues of distance learning».

However, other aspects of the on-line University “Guglielmo Marconi” gave CNVSU cause for concern, in particular the fact that it «after a growing trend of enrolments in the first three academic years», in the academic 2007-2008 had recorded «a significant decline of enrolments in all the faculties of the university»: during «the last academic year analysed in fact – according to the report of the CNVSU – enrolments are less than a third of those recorded the previous academic year».

The reasons for this sudden and alarming collapse in the number of students were connected, according to the CNVSU, to the drastic limitation introduced recently, by the art. 2, paragraph 147, of Law November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, no. 286, in the practice of recognising a large number of university credits (CFU: crediti formativi universitari) for the previous professional experience to the enrolled students. The provision of law, strongly supported by the new Minister of Education, University and Research Fabio Mussi, to call a halt to the excesses characterizing the previous years, established that universities could continue to consider in their academic regulations «professional knowledge and skills, certified in accordance with current regulation, as well as other post-secondary knowledge and skills and recognize them as university credits»; but that «in any case, the number of such credits cannot be more than sixty»<sup>47</sup>.

Examining the data of the last three academic years (2005-2006/2007-2008) on the percentage of enrolled students to which were granted university credits for their professional experience and those relating to the average number of credits granted to the students in this same period, it is easy to under-

<sup>47</sup> See art. 2, paragraph 147, of the Law November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, no. 286 – *Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 3 ottobre 2006, n. 262, recante disposizioni urgenti in materia tributaria e finanziaria* [Conversion into law, with amendments, of the Decree-Law October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006, no. 262, containing urgent provisions in taxation and financial matters], in GU, 277, November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006, ord. suppl. no. 223.

stand that the on-line University “Guglielmo Marconi” had extensively used the instrument of recognition of the credits for the previous professional experience in order to attract new students, also on the basis of specific agreements with public bodies (ministries, local authorities, law enforcement agencies, etc.). In fact, the 96.9% of the students enrolled in the academic year 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 had benefited from the recognition of credits and, in those same academic year, the average number of recognized CFU was, respectively, 93.7 and 73.5, *i.e.* between one half and one third of the credits required to earn a bachelor’s degree (180 credits). After the Law November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, no. 286 the situation changed considerably, as evidenced by the fact that, in the academic year 2007-2008, the number of enrolled students to which the credits for previous professional experience were recognized had dropped to 85.6% and, in particular, that the average number of recognized CFU had not passed 33.9%.

It does not seem an exaggeration to affirm that the University “Guglielmo Marconi” – such as various other on-line and traditional Italian universities – had recorded, in its first three years of activity, such a success of enrolments thanks to the systematic and massive use of the recognition of credits process for the previous professional experience; a practice, as the CNVSU underlined, used by this university in a «significantly substantial way».

The «strict regulation» imposed by the minister Mussi introduced a substantial change, permitting no longer to the universities to rely on the attraction represented by a significant reduction in the degree courses. It is not surprising in this regard, after the collapse in enrolments recorded «in the just ended academic year» (2007-2008), the recommendation made by the CNVSU to the University “Guglielmo Marconi” to «carefully monitor the developments in the future enrolments in order to safeguard the sustainability of the institution itself»<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall’Università Telematica Guglielmo Marconi al termine del primo triennio di attività. Giugno 2009* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Guglielmo Marconi at the end of the first three years of activity.

The observations and criticisms expressed by the CNVSU in the report on the on-line University TEL.M.A., published in May 2009, were totally different, also because focused largely on the economic and financial sustainability of the initiative. This university, consisting of 2 faculties including 2 bachelor's degree courses, 2 degree courses and the single-cycle degree course in Law, was praised by the CNVSU for the presence of «a structured teaching staff which, although the excessive number of researchers, on the whole meets the requirements»; for its educational syllabus, considered «consistent with the teaching staff of the university»; and, finally, for the attention «paid to the quality of the content of the learning modules [...] edited by teachers from the university system, often with great professionalism».

Paradoxically, a cause for major concern was «the choice of teaching methods», and more specifically the methodological approach applied to distance learning: the on-line University TEL.M.A., in fact, tended «to reproduce even in the on-line lessons, the traditional methods of frontal instruction, without exploiting the full potential of web-based tools».

The most serious problems, however, were related to the number of students that was «significantly lower than originally expected» and to the «inevitable consequences» that this situation had produced «on the economic-financial side»: «The most critical point – the report of CNVSU stated – is that of the financial sustainability of the initiative. In the 2005-2007 period the University has had cumulative losses that exceed € 1.5 million compared with joint stock of only € 350,000. Preliminary data for 2008 show a further loss, although more limited due to the interventions of rationalisation. [...] Of consequence, – concluded the author of the report – the owners are considering the possible transfer of their share to a private partner. [...] Therefore, it is necessary to check before the starting of the academic year 2009/2010 the existence of conditions that justify public authorization».

According to the CNVSU at the basis of the severe financial crisis that invested the on-line University TEL.M.A. there was the short-sighted choice of the management to use «mainly the staff of the Public Administration, through conventions», relying, as other on-line universities, on the massive and systematic use of the benefits and reductions in the degree courses allowed by the recognition of credits for the previous professional experience to increase enrolments; a practice that, as the report underlined, threatened not to bring «to the desired results», due to «the risk that this market was largely saturated»<sup>49</sup>.

The report on the on-line University “Leonardo da Vinci”, published in April 2009 by the CNVSU, confirms the extreme variety in the characteristics of on-line universities established in Italy after the approval of the decree Moratti-Stanca. In this case, the peculiarity of the educational syllabus proposed by this university was its being a sort of tool/emanation of a traditional university: «The non-State on-line University “Leonardo da Vinci” in Torrevicchia Teatina (Chieti) – the CNVSU stated in this regard – has an institutional structure that makes it an organization integrating the activities of the State university “G. D’Annunzio” taking on also the function of ‘on-line Campus’».

The almost symbiotic connection between the traditional and the on-line university ensures to the latter good performances in terms of organization and a high qualification in terms of technological facilities for e-learning and of the educational syllabus. Both the administrative and financial organization, and that concerning «the management and development of the operating systems and Web laboratories», had high levels of efficiency. A flexible on-line learning, «a good level of interactivity» and the possibility of using functional and updated «educational materials» were also guaranteed to the students. In this respect, the opinion of the CNVSU is not surprising, in fact, according to it

<sup>49</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall’Università Telematica TELMA al termine del primo triennio di attività. Maggio 2009* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University TELMA at the end of the first three years of activity. May 2009], Doc 9/09, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/publidoc/comitato/default\\_new.asp?id\\_documento\\_padre=11646](http://www.cnvsu.it/publidoc/comitato/default_new.asp?id_documento_padre=11646)> (last checked: May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 12-13.

the on-line University “Leonardo da Vinci” was characterized by «seriousness in the teaching approach» and by the effort to «improve the methods of distance education».

However, also in this case, there were «particularly critical elements». While, in fact, on the one hand, «the expected number of enrolled students» had not been achieved and this could «lead to difficulties in the sustainability of the initiative», on the other, as a result of the total dependence to the University “Gabriele D’Annunzio” of Chieti-Pescara, the on-line University “Leonardo da Vinci” appeared as a sort of centre of operations or laboratory rather than a real university, not possessing neither an independent administrative system nor an autonomous teaching staff, thus relying on the human and organisational resources given by «the mother University»<sup>50</sup>.

In presenting the results achieved over the first three years of activity by the International on-line University Uninettuno, the report by the CNVSU in June 2009 emphasized, first of all, that the university was «a continuation of the previous experience of the Consorzio Nettuno, consisting of 43 universities», with whom it shared «the structure and the development strategies», and whose research activities «had gave origin to the educational models used at the university». This condition, if on the one hand, had produced a number of advantages and benefits for the university, on the other, was the source of some serious problems, which might affect its development.

According to the CNVSU, «the number of enrolments lower than expected, and the limited presence of younger classes» were due to «the delay of the ‘transition’ of the students from the *consortium* to the on-line University. Many universities participating in the *consortium*, in fact, have so far kept alive the possibility of a ‘distance’ inscription to their courses». The removal of such a restriction appeared to be «essential to allow

<sup>50</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall’Università Telematica “Leonardo da Vinci” al termine del primo triennio di attività. Aprile 2009* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University “Leonardo da Vinci” at the end of the first three years of activity. April 2009], Doc 8/09, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11661](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11661)> (last checked: September 23<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 20-21.

a substantial growth in new enrolments (today approximately 10,000 students are enrolled in the courses offered by the Consorzio Nettuno, against the 2,000 students of the Uninettuno)». In other words, the creation of the on-line university in the place of the *consortium* would have to involve the transfer of the students enrolled in the participant universities to the new institution, a fact that, after three years, had not yet occurred and the realization of which, given the economic interests, appeared far from being easy. This explained why the 5 faculties activated, for a total of 9 degree courses, were «extremely uneven», «in terms of quantity», and why the data on enrolments were «significantly lower» than expected.

But there were also other problems: in the academic year 2008-2009, «none of the courses» of the international on-line University Uninettuno possessed «the minimum teaching requirements», although the university had tried to overcome this situation by announcing 23 «procedures of comparative assessment, which should allow the achievement of the minimum teaching requirements». The choice of announcing almost exclusively positions as university researcher (22 on the total of 23 positions), could «allow to combine the respect of the teaching requirements with the balance of the budget», but it «didn't ensure the professional development of such a large number of researchers without the presence of a senior research staff»; and, at the same time, it didn't create the conditions for studies and research at an authentically university level<sup>51</sup>.

According to the CNVSU, the situation at the on-line University Italian University Line (IUL) in Firenze was paradoxical. It «promoted by a *consortium* consisting of 5 universities (Bicocca of Milano, Firenze, LUMSA, Macerata and Palermo) and by dall'Istituto Nazionale di documentazione

<sup>51</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica Uninettuno al termine del primo triennio di attività. Giugno 2009* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Uninettuno at the end of the first three years of activity. June 2009], Doc 12/09, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11664](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11664)> (last checked: October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 20-21.



per l'innovazione e la ricerca educativa (INDIRE), (National Institute of documentation for Educational Innovation and Research», did not have its own resources, but relied on «the resources the *consortium* makes available»: the administrative staff, the spaces and the operative system, in fact, were «almost entirely provided by INDIRE», while the preparation and distribution of the courses was «assured by the teachers of the member universities». In its first three years of activity, the on-line University Italian University Line (IUL) had activated only a course and had a very limited number of members, fifty in all. The quality of the education provided seemed undoubtedly appropriate: «The teaching material – as stated in the report of the CNVSU – has been realized by professors of Italian universities and experts in the science of education; the small number of students allows an adequate mentoring; the technological and multimedia support is consistent with the needs of the educational process, in terms of the number of possible accesses to the operative system and of training functions».

Also in this case, there were other serious problems and so difficult to solve that it was hard to outline a clear perspective for the future:

More doubts emerge – we can read in the report by the Committee for the evaluation – about the sustainability of the educational syllabus (if this was provided by an institutions that respects the common rules and, in particular, those relating to the minimum requirements). In fact, the course activated not only does not possess the minimum level for what concerns the teaching, and the university is not planning any recruitment plan, but it would be difficult for the university to try to obtain it. A policy of self-recruitment is not compatible with the financial resources of the University, given the extremely small number of enrolled students. [...] The educational syllabus of the IUL is therefore not sustainable according to the existing regulation on on-line universities.

The CNVSU expressed their dismay – already expressed more or less indirectly in the reports about the other Italian on-line universities – for this problematic situation and the clear and substantial absence of requirements that characterized the IUL in terms of university autonomy: «In fact, the IUL

appears to be a structure supporting the educational activity of the member universities rather than an autonomous university, in terms of available resources and operating models»<sup>52</sup>.

The report by the CNVSU on the results of the on-line University E-Campus at the end of the first three years of activity, published in February 2011, re-proposed some problems already identified in the previous assessments of on-line universities. First of all, the absence of «an adequate teaching staff» and the lack of a «production of scientific research» at a university level.

The on-line education provided by the university showed critical elements: if, in fact, «the operative system used and the organization of the teaching activity» could be considered adequate, the «tutoring» appeared to be more problematic, due to the lack of clarity about its organization and purpose. The main and most serious problem that characterized the on-line University E-Campus, however, was the total reliance on the Foundation chaired by Francesco Polidori, the owner of CEPU, that the CNVSU judged to be in contrast with the efforts to make E-Campus a real university<sup>53</sup>.

Another problematic situation was that of the on-line University “Giustino Fortunato” as emerged from the report prepared in February 2010 by the CNVSU. «In the examined three years», it was stated in the document, «the evolution in the number of enrolled students» had recorded a «significant reduction», while the majority of the students consisted of «a series of subjects with previous academic careers and, in the

<sup>52</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica non statale Italian University Line al termine del primo triennio di attività. Dicembre 2009* [Assessment of the results achieved by the non-State on-line University Italian University Line at the end of the first three years of activity. December 2009], Doc 20/09, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11677](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11677)> (last checked: September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 13-14.

<sup>53</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica E-Campus al termine del primo triennio di attività. Febbraio 2011* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University E-Campus at the end of the first three years of activity. February 2009], Doc 05/11, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11790](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11790)> (last checked: September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 17-18.

case of enrolled students, with a number of credits recognized for the previous skills acquired».

Although the leadership of the university pointed out that «the great number of agreements with organizations, universities and associations» was «primarily an instrument for the reduction of students' contributions» and not a means to ensure «reductions in the number of credits necessary to obtain academic degrees», it was clear that the university, «as well as the other on-line institutions of the period», in its first three years of activity had relied especially on those who worked in the Public Administration and that wanted to earn a degree in a short time, using of all the facilitations permitted by law.

Finally, for what concerns the requirements imposed by «the regulations on the minimum number of teachers», the on-line University “Giustino Fortunato” could be said to be in compliance with the law, including an associate professor and seven «winners of a competitive exam for university researchers» for a three-year Bachelor's degree course and a single-cycle Master degree course, while the scientific and research activity seemed to be totally inadequate<sup>54</sup>.

The report published in February 2010 by the CNVSU on the on-line University Pegaso repeated, to a great extent, the observations already reported in the assessment about the University “Giustino Fortunato”:

The enrolments trend in the three-year period – the document recorded – presents significant increases characterized by advanced age (a common feature in the institutions of this type) and by the recognition of credits for previous university activity or professional experiences. The increase in the number of students of the School of Education is particularly important and, probably, due to the information campaign about certain abbreviations of career for the staff already engaged in educational facilities. The high number of agreements with organiza-

<sup>54</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica Giustino Fortunato al termine del primo triennio di attività. Febbraio 2010* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Giustino Fortunato at the end of the first three years of activity. February 2010], Doc 06/10, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11680](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11680)> (last checked: September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 7, 12, 17.

tions, ministries and trade unions seems to be the main instrument to guide the enrolments.

The on-line University Pegaso, apart from the advertising campaign aimed at increasing the number of students, did not seem very interested in the scientific qualifications of its teaching staff and to the beginning of specific research initiatives: «The research activity – noted the CNVSU – which is expected to support the two departments, does not seem significant, and we have to underline that its direction is given to teachers external to the University».

After such a survey, the CNVSU suspended the judgment on the on-line University Pegaso as had already happened with the University “Giustino Fortunato”, postponing any assessment to the quinquennial control of the results: «For the purposes of the following ministerial decisions – they underlined – the final assessment will be carried out at the end of the first five years of activity»<sup>55</sup>.

The on-line University Unitel, destined to be moved from Milano to Roma with the new name of San Raffaele (2010), recorded a real flop of enrolments in the first three years of activity, such as happened in many other already examined universities, so as to raise doubts about the financial sustainability of the initiative, at least in the future:

The proposal of the Unitel during the establishment phase – the CNVSU stated in the report published in December 2009 – considered for the first year a turnover resulting only from the enrolment fees (for an annual amount of approximately EUR 2,500) of approximately 1.5 million of euro and, at the fifth year, 9.2 million euro; the first enrolments were of 605 students and, at operating speed, they should have to reach the number of 3,680 students (including 1,580 new enrolments). The actual numbers were extremely from these predictions: after three years from the beginning of the activity, the total number of enrolled students is much lower than what had been estimated.

<sup>55</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica Pegaso al termine del primo triennio di attività. Febbraio 2010* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Pegaso at the end of the first three years of activity. February 2010], Doc 07/10, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11679](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11679)> (last checked: September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014), p. 14.

The issue of the small number of students seemed to be even more serious because it had prevented Unitel to provide adequate spaces and essential infrastructure for the teaching activity and, above all, had produced a «slowdown in the plan of recruitment of teaching staff», so that, because of the «significant absence of teaching and research staff», the university had not been able to achieve «the minimum requirements for the activated 3 courses».

Proved that the situation of the on-line University Unitel differed significantly «from the objectives proposed during the establishment phase» the CNVSU emphasized the necessity that the Ministry of Education, University and Research closely monitor the evolution of the university, whose future raised many concerns<sup>56</sup>.

The report prepared in December 2009 by the CNVSU on the results achieved by the on-line University “Niccolò Cusano” described a certainly problematic situation, presenting issues and problems already emerged various times in the previous assessments of on-line universities. Also in the University “Niccolò Cusano”, the majority of students were those who had «suspended the studies in the past», a typology of students «destined to become saturated» in the following years, and on which, therefore, it was not possible to rely for the effective development of the university.

Although the presence of «a very well-structured educational syllabus», to some extent, also «excessive in relation to the quantity and quality of human resources available for the courses», the University “Niccolò Cusano” had launched a «recruitment plan» of the teaching staff that, on the basis of financial considerations, had relied almost exclusively on the researchers, at the expense of the teachers of first and second level, thereby preventing «opportunities for the development

<sup>56</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica Internazionale non statale Unitel al termine del primo triennio di attività. Dicembre 2009* [Assessment of the results achieved by the non-State international on-line University Unitel at the end of the first three years of activity. December 2009], Doc 18/09, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11673](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11673)> (last checked: September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 13-14.

of an adequate scientific maturity of the researchers», already severely penalized by an excessive load of work on the educational side, so that to be almost reduced to «simple tutors».

Finally, the «limited infrastructures and spaces for research», drove the CNVSU to suspend judgment about the future perspectives of the university, as well as to recommend a careful and constant monitoring by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research on its activities<sup>57</sup>.

The problems and weaknesses of a particular institution as the on-line University Universitas Mercatorum, expression, as already mentioned, of the system of Italian Chambers of Commerce, were totally different. The report prepared in December 2009 by the CNVSU on this university testifies the undeniable «quality» of its educational syllabus and, in particular, the excellent level «of the operating system and of the related technological structures used for the education process» and the great competence «of the University teachers».

If it was true, however, that in the academic year 2008-2009, the on-line university Universitas Mercatorum did not «reach the minimum requirements for its only study course», it was equally true that, with the competitive exams organized in 2009, «at the time of the publication of the report of CNVSU the university was able to meet the minimum teaching requirements».

In addition, in contrast with the majority of the other on-line universities, the Universitas Mercatorum «recognized a very limited number of credits for verifiable educational activities to the enrolled students», also in order to make a «qualitative selection» of the students.

Finally, the CNVSU, having examined the financial balance sheets, believed there were no «particular reason for concern regarding the economic and financial sustainability of the University», so we can affirm that the on-line University Universitas

<sup>57</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica "Niccolò Cusano" al termine del primo triennio di attività. Dicembre 2009* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University "Niccolò Cusano" at the end of the first three years of activity. December 2009], Doc 19/09, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11678](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11678)> (last checked: September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 14-15.

Mercatorum seemed to present higher quality standards than the most of the other Italian on-line universities.

However, although the absence of clear problems and weaknesses, the on-line university Universitas Mercatorum with its only course in “Business Management” and its student population made up of a 39% «of personnel operating within the Chamber network or in other public bodies», was far from being a real academic institution; in particular, for its promoters’ purposes and operative objectives, it could have act more profitably, *i.e.* with less waste of resources, as a «technology partner» of a traditional university. This was probably the idea of the CNVSU that, in the conclusion of the report, strongly recommended the Universitas Mercatorum to achieve in the short term «a relationship both as a joint-venture and a fusion with a traditional university»<sup>58</sup>.

In January 2010, while the assessment on the results achieved by the individual universities during the first three years of activity were being completed, the CNVSU published the report *Analisi della situazione delle Università Telematiche* [Analysis of the situation of on-line Universities], which provided an overall evaluation of these institutions. The report presented, as repeatedly emphasized, «an overall situation of a quite disappointing system», in which «a number of important, structural or non-structural problems were found, on which it is necessary to draw attention».

The CNVSU, after reporting the «structural weakness of these universities, in terms of their ability to act in the field of research», the delays and the various lacks on the methodological and didactic field, the serious and clear «inconsistency between the very small number of demands for distance education and the relatively large number of universities and courses», and, finally, the negative fact that the number of students

<sup>58</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica Universitas Mercatorum al termine del primo triennio di attività. Dicembre 2009* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Universitas Mercatorum at the end of the first three years of activity. December 2009], Doc 17/09, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11672](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11672)> (last checked: September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 22-24.

of the on-line universities in the first three years of activity appeared to be «linked, in many cases, to a policy of ‘encouragement’, through a very generous process of recognition of credits, creating, in many cases, a high number of ‘premature graduates’», stressed that the on-line universities system, shaped on the basis of the rules contained in the decree Moratti-Stanca, seemed to be inspired by «exclusively [...] market reasons», risking to compromise the future «development of the system».

Given these evaluations, the CNVSU drew two conclusions. The first: «the overall picture of the situation clearly shows that the purpose of the Inter-ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (improving the access to learning resources and facilitating the use of new experimental teaching methods) is very far from being pursued»; the second: «The described situation is not exclusively a responsibility of the existing on-line universities. There was in fact, at the central level, a failure in the evaluation of their mission, an inappropriate idea of the role of these universities within the national university system and the lack of both a strategic line and of a development program for the system of these universities»<sup>59</sup>.

Essentially, it was a real condemnation of the failure of the ministerial policies carried out on this side, with particular reference to Letizia Moratti’s five-year management<sup>60</sup>. The basic sensation, however, is that, no matter how accurate, undeniable and hard the accusations of the CNVSU were, they don’t succeed to reveal the central and most critical element at the basis of the choices made in Italy in the field of e-learning.

Beyond, in fact, the widespread and sometimes serious weaknesses in the teaching staff, with the minimum teaching

<sup>59</sup> National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Analisi della situazione delle Università Telematiche. Gennaio 2010* [Analysis of the situation of the on-line universities. January 2010], Doc 04/10, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11682](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11682)> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 7-9. See also: National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Decimo Rapporto sullo Stato del Sistema Universitario. Dicembre 2009*, parte IV (“Focus sulle Università Telematiche”), cap. 7<sup>o</sup>, pp. 138-146.

<sup>60</sup> Letizia Moratti was Minister of Education, University and Research in the II and III government led by Silvio Berlusconi, from June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 to May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006.



requirements in relation to the educational syllabus, the inadequate – and sometimes non-existent – scientific and research activities carried out within the universities, the significant and generalized flop of enrolments compared with the starting hypothesis and the embarrassing – though undeniable – situation in which the increase in the number of enrolled students was mainly the result of the extraordinary recognition of credits for the previous professional experience (with a consequent significant reduction in the study courses), allowed by agreements with institutions and bodies of the public administration and, finally, budgets so little balanced to cause concerns about the economic and financial sustainability of the initiative<sup>61</sup>, the reports of the CNVSU between 2009 and 2011 on the results achieved by the Italian on-line universities at the end of their first three years of activity, describes not only a widespread situation of default, due to the lack of the requirements established by law, but something much more serious: the clear lack in many of the on-line universities evaluated, of the fundamental characteristics of the *Universitas studiorum*, which traditionally make the difference between the university itself and the other types of institutions authorized to provide traditional or distance higher education courses<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> On this problems see: Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, *Commissione di studio sulle problematiche afferenti alle Università telematiche istituite con D.M. 429 del 3 giugno 2013. Relazione* [Ministry of Education, University and Research, Study Commission on the problems related to the on-line Universities established by Ministerial Decree 429 of June 3rd, 2013 Report], cit., pp. 5-6.

<sup>62</sup> The assessment of the results achieved by on-line universities at the end of their first five years of activity, carried out in 2011 by the National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (CNVSU), and then, between 2012 and 2014 by the National Agency for the Evaluation of University and Research System (ANVUR) replacing the CNVSU in this task under the art. 4 of Presidential Decree February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, no. 76, gave very different results, showing, in some cases, the overcoming of the problems identified in the evaluation carried out at the end of the first three years of activity and, in others, the persistence (if not even the worsening) of the lacks and inconsistencies recorded. This assessment did not modify the overall picture and, above all, beyond the results achieved by the single universities, reaffirm the need (and urgency) of «a further assessment» based on «new and stricter requirements». See in this respect: National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica Guglielmo Marconi al termine del primo quinquennio di attività. Febbraio 2011* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Guglielmo Marconi at the end of the

Not surprisingly, the National University Council in the *Mozione sulle Università Telematiche* [Motion on on-line Universities] approved on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010, and then in the opinion realized on December 17<sup>th</sup>, of the same year on the decree «General guidelines for the University Programs for the three-years period 2010-2012», expressed the «dissent» towards the «possibility that the on-line Universities could, under their proposal and with the procedures established in the Decree, turn into non-State (non on-line) universities authorized to activate courses using both distance education and traditional learning». In these same documents the Council also underlined that «with the process of recognition provided for the regulations approved by the Minister of Education, University and Research, in collab-

first five years of activity. February 2011], Doc 4/11, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11789](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11789)> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014), p. 24; National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica Uninettuno al termine del primo quinquennio di attività. Febbraio 2011* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Uninettuno at the end of the first five years of activity. February 2011], Doc. 2/1, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11787](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11787)> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 19-20; National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica "Leonardo da Vinci" al termine del primo quinquennio di attività. Marzo 2011* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University "Leonardo Da Vinci" at the end of the first five years of activity. March 2011], Doc 10/11, <[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11789](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11789)> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014), p. 13; National Agency for the Evaluation of University and Research System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica non statale Italian University Line – IUL al termine del quinto anno di attività. Approvato dal Consiglio Direttivo in data 3 luglio 2012* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Italian University Line – IUL at the end of the first five years of activity. Approved by Governing Board on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012], Doc 8/2012, <[http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/doc\\_08-12\\_telematica\\_iul.pdf](http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/doc_08-12_telematica_iul.pdf)> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014), p. 18; National Agency for the Evaluation of University and Research System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica Giustino Fortunato al termine del quinto anno di attività. Approvato dal Consiglio Direttivo il 24 luglio 2012* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Giustino Fortunato at the end of the first five years of activity. Approved by Governing Board on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012], Doc 12/2012, <[http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/relazione\\_finale\\_g\\_fortunato\\_uv.pdf](http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/relazione_finale_g_fortunato_uv.pdf)> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 30-31; National Agency for the Evaluation of University and Research System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica non statale San Raffaele al termine del quinto anno di attività. Approvato dal Consiglio Direttivo il 21 giugno 2012* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University San Raffaele at the end of the first five years of activity. Approved

oration with the Minister for Innovation and Technologies» «a very simplified recognizing procedure» was established «that allows the establishment of a new type of university, through a channel independent and parallel to the existing system, on the only condition that the university possesses an operative system technically capable of providing distance learning, but without defining the quality requirements and the necessary controls and guarantees». The consequences were «paradoxical, since institutions that do not have their own teaching staff and does not carry out any research could be authorized to confer [academic] degrees<sup>63</sup>» including «that of *Ph. Doctor*».

by Governing Board on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012], Doc 5/2012, <[http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/doc\\_05-12\\_telematica\\_san\\_Raffaele.pdf](http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/doc_05-12_telematica_san_Raffaele.pdf)> (last checked: September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 29-30; National Agency for the Evaluation of University and Research System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica Universitas Mercatorum al termine del quinto anno di attività. Approvato dal Consiglio Direttivo in data 24 luglio 2012* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Universitas Mercatorum at the end of the first five years of activity. Approved by Governing Board on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012], Doc 11/2012, <[http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/doc\\_11-12\\_telematica\\_Universitas\\_mercatorum\\_finale.pdf](http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/doc_11-12_telematica_Universitas_mercatorum_finale.pdf)> (last checked: September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014), pp. 34-36; National Agency for the Evaluation of University and Research System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica Pegaso al termine del quinto anno di attività. Approvato dal Consiglio Direttivo il 24 luglio 2012* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Pegaso at the end of the first five years of activity. Approved by Governing Board on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012], Doc 10/2012, <[http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/doc\\_10-12\\_telematica\\_Pegaso\\_uv.pdf](http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/doc_10-12_telematica_Pegaso_uv.pdf)> (last checked: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 49-50; National Agency for the Evaluation of University and Research System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università degli studi Niccolò Cusano Telematica Roma al termine del quinto anno di attività. Approvato dal Consiglio Direttivo il 24 ottobre 2012* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University Niccolò Cusano of Roma at the end of the first five years of activity. Approved by Governing Board on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012], Doc 16/2012, <[http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/relazione\\_ii\\_visita\\_febbraio\\_2012\\_0.pdf](http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/relazione_ii_visita_febbraio_2012_0.pdf)> (last checked: September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014), p. 22; National Agency for the Evaluation of University and Research System, *Verifica dei risultati conseguiti dall'Università Telematica non statale UnitelMA Sapienza al termine del quinto anno di attività. Approvato dal Consiglio Direttivo il 17 febbraio 2014* [Assessment of the results achieved by the on-line University UnitelMA Sapienza at the end of the first five years of activity. Approved by Governing Board on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014], Doc 4/2014, <<http://www.anvur.org/attachments/article/311/Relazione%20Unitelma%20DEF.pdf>> (last checked: September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014), p. 18.

<sup>63</sup> National University Council, *Mozione Università Telematiche, Adunanza del 25 maggio 2010*, Prot. n. 1056, cit., pp. 2-3; National University Council, *Parere generale n. 10 approvato nell'adunanza del 17 dicembre 2010 sullo Schema di Decreto «Linee generali d'indirizzo della Programmazione dell'Università per il Triennio*

In this regard, some years before, as a consequence of the needs to introduce stricter rules for the recognition of on-line universities and courses, the Decree October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006, no. 262, later converted into Law of November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, no. 286, established that, for the purposes referred to in the previously mentioned art. 26, paragraph 5, of the Law of December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002 no. 289<sup>64</sup>, the Minister of University and Research, in collaboration with that for Reforms and Innovations in Public Administration had to prepare a special regulation, and that, until the date of implement of the Regulation, «the establishment of new on-line universities authorized to confer academic degrees could not be allowed»<sup>65</sup>.

Because the above mentioned ministerial regulation was never arranged, the prohibition of creating new on-line universities was reaffirmed, at first, with the Ministerial Decree Decem-

2010-2012» [General Opinion no. 10 adopted at the meeting of December 17th, 2010 on the Decree «General guidelines for the Planning of the Universities for the three years period 2010-2012»], cit., pp. 3-4.

<sup>64</sup> The art. 26, paragraph 5, of the Law December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002, no. 289 – *Disposizioni per la formazione del bilancio annuale e pluriennale dello Stato (legge finanziaria 2003)* [Provisions for the formation of the annual and multi-annual State budget (Finance Act 2003)], stated that: the decree of the Minister for Education, University and Research, in collaboration with the Minister for Innovation and technologies, determines the criteria and procedures for the recognition of distance university courses and academic institutions enabled to confer academic degrees, in accordance with the Rules of the Decree of the Minister for University and scientific and Technological Research November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509, at the end of the same courses, with no burden on the State budget. For the purposes of the acquisition of the authorization to confer academic degrees, the institutions must have adequate organisational and managerial resources able to: «a) present a flexible system, able to use the various technologies for the management of interactivity, while preserving the principle of their usability; b) encourage the integration of a coherent and educationally valid range of services to support the teaching; c) ensure the selection, design and drafting of appropriate learning resources for each courseware; d) ensure adequate interaction contexts for administering and managing the learning contents, also through a structured service of a on-line tutoring; e) ensure adequate assessments of the knowledge according to certifications of acquired skills; provide for the research and development of innovative e-learning systems able to support multimedia data related to learning the products offered».

<sup>65</sup> It is the art. 2, Paragraph 147, of the Law November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, no. 286 – *Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 3 ottobre 2006, n. 262, recante disposizioni urgenti in materia tributaria e finanziaria* [Conversion into law, with amendments, of Decree-Law October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006, no. 262, containing urgent provisions in taxation and financial matters], cit.

ber 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010, no. 50, concerning the definition of the general guidelines of the University Programs for the three years period 2010-2012<sup>66</sup>; and, then, with the Ministerial Decree October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013, no. 827, concerning the general guidelines of the Programs 2013-2015, which established that the prohibition was in force until the academic year 2015-2016<sup>67</sup>.

Finally, the recent requests for recognition of new on-line courses from the above mentioned universities, contributed to increase the confusion and the discredit on the on-line universities system and on the distance education as a whole. During the 2013, in this regard, the majority of the Italian on-line universities requested the activation of new study courses: E-Campus required the activation of 18 courses, Pegaso, Uninettuno and “Niccolò Cusano” of 7 courses each, while 2 were required by the San Raffaele (formerly Unitel) and the Universitas Mercatorum<sup>68</sup>.

The requests were submitted to the ANVUR, which «gave a negative answer to all of them», with the only exception of the two courses offered by the Universitas Mercatorum, explaining it, «with the lack of definition of lesson plans, a lack of specificity of the learning objectives and a too general motivation for the activation of the courses, as well as the insufficient number of teachers and tutors and the limited research activity» carried out in these universities. At this point, after the appeal of these on-line universities to the TAR (Regional Administrative Court) of Lazio against the refusal of activation of the new courses expressed by the ministry of University and Research, after the negative opinion of the ANVUR, the Administrative

<sup>66</sup> Ministerial Decree December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010, no. 50 – *Definizione delle linee generali di indirizzo della Programmazione delle Università per il triennio 2010-2012* [Definition of the guidelines for the Programs for the academic years 2010-2012], in GU, 125, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011, pp. 5-16.

<sup>67</sup> Ministerial Decree October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013 no. 827 – *Linee generali di indirizzo della programmazione 2013-2015* [General guidelines for the Programs 2013-2015], in GU, 7, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014, pp. 4-7.

<sup>68</sup> See the list of courses offered by the single on-line universities in Ministry for Education, University and Research, *Commissione di studio sulle problematiche afferenti alle Università telematiche istituita con D.M. 429 del 3 giugno 2013. Relazione* [Study Commission on issues relating the on-line Universities established by Ministerial Decree 429, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013. Report], cit., pp. 6-8.

Justice intervened in some cases eliminating the ban and therefore imposing the recognition of new courses; or, in other cases, forcing the ministry «to reconsider the application for the recognition of the new courses» presented by the above mentioned on-line universities<sup>69</sup>.

But, beyond the paradox of a university educational syllabus imposed through the judgments of the Regional Administrative Court of Lazio and the Council of State, the basic impression is that of a system with serious lack and that requires a remedial action. Not surprisingly, the *Study Commission on issues relating the on-line Universities*, established in the Ministry of Education, University and Research with the Ministerial Decree June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, no. 429<sup>70</sup>, has recently made a series of proposals for the improvement of the system which, suggesting great modifications, clearly reveal the critical nature of the situation:

At the end of this report – we can read in the document prepared by the Ministerial Committee – it is appropriate to made a series of proposals, due to the difficulties described so far. First of all, we note the need to standardize the rules regarding the on-line Universities to that of traditional universities, expunging from the system the derogatory rules in favour of the on-line Universities. In particular, an action on the regulation of the recognition process was necessary in order to avoid that, due to a mere temporal and formal question (as happened to 3 Universities on a total of 11), the assessment for the recognition was not based on qualitative requirements, such as those related to the effectiveness and efficiency of the courses (including infrastructural aspects). This regulation should be based on criteria exactly alike those of the non-State universities, without the possibility of derogation, under the penalty of the cancellation of the legal

<sup>69</sup> Ivi, pp. 8-9.

<sup>70</sup> The *Study Commission on issues relating the on-line Universities* was established by the Ministerial Decree no. 429 of June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013. It includes the Professors Stefano Liebman (University Bocconi of Milano) and Marco Mancini (University of Tuscia-Viterbo and President of the CRUI until August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013) and Dr. Marcella Gargano, Deputy Head of Cabinet of the Minister of Education, University and scientific Research. It was officially established in the offices of the Ministry of Education on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and held its meetings on July Ead., July 22<sup>nd</sup> and August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. The final report of the Commission was presented on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013. See the text of the report in the Ministry of Education, University and Research, *Commissione di studio sulle problematiche afferenti alle Università telematiche istituita con D.M. 429 del 3 giugno 2013. Relazione* [Study Commission on issues relating the on-line University established by the Ministerial Decree 429, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013. Report], cit.

value given to the course. Secondly, the Commission, in order to achieve the objective of ensuring the quality of the educational syllabus, set a time limit within which the on-line Universities must meet the quantitative requirements related to the teaching staff as established by the regulations for the non-State Universities, particularly for what concerns the presence of a permanent staff, otherwise the University itself risked the suppression. Also in this case, the failure to meet the requirements should lead to the immediate termination of the course of study.

And also:

It was necessary to introduce a specific obligation, for the teaching staff of these universities, to carry out research activities so that the public funds were allocated according to the quality of the teaching and research activity, as established for other academic institutions. [...] It was essential that, starting with the new Three-Year Plan 2013-2015, stricter criteria were established and that the creation, confirmation or cessation of the on-line courses were subjected to the respective regional coordination committees, assigned to the universities on the basis of their administrative headquarters<sup>71</sup>.

If we recall the vicissitudes that marked the beginning of the distance higher education in Italy, starting from the already mentioned Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 issued by the Minister of Education, Universities and Research, Letizia Moratti, in agreement with the Minister for Innovation and Technology, Lucio Stanca, we will remain surprised by the enormous attention paid to the system of on-line universities with its educational syllabus and, conversely, from the little interest aroused by the initiatives of the traditional universities, also authorized to activate distance education during the same period.

In this regard, we could affirm that the need to cope with the critical situations that affected from the beginning the on-line universities, to constantly monitor their work and to ensure – through increasing and systematic controls by the CNVSU and more recently by the ANVUR – the possession of the requirements established by law and the maintenance of certain quality levels, has led the Ministry of Education, University and

<sup>71</sup> Ivi, pp. 16-17.

Research to focus their attention on the system of on-line universities.

However, in the past decade (2003-2013), all the so-called «conventional» Italian universities not only have developed high-profile projects in the field of e-learning, as evidenced by the presence of a range of on-line courses, parallel to the traditional ones, addressed, in most cases, to a percentage between 10% and 30% of the total number of students, but they were also the protagonist of initiatives and research projects of an interdisciplinary nature which have contributed to the evolution of this field on the technological and methodological-didactic side and to the training of the teaching staff and tutors engaged in on-line teaching.

To fully understand the evolution recorded by «conventional» Italian universities in the field of e-learning and distance education over the last decade, it is necessary to start from the results of the survey on the spread of e-learning in the Italian university system, carried out in 2006 by the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI) within the project ELUE (E-Learning and University Education) activated by the European Community.

The survey, using the data provided by 59 «conventional» Italian universities on a total of 77, *i.e.* about the 75%, shows that the spread of the e-learning in Italian universities is realized in «the absence of significant regulatory and financial support»<sup>72</sup>. This explains the delay and uncertainty that marked, at least in a first phase, the development of e-learning in the national university system. As the survey carried out by the CRUI highlighted, «the theme of e-learning, which characterized an increasing number of universities over the past years, has mainly taken the form of episodic experiences, unrelated to an organic coordination at a University level».

It is true, however, that there was a clear acceleration on that side «between the years 2002 and 2004», during which «the

<sup>72</sup> Fondazione CRUI, *L'Università verso l'e-learning: Finlandia, Francia e Italia a confronto*, Roma, Tip. Città Nuova, 2006, pp. 19-20. But see also: Alfonsi, Carfagna, Pedreschi (eds.), *E-Università: facciamo il punto*, cit.



number of the universities that have begun a university policy in the field of e-learning has increased by almost 100%». The survey carried out by the CRUI, within the project ELUE, identifies, among the most important elements testifying «a progressive spread of e-learning in the academic field», the growing participation of Italian universities to «*consortium* initiatives in the field of e-learning» and, above all, the presence of «a university centre for ICT/e-learning» in the 84% of the universities participating to the survey, with the purpose of management and technological support, but also to study the problems related to the on-line teaching: «At least a half of these centres work in activities such as educational research, the definition of standards and the support for the preparation of on-line learning materials»; while about one-third also performs tasks of «pedagogical support [...] to the development of e-learning activities».

At the time of publication of the results of the survey CRUI (2006), the offer of on-line courses was quite significant («in the field of on-line learning there was a great fervor of initiatives»), especially in areas such as «the humanities, the engineering and the social sciences»; while the offer of on-line extra educational services (administration, right to education, etc.) appeared still limited, being guaranteed only by the universities with a distance education syllabus. Only the 46% of the surveyed universities, in fact, was able to offer «to the users of on-line learning the possibility of a remote interface with their offices» although «a further 22% of universities that are working in this field» would have been able, in a short time, to guarantee the same services. Finally, the number of «distance education students» was considerable, given also the short time from the activation of the first courses, which for the 80% of the universities involved in the survey reached «the 10% of the total number of students»<sup>73</sup>.

A very important chapter of the survey was that related to the research initiatives on e-learning carried out within Italian «conventional» universities. The confirmation of a growing success of the e-learning in the academic field, in fact, was

<sup>73</sup> Fondazione CRUI, *L'Università verso l'e-learning: Finlandia, Francia e Italia a confronto*, cit., pp. 102-108, 112-114, 126-128.

not only proved by «the rise of the on-line educational syllabus», but also by «a careful attention of the university research towards these new teaching methods». And the controls carried out on this side, provided a framework that testifies the commitment and the scientific quality of the research carried out in this field in the Italian universities: not only, in fact, «about a half of the universities» was at the time already successfully engaged in studies on distance education, but a series of elements proved that «the presence of e-learning in the agenda of the university research» was «intended to increase in the future»<sup>74</sup>.

Finally, on the basis of the information provided by the universities involved, the survey of the CRUI offered a picture of the main obstacles to the spread of e-learning in the Italian university system. Among the «restraining factors with respect to a full spread of e-learning in the university system», there were, above all, the «inadequacy of financial resources and the related underinvestment». However, it was necessary to add to these factors the one that, in many respects, «most burdened the on-line learning», *i.e.* «the attitude of distrust of some teachers towards digital innovations for teaching purposes»; as well as the teaching staff's doubts on «the encounter between technology and education».

Focusing on the «fears that more often worried the skeptical academic staff», the survey of the CRUI highlighted the «critical reading focused on the risks of a potential reversal of roles between pedagogy and technology», for which the latter, the technology, «which should be serve the former, seems, instead, to prevail in the learning theories, so that they are placed in a subordinate position with a consequent impoverishment of educational quality»<sup>75</sup>.

From the picture provided by the survey carried out in 2006 by the CRUI, as a part of the ELUE project, it is clear how the rise of e-learning in the Italian universities was characterized, from the beginning, by an increasing commitment of the universities, not free from uncertainties and concerns about the gaps

<sup>74</sup> Ivi, p. 111.

<sup>75</sup> Ivi, pp. 119-121.

and ambiguities from a regulatory point of view and the lack of resources and investments to support the development of this field. The doubts raised by a part of the teaching staff, about the level of quality of university education produced by the combination of academic teaching and new technologies related to distance learning, denote, in some ways, the extreme seriousness with which the Italian university system has faced this deep change<sup>76</sup>.

In order to fully evaluate this process, it is worthwhile to complete our analysis with a case, focusing on the experience of the University of Macerata, one of the first Italian «conventional» universities to activate, after the decree Moratti-Stanca, an organic program of university distance education.

The University of Macerata promoted a national seminar on the topic *E-learning: formazione, modelli e proposte (E-learning: training, models and proposals)* at the Abbey of Fiastra (MC), on April 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004. It, through the contributions of experts and officials of the ministry of Education and of some the major experts in the field from different Italian universities, was aimed to fully analyse aspects and problems of e-learning still largely neglected, if not completely ignored<sup>77</sup>. As pointed out in the introduction to the seminar, the then Rector prof. Roberto Sani, the meeting was originated from a series of very important considerations and requests.

The Ministerial Decree April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 on “Criteria and procedures for the recognition of State and non-State distance education universi-

<sup>76</sup> Between the most important papers on the problems related to the development of the e-learning in the Italian higher education system, see: P. Ardizzone, P.C. Rivoltella, *Didattiche per l'e-learning. Metodi e strumenti per l'innovazione dell'insegnamento universitario*, Roma, Carocci, 2003; L. Galliani, R. Costa, *Valutare l'e-learning*, Lecce, Pensa Multimedia, 2003; P.G. Rossi (ed.), *Didattica multimediale in rete*, Perugia, Morlacchi, 2004; R. Maragliano (ed.), *Pedagogie dell'e-learning*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2004; C. Scurati (ed.), *E-learning/università. Esperienze, analisi, proposte*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2004; F. Falcinelli (ed.), *E-learning. Aspetti pedagogici e didattici*, Perugia, Morlacchi Editore, 2005; L. Galliani, R. Costa (eds.), *E-learning nella didattica universitaria. Modelli, ricerche ed esperienze della Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione dell'Università di Padova*, Roma, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2005.

<sup>77</sup> P. Crispiani, P.G. Rossi (eds.), *E-learning. Formazione, modelli, proposte*, Roma, Armando Editore, 2006.

ties” established the requirements for the recognition of distance education courses, as well as the eventual recognition of new bodies allowed to provide such courses (the so-called *on-line universities*). It also established the specific techniques of the e-learning system that on-line universities must implement to manage and provide distance education courses. What is missing in this Decree, and that we intend to focus on during the seminar in Macerata, is the whole picture of the purposes and organisational forms of e-learning best suitable for traditional universities, *i.e.* the e-learning model able to better interpret the framework of supply and demand of university education, to meet the needs of those involved in distance education, first of all teachers and students; a model that can really attract new students and support the quality of this education, contributing effectively to combine the essential needs of *innovation* with the *tradition of excellence* of the university system.

The determination of a specific university e-learning model was in fact, according to the Rector of the University of Macerata, an important challenge, full of implications and problems to be solved:

It is necessary, first of all, to solve the problem of how to integrate the university professors in this creative process; of how to face with the (not secondary) issue of the creation and management of contents; of how to ensure that the system could produce concrete advantages to teachers in terms of labour saving, relief of the organisational aspects and more repetitive teaching, in short, to improve the quality of teachers’ work, with a real balance between teaching activities and research activities. At the same time, it is necessary to clearly define *new tutorial forms* to support the learning process and to determine *criteria and methods of evaluation of distance education learning*, able to ensure the *quality* and *effectiveness* of the processes and results.

And also:

The challenge is to demonstrate that the e-learning methods can effectively support the university education and that, indeed, between the so-called *collateral damages* of the use of new *Information and Communication Technologies* in distance education (from the interactive use of the Web for the access to content and services and for cooperative work, to the use of the *spreadsheet* for the treatment of active documents and calculation modules and to the databases for the management of information); among the *collateral damages*, I said, there is the highly desirable one of the achievement, at the end of a university course, of an effective mastery of these new *technologies*. A perspective that we consider necessary to pursue, even if with a significant delay compared to other industrialized countries,

as recent surveys and studies have highlighted, in the spread of the ability to use the new *Technologies of Information and Communication* at the social level.

At the basis of the decision to organize the seminar in Macerata on *E-Learning: Training, Models and Proposals*, stood, finally, the awareness that:

Beyond the choice and the adoption at a University level of a certain model of distance learning, the e-learning can represent an opportunity for research and experimentation in the field of didactics and pedagogy of the teaching and learning process. And this, in particular, because we are firmly convinced that, beyond the multiple and complex technological and managerial aspects of the process, the e-learning represents one of the most important background for the *education of the future* (including that of higher and university level) and, as such, is a necessary challenge for a *pedagogy of education and training* that wants to provide answers and competence of culturally and humanely mature individuals<sup>78</sup>.

Based on the papers presented by experts such as Pier Giuseppe Rossi, Luciano Galliani, Pier Cesare Rivoltella, and numerous other scholars, the seminar of April 2004 outlined real guidelines for the conventional universities involved in e-learning and distance education:

Suggestions and proposals emerge from the seminar, that had to be translated into concrete projects and initiatives. With this purpose it is necessary, first of all, to wonder about the meaning of a system of distance learning (ODL) for a university today, investing resources and developing projects in the field of e-learning. Surely, the first approach to e-learning in our country can be considered now outdated, an approach full of enthusiasm, but also a bit naive, which allowed the beginning of some interesting, but quite limited, experiences.

Among the most important needs there are: in the first place, to establish a well structured educational syllabus for the users who, for professional or geographical or for other reasons, cannot fully enjoy the direct normal educational and organisational structures of universities and that, therefore, request to the universities a training process and a cultural and profes-

<sup>78</sup> R. Sani, *Introduzione*, in Crispiani, Rossi (eds.), *E-Learning. Formazione, modelli, proposte*, cit., pp. 12-14.

sional growth totally innovative, which cannot be fulfilled except through the use of new technologies and redefining the approaches and strategies for higher education:

It is a broad and demanding user base, that does not look for a easy way to obtain a degree and that, instead, aims to achieve levels of cultural and professional training at least equal to those provided by the University through traditional educational channels, and well-established structures and methods of teaching / learning. An user base that aims to increase its scientific and professional competencies, and that asks for a enhancement of the possessed knowledge and experience. The real challenge, in this respect, is the ability to define, integrate and analyse the personal experienced in the human and professional field, through the acquisition of cultural tools and the knowledge of an appropriate scientific framework.

In order to coordinate and enhance the initiatives of the individual universities in the field of e-learning, it was necessary, first of all, to define the characteristics and functions of the *University Centres for Distance Learning*, which should have been a sort of «control room» and, at the same time, a real research lab at the service of teaching innovation and pedagogical planning of the universities:

So far, we have moved with no particular order and with a pioneering approach, operating at the level of individual faculties, and sometimes even individual courses. And here is the first problem: what is the University coordination of the e-learning activities that could and should be planned and implemented today? The perspective adopted in recent months by several Italian universities is that of the establishment of specific *University Centres of for Distance Learning*. The activation of *University Centres for Distance Learning* was originated, in most cases, by the need to identify effective indicators and efficient operating methods for this field. Beyond the essential planning functions so far carried out, however, it is necessary to wonder: what should e the role and the competencies of these University Centres? The study seminar in Macerata suggests that they not only have to perform a function of direction and coordination, as well as of technical and managerial support, but that they also should promote and ensure applied research, to update their competencies and to promote innovation in the field. In this regard, it was clearly stressed the need to focus immediately and constantly on projects that connect synergistically know the *educational-pedagogical* dimension (and reflection) and the *technological* dimension (and reflection).

That being so, a sort of «Charter» of the functions and competencies of these *University Centres for Distance Learning* was developed in the course of study seminar in Macerata:

1) A University Centre that, first of all, establishes what should be the levels of centralization, that is documented on the «good customs» and promotes and transmits them to the University, that might serve as a connection and coordination tool with respect to the Faculties and Courses. 2) A University Centre which is able to arrange activities to promote and support the implementation and development of e-learning (training of tutors, teacher training, etc.), *i.e.* that promotes the growth of internal resources and enhances the existing ones to create an expertise within the University. 3) A University Centre which might have a specific organic with well-structured competencies (experts in education and computer science, technical and administrative staff, tutors and other figures of support, as well as researchers in the field of Distance Learning, etc.). 4) A University Centre that enables the coordination between the research in the educational-pedagogical field and the technological and computer one. 5) A University Centre which is not limited to providing «services» and to ensure «best practices», but that makes possible a continuous update of the proposals in the context of lifelong and distance learning (ODL).

For what concerns the latter point, it was necessary to create structures that, in addition to grant specific services, operates with the purpose to promote, within the University and the teaching staff, a real «common and updated culture» of Distance Learning (ODL), so that e-learning was gradually perceived:

not as something exceptional, but as a normal and essential part of university education, expression of a variety of educational, cultural and communicative needs; as a sort of approach capable to respond to a wide set of functions and activities: from that of support to traditional lessons, to the definition of on-line activities to be integrated in predominantly frontal ones, to blended methods, to exclusively on-line courses. We are certain that this instrument is necessary in today Universities; as well as we believe that it is impossible to continue considering e-learning as a irrelevant or marginal reality compared to the processes and dynamics of university teaching and research<sup>79</sup>.

In September 2004, the *Centro di Ateneo per l'E-Learning e la Formazione Integrata (CELFI)* [University Centre for E-Learn-

<sup>79</sup> Ivi, pp. 14-18.

ing and Integrated Training] was established at the University of Macerata, on the basis of the considerations developed in the National seminar on *E-Learning: Training, Models and Proposals*. Among its aims there were to «support and coordinate the progressive methodological and technological development of learning and teaching processes that involves the use of Internet and multimedia», to act as a «strategic tool to promote the integration of educational technologies both in teaching in the students' routines»; to «coordinate the initiatives related to e-learning, on-line teaching (connected to classroom teaching), and distance learning activated by the Faculties and jointly planned»; and, finally, to «promote research and development activities in connection with national and international organizations», and to «make available to the university teaching and research activity the most modern technological methods», carrying out its activity «respecting the differences and specificities of the individual faculties and courses»<sup>80</sup>.

The CELFI was directed by Pier Giuseppe Rossi, a professor of general education at the University of Macerata, and in the following years, it would have had the task to coordinate and support in terms of technology, teaching and organization, an on-line educational syllabus consisting of more than fifteen Bachelors and Masters degree courses and postgraduate courses, established within different faculties (Education Sciences, Law, Political Sciences, Humanities, Cultural Heritage, Communication Sciences) and intended to involve thousands of students, approximately the 12-15% of the total number of enrolled students<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> The *Centro di Ateneo per l'E-Learning e la Formazione Integrata (CELF)* [University Centre for E-Learning and Integrated Training] of the University of Macerata was established by Decree of the Rector September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004, no. 1235. See Università degli Studi di Macerata, *Rapporto di ateneo anno 2004*, Macerata, Biemmegraf, 2005, pp. 86-87.

<sup>81</sup> In addition to starting several collaborations with individual scholars and European and non-European research organizations on the theme of e-learning and distance education, the CELFI managed from the beginning the training of the support staff for on-line courses, creating, among other things, the postgraduate course of training for "On-line Tutor" in collaboration with the University of Camerino and Molise. See: S. Silenzi, *E-Learning Design all'Università di Macerata: I Tutor on-line*,



In order to promote a «constant coordination between the research in the educational and pedagogical field and the technological one» and not «to merely provide ‘services’ and ensure ‘best customs’», but to make possible the «continuous update of the proposals in the field of Distance Learning (ODL)», in June 2006 the University of Macerata organized an international conference on the theme *Progettare e-Learning/e-Learning design*<sup>82</sup>, sponsored by the Conference of the Rectors of Italian Universities (CRUI), the Italian Society of Pedagogy (SIPED), the Italian Society for Educational Research (SIRD) and the main Italian and European organizations active in the field of e-learning, such as the SIE-L and L-EIFE. It included among its the speakers – more than a hundred scholars – some of the most important experts in the field:

For our University – the Rector of the small University of Macerata Roberto Sani underlined, introducing the conference – e-learning is a strategic sector: the beginning of a Ph.D. on *E-Learning and Knowledge Management*, the activation also with the distance education method of an increasing number of Bachelors and Masters degree courses and of masters and postgraduate courses, the establishment of a Bachelor’s degree course on *E-Learning and Multimedia*, the presence of a specific research project of National Interest (PRIN), funded by the Ministry of Education, and of several international research projects in the field testified it<sup>83</sup>.

*Indirizzo telematico*, <[http://isdsm.univ-tln.fr/PDF/isdsm39/Article\\_Isdm\\_Ticemed09\\_Silenzi\\_MP%20ok.pdf](http://isdsm.univ-tln.fr/PDF/isdsm39/Article_Isdm_Ticemed09_Silenzi_MP%20ok.pdf)> (last checked: September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014), pp. 8-11.

<sup>82</sup> P.G. Rossi (ed.), *Progettare e-Learning/e-Learning design. Atti del Convegno, Macerata 7-9 giugno 2006*, 2 vols., Macerata, eum, 2006.

<sup>83</sup> Today – Sani also underlined – we have eight academic courses (Bachelors and Master degree courses), using entirely the on-line method, and this method that originally had involved the Faculties of Education and Law, today also involves the Faculty of Political Sciences and Humanities. Over the 12% of students enrolled in our university belongs to on-line undergraduate courses; to these must be added a significant percentage of graduates who are achieving specialization in postgraduate courses, using both the blended and the on-line method. The *Centre for E-Learning and Integrated Training* (CELFIT), established some years ago, plays an effective and well-structured activity of technical and organisational support to the faculty and, at the same time, is committed to promoting technological innovation and methodological research in the field. The activation, in the Faculty of Education, of the degree course in *Trainer for E-Learning and Multimedia* and, at the same time, the establishment of a dedicated Ph.D in *E-Learning and Knowledge Management*, confirm that our University considers the training of experts and the promotion of highly specialized research in the field as essential for the increasing qualification and the

The meeting in Macerata, intended to resume and continue «the reflection began two years before with the another important study seminar on *e-learning, training, models and proposals*», had as objective to focus on the new and significant challenges represented by e-learning in higher education and Italian universities:

Today, e-Learning includes two different scenarios, two different interpretations of the same reality. The first scenario shows a large and rapidly expanding sector, which includes a surprisingly variety of skills, methodologies, technologies and, at the same time, a clear – and valuable – planning attitude. Recent literature now identifies an organic evolution, a kind of historical development of *distance education*, in which [...] it is possible to identify different phases (each with its theoretical references, its conceptual and methodological frameworks, its specific approaches), and different generations of scholars who have contributed to the development of this sector. A confirmation of the rapid development of studies and research in this field is represented by the fact that the treatises and handbooks on e-Learning tend to become obsolete within a few years; and this is not only because some of their solutions and proposals become very soon outdated; but also, and especially, because the approaches and issues under investigation seem to be outdated – and therefore obsolete respect to the evolution of the debate and research addresses.

The other scenario was the one connected to the levels of knowledge/competence and fruition/ use of e-learning of those who seemed to be the main and most direct creators and protagonists of distance education:

The university teachers seem to be still neutral- even when not prejudicially suspicious – towards such innovation; and this, in my opinion, not only because, having get in contact with the digital technologies only in their adulthood, they experience the difficulties and resistances typical of those who are not «digital natives», but also because they are subjected to a series of prejudices and fears, equally understandable and that should be kept in mind, whose origins lie in the cultural and educational para-

necessary updating of the same activities of E-Learning and Integrated Training (R. Sani, *Introduzione ai lavori*, in Rossi (ed.), *Progettare e-Learning/le-Learning design. Atti del Convegno, Macerata 7-9 giugno 2006*, cit., vol. I, pp. 13-14). See the analysis documented reconstruction provided by L. Giannandrea, P. Magnoler, P.G. Rossi, *APOL o l'aula virtuale. I master on-line dell'università di Macerata*, in E. Damiano (with L. Giannandrea, P. Magnoler, P.G. Rossi), *La mediazione didattica. Per una teoria dell'insegnamento*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2013, pp. 234-283.

digms that have traditionally inspired and characterized the university and academic teaching in Italy and in Europe. In other words, little or no attention was given for a long time, in our country, to the university methodological-teaching innovations and to the creation of a specific teachers' sensitivity and competence in the field, thus strengthening a series of prejudices about the formal correctness and the effectiveness and validity of an academic teaching that does not acquire the traditional forms of direct and frontal transmission of certain contents and that – far beyond the use of computer and digital technology as a mere aid to the traditional «lesson» – involves the use of new methods of knowledge transmission and assessment and, above all, calls into question the principle of unity of place and time, *i.e.* the simultaneous coexistence, in the same educational place (university classroom), of all the actors of the teaching / learning process.

Given this situation, it was necessary to be aware of the complexity of the factors involved and the gap between the scientific and technological progress of e-learning, on the one hand, and its practical implementation in the Italian universities, on the other:

It is necessary to understand the real and the most significant challenges that e-Learning meets in the current historical time and, at the same time, to wonder about the positive impact that the spread of distance education can have in the more general process of educational and cultural modernization of the Italian university system. If we can not quickly fill – or at least reduce – the present gap between the minority of experts and the majority of teachers who had not realized yet the substantial benefits produced by e-Learning in the university education, aiming to promote a wider knowledge of the problems of distance learning and an authentic culture of teaching and methodological innovation among our colleagues, the negative effects of such a delay will have an impact not only on e-Learning, but also on the ability of Italian universities to adapt their educational syllabus on the new challenges of the «communication society».

In this respect, it was necessary to further strengthen the already existing connection between the research in the field of e-learning and the reflection on the renewal of university teaching, as well as pay equal attention both to the improvement of distance education strategies and the strengthening of its technologies, and to the development of a wider «e-Learning culture» and the promotion of a more widespread expertise of academic teachers in this field:

All this can only be achieved through a direct and conscious involvement of an increasing number of teachers in the ongoing processes and by the activation of a serious support to experimentation, which allows to overcome the difficulties and to develop a «widespread competence» in this context. The appropriate integration between teaching and technology also imposes the need for a broader debate on the meaning and extent of the innovations that e-Learning introduces in the communication of knowledge and skills and in the same university educational processes. On this side, it is necessary a culturally careful approach towards the new digital technologies and their use in education, which, on the one hand, avoids the simplistic enthusiasm and dangerous idea according to which the success of e-Learning depends entirely on the quality and appropriateness of the technological supports employed and, on the other hand, constantly reflects on the new meanings and processes that the use of digital technologies produces in the learning and training process, *i.e.* on the original dynamics that the e-Learning process introduces in the teaching / learning and educational practices.

For all these reasons, the e-learning could not be «represented by a minority of specialists or – on a different level – be an initiative relying on voluntarism and the planning of a sector or a component (faculty, department, research centre, etc.) of the universities». Its efficient and effective implementation required a conscious choice by the governing bodies of the University, which had to define the strategies and objectives to be pursued on this side and, at the same time, to provide the human and financial resources for its concrete implementation and monitoring:

The choice made in recent years by several Italian universities, including that of Macerata, to establish a University Centre for e-Learning and integrated training, has essentially this meaning: to coordinate the sector, to support experimentations, to provide conceptual frameworks, educational and technological support to the structures involved in the sector. Someone considers the University Centres for e-Learning and integrated training as simple service centres, *i.e.* facilities devoted to the mere provision of specific services within the University (in this case the distance learning). We can't share this idea, which seems to be not only simplistic, but also dangerous in the case of a sector such as e-Learning, whose effectiveness and functionality is strongly dependent on scientific and technological research and on the ability to those who work to produce innovation and to extend and update the competence levels. The experience carried out in recent years at the University of Macerata is extraordinarily significant in this regard and seems to confirm the correctness of an intuition that from the begin-

ning has supported our work, encouraging us to favour a model of University Centre for e-Learning and integrated training that was not limited to provide a specific service, but was able to combine the teaching activity and a wide range of services (on-line registration and enrolments, on-line booking of exams, access to library catalogues and digital library resources, on-line information and orientation etc.) with a highly specialized research activity, in order to improve the theoretical models and operational strategies, to upgrade our system on the basis of most innovative Italian and foreign experiences, to monitor and evaluate it.

However, the new challenges represented by e-learning required the cooperation and commitment of several actors: experts and specialists in e-learning, first of all, but also the governing bodies of the universities, scientific societies of the different sectors and disciplines and, in particular, the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI):

The CRUI has had in recent years, with reference to e-learning and new technologies applied to teaching and university education, a function of coordination of efforts and of study of the new problems that, in my opinion, turned out to be particularly important: it has allowed an expansion of knowledge in the field, resulting in the overcoming of many *clichés* and prejudices; has supported the research, abroad experiences and initiatives, the collaboration between universities, the emergence, within the Italian universities, of a new sensibility, looking at e-learning and new technologies as one of the factors that can permit the national university system to really improve. The CRUI has exercised in recent years – though not always with the desired results – a work of encouragement and guidance in respect of the same Ministry of Education, whose choices are not always responding to the real needs and expectations of the national university system.

It was essential, in this regard, that such a commitment would not fail and that, indeed, it would strengthen and consolidate:

In particular, it is essential that it [the CRUI] continues to play a coordination and stimulus action for the whole system of Italian universities. Two aspects of the complex reality of today e-Learning require, in particular, an organic intervention by the CRUI: the *assessment* and, above all, [...] the quality. Someone has affirmed in recent years that the use of e-Learning involves saving, or at least a lower cost, compared to traditional teaching forms and methods. There was a great emphasis on the *convenience* of e-Learning in order to promote its wider use and spread. Actually, it is not true, and this idea, perhaps, served to remove some prejudice and *clichés* and to encourage who was looking for innovation at low cost and high

profitability to approach to e-Learning. In all cases, this type of approach was short-lived, and, above all, was based on an incorrect assumption. There are other – and very different – reasons for the universities to invest in e-Learning, which, when respects a standard of quality, involves significant expenses and financial resources, as well as adequate technical expertise by those who are called to manage it. The e-Learning is, however, a wide-ranging strategic objective, because it does not just promote a new method of distance education, but also encourages the improvement of the quality of traditional teaching, promotes an increase of methodological-didactic and technological competencies among the teachers, activates a process of modernization of the facilities and services of the universities.

Finally, for a real improvement of the quality of e-learning within the Italian university system, it is necessary and compelling a real change of direction of the strategies implemented so far by the Ministry of Education, University and Research:

The last decree of the Ministry of Education in this field was the Moratti-Stanca, which certainly has a series of merits, but it also involves many misunderstandings and ambiguities, so little being in harmony with the evolution of the e-Learning in the Italian university system. The first misunderstanding is that, for the spread of distance learning in higher and university education, the legislature considered more useful the establishment of on-line Universities, which, in the majority of cases, were originated from bodies and *consortia* that had nothing to do with the academic world (with all the consequences), rather than the promotion and support of e-Learning in traditional universities. The second misunderstanding of the law Moratti-Stanca was to pay attention almost exclusively, with reference to distance learning, to the problems of a technological nature than to the methodological-didactic ones. It seems to me that these issues require a commitment of the CRUI, promoting a necessary revision of the decree or the integration in its most lacking and ambiguous parts<sup>84</sup>.

Many of the topics discussed during the international conference sponsored by the University of Macerata in June 2006 would have been, in the following years, resumed and analysed by the specialists of the field<sup>85</sup>. The University of

<sup>84</sup> R. Sani, *Conclusioni dei lavori*, in Rossi (ed.), *Progettare e-Learning/e-Learning design. Atti del Convegno, Macerata 7-9 giugno 2006*, cit., vol. II, pp. 1108-1116.

<sup>85</sup> See, in particular: P.C. Rivoltella (ed.), *E-tutor. Profilo, metodi, strumenti*, Roma, Carocci, 2006; R. Trincherò, *Valutare l'apprendimento nell'e-learning. Dalle*

Macerata, thanks to its high-profile project and a kind of e-learning and distance education characterized by a close connection between teaching and research, technological innovation and pedagogical reflection, was awarded by the European Foundation for Quality in E-Learning (EFQUEL), in November 2009, along with other European institutions, with the prestigious *Unique E-Learning Quality Label* for the years 2009-2012 for the high quality of e-learning services and the use of new technologies<sup>86</sup>.

Some time ago, Antonio Calvani, a leading Italian specialist in teaching and education technologies, outlining a series of

*abilità alle competenze*, Trento, Erickson, 2006; M. Giacomantonio, *Learning object. Progettazione dei contenuti didattici per l'e-learning*, Roma, Carocci, 2007; A. Colorni, M. Pegoraro, P.G. Rossi (eds.), *e-Learning tra formale e informale. Atti del 4° Congresso della Società Italiana di e-Learning: Macerata*, 3-6 luglio 2007, Macerata, eum, 2007; M.G. Celentano, S. Colazzo, *L'apprendimento digitale. Prospettive tecnologiche e pedagogiche dell'e-learning*, Roma, Carocci, 2008; F. Rajola, C. Scurati, A. Torriero (eds.), *Il nostro e-learning. Innovazioni didattiche e formative*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2009; D. Palomba, *Oltre l'E-Learning? Università aperta e nuovi modelli di formazione*, Pisa, Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2009; P.G. Rossi (ed.), *Tecnologie e costruzione di mondi*, Roma, Armando, 2009; M.B. Ligorio, E. Mazzoni, A. Simone, M. Schaerf (eds.), *Didattica on-line nell'Università: teorie, esperienze e strumenti*, Napoli, Scriptaweb, 2011.

<sup>86</sup> In addition to the University of Macerata, the prize *Unique e-learning quality label* for the period 2009-2012 was given in Helsinki by the European Foundation for Quality in e-Learning to the following European universities: Dipoli Institute (Helsinki University of Technology), Metid Centre (Politecnico of Milano), Moscow University of Industry and Finance, School of Humanities (University of the Aegean), University of Granada, University of Leicester. The *Unique*, acronym of *European University Quality in E-Learning* is the first European accreditation system that evaluates the universities in the fields of e-Learning and rewards the excellent use of new technologies. The evaluation process was complex and varied: in June 2008, two members of the international committee of evaluators visited the university, meeting the administration managers, the staff of the CELFI, the University Centre for Information Technology and multimedia, the teachers, the tutors and the students involved in on-line learning. The evaluators examined highly technical aspects, such as the network infrastructure or the design of on-line environments, along with administrative, educational and university policies. It was appreciated that the e-Learning services are included in a strategy for innovation and quality in order to enhance the services provided to students, with a constant confrontation with the European leader institutions. See: <<http://csia.unimc.it/it>> (last checked: September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014).

perspectives on the future of e-learning in the Italian university system, emphasized that, in recent years,

The universities want to incorporate the distance in the ordinary courses with a single method in which distance and traditional education are blended; basically, most of the teaching, starting from the undergraduate level, is characterized by a particular integration of traditional teaching and on-line teaching, the so-called combined or blended method; the quantity of each of them depends on various factors, but now all the institutions have undergone this process of reconfiguration. It is not clear yet whether within the universities the increasing presence of e-learning is destined to be associate, in the following years, with a general rethinking on the nature and purposes of the university itself, if this will lead to organisational solutions that can incorporate more deeply the new models of cooperative production of knowledge typical of a globalized society, or to accept the challenge of lifelong learning, be opened to new dimensions such as that represented by informal learning.

A complex process, the one outlined by Antonio Calvani, whose results are far from being obvious, implying an approach to e-learning and university distance education which combines technological innovation with the reflection on the nature of knowledge and its construction; requiring, at the same time, a rethinking of the terms and characteristics of traditional learning and education<sup>87</sup>.

These are demanding needs and purposes targets, very difficult to be reached by the so-called on-line universities, whose fragile configuration from an institutional and scientific point of view inspires a certain degree of pessimism about their ability to exercise a leading role in the future scenarios of e-learning and university distance education.

The challenge, in this respect, mainly concerns the network of «conventional» universities that from a long time – not without uncertainties, delays and reflections – are interested in technological innovation and distance learning. And it is particularly demanding challenge not only because the whole process of implementation and development of e-learning in the Italian university system of the last decade has occurred, unlike the other countries of European Union, in the absence

<sup>87</sup> Calvani, *Dall'Educazione a Distanza all'e-Learning*, cit., pp. 14-15.



of appropriate regulatory interventions and financial support from national governments, but also because on this front, as on many others of higher education, the real absence of a valid political interlocutor, aware of the challenging situation, made more difficult for the Italian university system to adapt to the ongoing changes.



## Chapter 3

The University as a historiographical problem. Studies and research on Italian universities and higher education systems in the last twenty years

Studies and research on the history of universities and of higher education have seen, in the past two decades, a significant flowering and a remarkable renewal. Since the last decade of the Twentieth century the historiographical debate on universities and higher education has experienced a new and fruitful season<sup>1</sup>. In particular, there has been a significant increase in the studies relating to the policies and systems used in Italian universities during the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries and to the history of individual universities in modern times, a phenomenon in sharp contrast with the panorama emerging in the previous decades<sup>2</sup>, during which the scene was dominated

<sup>1</sup> See I. Porciani, *L'università dell'Italia unita*, «Passato e presente», 29, 1993, pp. 123-135; Casadei, *Recenti studi sull'Università italiana dopo l'Unità*, cit.; M. Moretti, *La storia dell'Università italiana in età contemporanea. Ricerche e prospettive*, in Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del convegno. Padova, 27-29 ottobre 1994*, cit.; Fois, *La ricerca storica sull'Università italiana in età contemporanea. Rassegna degli studi*, cit. Further reviews of studies on the history of the university are those proposed in L. Bellatalla, *Didattica e storia dell'Università in Italia*, «Ricerche Pedagogiche», 115, 1995, pp. 57-64; Brizzi, *La storia delle università in Italia: l'organizzazione della ricerca nel XX secolo*, cit.; M. Roggero, *Le università in epoca moderna*, in Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del convegno. Padova, 27-29 ottobre 1994*, cit., pp. 311-334.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview and a critical balance of the historiography of this field in the phase preceding the one examined here, see: G. Ricuperati, *La scuola nell'Italia unita*,

in an almost undisputed manner<sup>3</sup> by medieval and modernism research. The historians' attention had focused especially on the golden age of the origins, and so on medieval studies, with some significant forays in the modern age<sup>4</sup>. In this field, the particular branch of studies on the history of individual universities has registered a substantial stability, and represents, still today, one of the most representative research paths of Italian and European historiography in this sector<sup>5</sup>. Since the early Nineties a

in *Storia d'Italia*, Torino, Einaudi, 1973, vol. V, pp. 1693-1736; and A. La Penna, *Università e istruzione pubblica*, in *ivi*, pp. 1737-1774.

<sup>3</sup> In contrast with this state of affair, during the Eighties some scholars, especially with a historical and scholastic education, were engaged in the reconstruction of the events relating to the birth and the complex evolution of the national university system after Unification. In this regard, see in particular: F. De Vivo, G. Genovesi (eds.), *Cento anni di università. L'istruzione superiore in Italia dall'Unità ai nostri giorni. Atti del III Convegno nazionale CIRSE. Padova, 9-10 novembre 1984*, Napoli, ESI, 1986; T. Tomasi, L. Bellatalla, *L'Università italiana nell'età liberale (1861-1923)*, Napoli, Liguori, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Among the most significant contributions on this front, we recommend: J. Verger, *Le università nel medioevo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1982; E. Brambilla, *Università, scuole e professioni in Italia dal primo '700 alla Restaurazione*, «Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento», 23, 1997, pp. 153-208; A. De Benedictis, *Le università italiane*, in G.P. Brizzi, J. Verger (eds.), *Le Università dell'Europa. Dal rinnovamento scientifico all'età dei lumi*, 6 vols., Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana Editrice, 1991-1996, vol. V, pp. 67-85; P. Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins University Press, 2002; E. Bellini (ed.), *Continuità e fratture nella storia delle università italiane dalle origini all'età contemporanea*, Perugia, Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, 2006. On the above mentioned fundamental and miscellaneous work *Le Università dell'Europa. Dal rinnovamento scientifico all'età dei lumi*, 6 vols., Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana Editrice, 1991-1996, edited by G.P. Brizzi and J. Verger, see the careful analysis proposed by M.R. Di Simone, *Le Università dell'Europa*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 1, 1997, pp. 229-231.

<sup>5</sup> See G. Benzoni, *Le istituzioni culturali: dalle università alle accademie*, in M. Firpo, N. Tranfaglia (eds.), *La storia: i grandi problemi dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea. L'Età moderna, 2. La vita religiosa e la cultura*, Torino, Utet, 1986, pp. 335-355. Among the publications of the last twenty years a renewed attention to the history of individual universities and of local academic institutions is evident, as demonstrated by some reconstruction of undoubted critical value, many of which dedicated to contemporary age, and especially to the events of the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries. As an example, but without any pretence to completeness, we recommend: G.P. Brizzi, L. Marini, P. Pombeni (eds.), *L'Università a Bologna. Maestri, studenti e luoghi dal XVI al XX secolo*, Cinisello Balsamo, Amilcare Pizzi, 1988; G. Catoni, D. Balestracci, A. Brilli, *L'Università di Siena. 750 anni di storia*, Siena-Milano, Silvana Editrice, 1991; M. Cattini, E. Decleva, A. De Maddalena, M.A. Romani, *Storia di una libera università. L'Università commerciale Luigi Bocconi dalle origini al 1914*, Milano, Egea, 1992; F. Traniello

significant impulse to the investigations and to the renewal of the studies in this field has come from the establishment of specific research groups and specialized centres devoted mainly to the analysis of the sources and to a detailed study of the history of universities and of the systems of higher education in Italy and Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth century.

In particular, in December 1991 Unistoria, the Interuniversity Centre of Studies for the History of Universities, was created. Its promoters – the University of Napoli “Federico II”, the University of Siena and the Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento – gave birth to an extensive program of research on the history of universities from which a series of publications

lo (ed.), *L'Università di Torino. Profilo storico e istituzionale*, Torino, Pluriverso, 1993; Commissione rettorale per la Storia dell'Università di Pisa, *Storia dell'Università di Pisa. 1343-1737*, 2 vols., Ospedaletto (Pisa), Pacini Editore, 1993; Id., *Storia dell'Università di Pisa, 1737-1861*, Pisa, Edizioni Plus, 2000; *Per una storia dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Settantacinque anni di vita nella chiesa e nella società italiana*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1997; M. Cattini, E. Decleva, A. De Maddalena, *Storia di una libera università: l'Università commerciale Luigi Bocconi dal 1915 al 1945*, Milano, Egea, 1997; Fois, *Storia dell'Università di Sassari 1859-1943*, cit.; M. Cattini, E. Decleva, A. De Maddalena, *Storia di una libera università: l'Università commerciale Luigi Bocconi dal 1945 a oggi*, Milano, Egea, 2002; P. Del Negro, F. Piovan (eds.), *L'Università di Padova nei secoli (1601-1805)*, Treviso, Antilia, 2002; P. Viola, *Oligarchie. Una storia orale dell'Università di Palermo*, Roma, Donzelli, 2005; R. Sani (ed.), *Per una storia dell'Università di Macerata*, Bologna, Clueb, 2009. For what concerns the University of Messina and the University of Roma “La Sapienza” are worthy of mention the works edited by D. Novarese, *Rassegna bibliografica sulla storia dell'Università di Messina*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 2, 1998, pp. 239-244 and by M.C. De Rigo, *Bibliotheca Sapientiae, Bibliografia delle pubblicazioni sull'Università di Roma “La Sapienza”*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 8, 2004, pp. 455-476. Among the most recent publications must be remembered: *Storia dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*, 6 vols., Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2007-2009; M. Bartoli (ed.), *In fide et humanitate. 70 anni della LUMSA. Presentazione del Sig. Cardinale Attilio Nicoria*, Roma, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009; Mattone (ed.), *Storia dell'Università di Sassari*, cit.; R.P. Coppini, *A short history of the University of Pisa*, Pisa, Plus, 2010; P. Grendler, *The University of Perugia, 1308-2008*, «The Catholic Historical Review», 2, 2010, pp. 282-288; D. Menozzi, *La Normale novecentesca e i problemi attuali dell'istruzione superiore*, «Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia», 3, n. 1, 2011, pp. 81-100; A. Bianchi (ed.), *Le università del Mezzogiorno nella storia dell'Italia unita 1861-2011*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2011; G. Berti, *L'Università di Padova dal 1814 al 1850*, Treviso, Antilia, 2011; Pomante (ed.), *L'Università di Macerata nell'Italia unita (1861-1966). Un secolo di storia dell'ateneo maceratese attraverso le relazioni inaugurali dei rettori e altre fonti archivistiche e a stampa*, cit.; *L'organizzazione dei saperi all'Università di Pisa. Dalle facoltà ai nuovi Dipartimenti*, Pisa, Pisa University Press, 2012.

and important scientific conferences and seminars<sup>6</sup> developed. In that same period, in various Italian universities, special documentation and research Centres on the history of the University were born, often originating by the need to coordinate and realize specific reorganization projects of the local historical archives; finally, in those universities of secular tradition that already possessed such structures, there was a real revival for research, and a significant strengthening of the investigations on the contemporary age<sup>7</sup>.

In the wake of these first initiatives, the aim of which was to support the revitalization of the studies in this field, the conference «La storia delle università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca» [The History of Italian Universities. Archives, sources, research means] was held in Padova from 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1994. It intended to summarize the situation of the archive collections and of the documentary sources available, and to promote a first meeting among the experts on the state of research in Italy and on the new sources of international historiography<sup>8</sup>.

In the same year, the first *Repertorio nazionale degli storici dell'Università*, edited by Gian Paolo Brizzi was created. It was a real census of the Italian scholars working in this area and a first organic presentation of the studies realized on the issue in recent

<sup>6</sup> Directed by prof. Aldo Mazzacane Unistoria gave birth to an important series of studies and researches whose publishing house is Jovene of Napoli, that has also published in recent years various study collections and documentary contributions of great value. See A. Mazzacane, C. Vano (eds.), *Università e professioni giuridiche in Europa nell'età liberale*, Napoli, Jovene, 1994; Porciani (ed.), *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei e il caso italiano*, cit.; R. Varriale, *La Facoltà di Giurisprudenza nella Regia Università di Napoli. Un archivio ritrovato (1881-1923)*, in ivi, 2000; I. Porciani (ed.), *Università e scienza nazionale*, in ivi, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> It is convenient to point out, among the older and more prestigious ones, the Centre for the history of University of Bologna (1906), and the Centre for the history of University of Padova (1922), as well as the more recent documentation and research centres (variously named), established in the universities of Ferrara, Genova, Macerata, Messina, Modena, Parma, Pavia, Perugia, Pisa, Roma, Sassari and Torino. See G.P. Brizzi, *Premessa*, in Id. (ed.), *Repertorio nazionale degli storici dell'Università*, Sassari, Chiarella, 1994, pp. 3-4. See also Fois, *La ricerca storica sull'Università italiana in età contemporanea. Rassegna degli studi*, cit., pp. 241-257.

<sup>8</sup> See Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle Università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del convegno. Padova, 27-29 ottobre 1994*, cit.

decades and of the investigations in progress; an instrument to be reintroduced, in a modernized form, a few years later and to represent a sort of manifesto of the «new course» of studies in this sector<sup>9</sup>.

In 1996, while this first phase of reorganization and revitalization of studies on the history of universities and higher education reached its peak, the CISUI (Interuniversity Centre for the History of Italian Universities) was established in Bologna by a group of scholars belonging to the universities of Bologna, Padova, Messina, Sassari and Torino. Its purpose was to increase research in the field of university history. Since its foundation, the CISUI presented itself as a coordination structure between the various Institutes and research Centres working in the university history field in various Italian universities, becoming, within few years, a fundamental point of reference for the research sector in Italy and Europe and including scholars and researchers from 23 Italian universities<sup>10</sup>.

In 1997, the annual scientific journal «Annali di storia delle università italiane» was created in the CISUI. On one hand, it intended to stimulate research on the university history, and on the other, it aimed at maintaining both the links between the present and the past (hence the column *Il punto* [The point], which treats a topical academic question in a strictly scientific manner) and the complex relationship that connects the history of the individual studies to the one of the whole academic network. Hence the decision to dedicate, since the origins of the magazine, the monographic part of the section *Saggi* [The essays] to the history of a single Italian university. Besides, from

<sup>9</sup> G.P. Brizzi (ed.), *Repertorio nazionale degli storici dell'Università*, Sassari, Chiarella, 1994; and D. Negrini (ed.), *Repertorio nazionale degli storici dell'università, 1993-1997*, Bologna, Clueb, 1998. The latter work, referring to the former and modernizing it, includes 375 files on the scholars and researchers of this discipline, and presents a broad overview of the researches and contributions dedicated to the institutional history of universities and to the more general events of higher education in Italy.

<sup>10</sup> At the present time, the CISUI includes scholars from 23 Italian universities: Bari, Bologna, Ferrara, Macerata, Messina, Milano "Bocconi", Milano Politecnico, Milano Statale, Modena and Reggio Emilia, Napoli, Padova, Parma, Pavia, Perugia, Pisa, Roma "Tor Vergata", Sassari, Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Siena "Stranieri", Torino, Tuscia, Valle d'Aosta, Verona.

the sixth issue of 2002, in this same magazine, a comprehensive current and retrospective bibliography on the history of Italian universities, incorporating even all the contributions published in Italy since 1997<sup>11</sup>, had been published.

Actually, already between the Eighties and Nineties, a series of important seminars and meetings had contributed to reviving the history of universities and higher education and to establish new routes of investigation, with a particular reference to the contemporary age<sup>12</sup>. Mentioning only the most significant cases, it is here sufficient to mention the meeting at the University of Siena in 1989 dedicated to «L'Università ieri e oggi. Offerta formativa e domanda sociale» [University yesterday and today. Academic programs and social demand]; to the one held in Pontignano in 1991 and focused on «Università e scienza nazionale tra Otto e Novecento» [Universities and national science in the Nineteenth and Twentieth century], to the already mentioned Neapolitan conference held in 1992 on «Università e professioni giuridiche in Europa in età liberale» [University and the legal profession in Europe in the liberal age]; to the meeting held in Sassari in the same year and focused on «Le Università minori in Italia nel XIX secolo» [The minor universities in Italy in the Nineteenth century]; to the conference held in Milazzo the following year on «Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medioevo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento» [Universities in Europe. Academic institutions from the Middle Ages to the present day: the structure, organization, function]; to the above mentioned seminar held in Padova in 1994 and dedicated to «La storia delle Università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca» [The history of Italian universities. Archives, sources, research means]; to the one held in Alghero in 1996 on «Le Università minori in Europa (secoli

<sup>11</sup> See the bibliographical references contained in «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 6 (2002), pp. 303-336; *ivi*, 7 (2003), pp. 399-415; *ivi*, 8 (2004), pp. 413-428; *ivi*, 9 (2005), pp. 383-401; *ivi*, 10 (2006), pp. 451-463; *ivi*, 11 (2007), pp. 447-459; *ivi*, 12 (2008), pp. 533-550; *ivi*, 13 (2009), pp. 451-459; *ivi*, 14 (2010), pp. 449-459; *ivi*, 15 (2011), pp. 421-438; *ivi*, 16 (2012), pp. 389-400; *ivi*, 17 (2013), pp. 535-544; *ivi*, 18 (2014), pp. 399-41.

<sup>12</sup> See Fois, *La ricerca storica sull'Università italiana in età contemporanea. Rassegna degli studi*, cit., pp. 241-242.



XV-XIX)» [Minor universities minor in Europe (XV-XIX)], and, finally, to the conference held in Trento in 1996 on «L'Università nella storiografia italiana (secoli XVIII-XX): approcci, bilanci e prospettive di ricerca» [The University in the Italian historiography (XVIII-XX): approaches, balance sheets and research perspectives]<sup>13</sup>.

In the above mentioned meetings, particular importance was given to the role played by universities and higher education systems in the process of «nation building», a fundamental interpretative category, which allowed the logic of the particular histories of the individual universities to enter what might be called a history of the «university model» and of its political-institutional and socioeconomic function in the process of nation constitution. With particular reference to the Eighteenth and Twentieth century, the university was regarded as a «laboratory» whose task was founding national science, selecting and training new ruling classes and guaranteeing the value of educational qualifications required for access to professions, and, so, as a regulatory factor of social order and of productive organization of society.

Such an approach, undoubtedly intending to open up new interesting research perspectives, is clearly evident in some of the contributions presented during the above-mentioned meeting held in Siena in 1989 and entitled «Università ieri e oggi. Offerta formativa e domanda sociale», whose proceedings were published some years later under the title *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei ed il caso italiano* [The Universi-

<sup>13</sup> See Porciani (ed.), *Università e scienza nazionale*, cit.; Mazzacane, Vano (eds.), *Università e professioni giuridiche in Europa nell'età liberale*, cit.; Porciani (ed.), *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei ed il caso italiano*, cit.; Da Passano (ed.), *Le Università minori in Italia nel XIX secolo*, cit.; Romano (ed.), *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi. Milazzo, 28 settembre-2 ottobre*, cit.; Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle Università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del convegno. Padova, 27-29 ottobre 1994*, cit.; Brizzi, Verger (eds.), *Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX). Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi. Alghero, 30 ottobre-2 novembre 1996*, cit.

ty in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries: European models and the Italian case]<sup>14</sup>.

This meeting, that saw the participation of some of the most renowned European specialists on the history of universities and higher education in the contemporary age, provided a first significant framework of the evolution registered in the institutional models and in the orientation of the scientific research and university education in the major countries of the continent, after the triumph of the bourgeois society and the rise of new socioeconomic *élites* and new ruling classes, as a result of the increasing industrialization and expanded markets, as well as the modernization of state administrative bodies. It's here sufficient to mention the situation overview proposed by Pierangelo Schiera in his contribution *Modelli di università nell'Ottocento europeo* [Models of European universities in the Nineteenth century], and the documented analysis of the German and French models – that exercised an important influence on the reorganization of the Italian university system in the post unitary period – offered respectively by Rüdiger vom Bruch (*Il modello tedesco: università e «Bildungsbürgertum»*) [The German model: university and «Bildungsbürgertum»] and by Victor Karady (*Il dualismo del modello d'istruzione superiore e la riforma della facoltà di lettere e scienze nella Francia di fine Ottocento*) [The dualism of the model of higher education and the reform of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in France in the late Nineteenth century] and Christophe Charle (*Le élites universitarie in Francia nella Terza Repubblica*) [The *élite* university in France in the Third Republic]<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Porciani (ed.), *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei ed il caso italiano*, cit.

<sup>15</sup> On the post-unit debate referring to the reorganization of higher education and the reform of the university it is also important to mention the documented essays by A. La Penna, *Modello tedesco e modello francese nel dibattito sull'università italiana*, in S. Soldani, G. Turi (eds.), *Fare gli italiani, Scuola e cultura nell'Italia contemporanea I. La nascita dello Stato nazionale*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1993, pp. 171-212. Among the more recent texts, see F. Pruneri, A. Bianchi, *School Reforms and University Transformations and Their Function in Italy from the Eighteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*, «History of Education», 39, n. 1, 2010, pp. 115-136; P. Del Negro, *L'Università italiana tra Sette e primo Ottocento: i modelli di riforma*, in A. D'Avenia, F. Palermo, D. Giuffrida (eds.), *Studi storici dedicati ad Orazio Cancila*, 4

During the meeting held in Siena, Ilaria Porciani (*Lo stato unitario di fronte alla questione dell'università*) [The unitary State faced with the question of the university] and Mauro Moretti (*La questione unitaria a cinquant'anni dall'unificazione. La Commissione Reale per il riordinamento degli studi superiori e la relazione Ceci*) [The question of Unit fifty years after Unification. The Royal Commission for the reorganization of higher education and the report Ceci] had the task to retrace the debate that developed within the post-unitary ruling class and to study the genesis and the development of the educational system promoted by Casati and of the university policy choices made during the liberal age and then in the Giolitti era. In particular, Porciani's articulated intervention focused on certain key themes of political and parliamentary debates of the last forty years of the Nineteenth century, such as the attempts to the centralization of higher education (just think of the choices made by the Minister Carlo Matteucci) and to the rationalization of the national university system (to which, for example, the debate on the maintenance or reduction of Universities is related); while the contribution of Moretti focused on the animated debate developed in the Giolitti era about the reform of the national university system and, in particular, about the work of the *Commissione Reale* for the reorganization of higher education, established in January 1910 by the Minister Edoardo Daneo<sup>16</sup>.

vols., Palermo, Ass. Mediterranea, 2011, vol. III, pp. 1213-1228; M. Moretti, *Toscana, Italia, Europa: La Normale di Pisa e i modelli universitari fra Otto e Novecento*, «Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia», 3, n. 1, 2011, pp. 11-33.

<sup>16</sup> On these issues see also Moretti, Porciani, *Il sistema universitario fra nazione e città: un campo di tensione*, cit.; M. Moretti, *L'«Associazione Nazionale fra i Professori universitari» e la politica universitaria nell'età giolittiana. Note ed osservazioni*, in Romano (ed.), *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento*, cit., pp. 581-600; I. Porciani, *L'eccezione e la regola: l'università italiana dell'Ottocento tra norma scritta e prassi quotidiana*, in *ivi*, pp. 625-635; M. Moretti, *L'istruzione superiore fra i due secoli: norme, studenti e dibattiti*, in A. Casella, A. Ferraresi, G. Giuliani, E. Signori (eds.), *Una difficile modernità. Tradizioni di ricerca e comunità scientifiche in Italia 1890-1940*, Pavia, La Goliardica Pavese, 2000, pp. 351-387.

Within the above mentioned context, Mauro Moretti gave a series of valuable information and suggestions about the approaches and the fundamental orientations that should mark the future investigations and researches on higher education and the university policy of the united Italy, especially when he stressed the urgent need to go beyond the «storia delle idee sull'università [history of ideas about the university]» to focus on «l'intreccio fra gli indirizzi e l'opera della legislazione, della sfera ministeriale, dei corpi e degli interessi locali, e la dimensione progettuale e critica dell'opinione, in specie politica e professorale [the interweaving between the addresses and the work of legislation, of the sphere ministerial, of the bodies and of local interests, and size of the project and critical opinion, especially political and professorial]»<sup>17</sup>.

The reports by Guido Melis (*Alle origini della Direzione generale per l'istruzione superiore*) [At the origins of Directorate General for Higher Education], with the appropriate use of the private papers of the general director of university education Giovanni Ferrando), by Luisa Mangoni (*Scienze politiche e Architettura: nuovi profili professionali nell'università italiana durante il fascismo*) [Political Science and Architecture: new professional profiles in Italian universities during Fascism], and by Giuseppe Ricuperati (*Per una storia dell'università italiana da Gentile a Bottai: appunti e discussioni*) [For an history of the Italian university from Gentile to Bottai: notes and discussion] undoubtedly contributed to enriching the debate proposed in the 1989 convention. The latter's intervention, which filled, at least partially, the real lack of studies in this field<sup>18</sup>, provided

<sup>17</sup> See Moretti, *La questione unitaria a cinquant'anni dall'unificazione. La commissione Reale per il riordinamento degli studi superiori e la relazione Ceci*, cit.

<sup>18</sup> Among the few works previously appeared and dedicated to the Gentile reform of 1923, and regarding also the reorganization of high school and university, remember the fundamental essay by M. Ostenc, *La scuola italiana durante il fascismo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1981; and the important collection of studies *Opposizioni alla riforma Gentile*, «Quaderni del Centro Studi "Carlo Trabucco"», 7, 1985 (with contributions of Michel Ostenc, Luciano Pazzaglia, Giorgio Chiosso and Redi Sante Di Pol). For more recent years, see also J. Charnitzky, *Fascismo e scuola. La politica scolastica del regime (1922-1943)*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1996; and L. Pazzaglia, R. Sani (eds.), *Scuola e società nell'Italia unita. Dalla legge Casati al Centro-Sinistra*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2001. On the relationship between universities and fascism the works by

a very articulate and complex framework of the fundamental choices of the university reform launched in 1923 by Giovanni Gentile<sup>19</sup>, and, in particular, of the following strategies in higher education used by the fascist regime, including the so called *Carta della scuola* elaborated on the eve of World War II by the Minister Bottai<sup>20</sup>.

M.C. Giuntella, *Autonomia e nazionalizzazione dell'Università. Il fascismo e l'inquadramento degli Atenei*, Roma, Edizioni Studium, 1992, by S. Salustri, *Un ateneo in camicia nera: l'Università di Bologna negli anni del fascismo*, Roma, Carocci, 2010, by P.G. Zunino (ed.), *Università e accademie negli anni del fascismo e del nazismo. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Torino, 11-13 maggio 2005*, Firenze, Olschki, 2008, by F.A. Bianco, *L'Ateneo pisano e gli studi politico-corporativi negli anni del fascismo*, «Rassegna storica toscana», 56, n. 1, 2010, pp. 211-239 deserves attention. Among the more recent texts, see also some contributions in P. Del Negro, *Le Università e le guerre dal Medioevo alla Seconda guerra mondiale*, Bologna, Clueb, 2011, such as P. Del Negro, *Gli studenti dell'Università di Padova caduti nelle due guerre mondiali*, pp. 113-138; E. Signori, *Tra Minerva e Marte: università e guerra in epoca fascista*, pp. 153-172; G. Di Renzo Villata, *L'Università degli studi di Milano e lo studio del diritto in tempo di guerra tra la Lombardia e la Svizzera (1940-1945)*, pp. 195-226. For what concerns the more recent studies on the university during the two Fascist decades, it is necessary to consider that most of them focused on the issue of Jewish persecution in the Italian academic world. In this regard, see: A. Ventura (ed.), *L'Università dalle leggi razziali alla Resistenza. Atti della giornata dell'Università italiana nel 50° anniversario delle Liberazione (Padova, 29 maggio 1995)*, Padova, Cleup, 1996; R. Finzi, *L'università italiana e le leggi antiebraiche*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1997; H. Goetz, *Il giuramento rifiutato. I docenti universitari e il regime fascista*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 2000; G. Boatti, *Preferirei di no. Le storie dei dodici professori che si opposero a Mussolini*, Torino, Einaudi, 2001. See also, finally, G. Montroni, *Professori fascisti e fascisti professori. La revisione delle nomine per alta fama del ventennio fascista (1945-1947)*, «Contemporanea», 2, 2010, pp. 227-259; R. Simili, *Sotto falso nome. Scienziate italiane ebrei (1938-1945)*, Bologna, Pendragon, 2010; M. Flamigni, *Il processo epurativo all'Università di Bologna*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 17, 2013, pp. 455-474.

<sup>19</sup> See Ricuperati, *Per una storia dell'università italiana da Gentile a Bottai: appunti e discussioni*, in Porciani (ed.), *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei ed il caso italiano*, cit., pp. 326-328.

<sup>20</sup> «I successori di Gentile – writes Giuseppe Ricuperati –, amici o nemici, avevano teso a corrodere le differenze, confermando una geografia universitaria casuale, legata a localismi, con non nascoste tendenze a dividere e in pratica sprecare risorse. [...] Un'altra università, decisamente professionalizzante e solo in parte capace di fornire ricerca scientifica era ormai quella degli anni Trenta» [«The successors of Gentile, friends or foes, had tended to corrode the differences, confirming a casual university geography, linked to localism, with no hidden trends in practice to divide and wasting resources. (...) Another university, professionalizing and only partially capable of providing scientific research was now that of the Thirties»] (ivi, pp. 347-348).

Many of the topics at the conference in Siena were reviewed, a few years later, by Umberto Massimo Miozzi in a monograph published in 1993 and dedicated to *Lo sviluppo storico dell'università italiana*<sup>21</sup>. The scope of this work was to provide an outline of the history of the Italian university from national Unification to the present days and was divided chronologically into three parts: the years between the proclamation of the kingdom of Italy and the democratic rebirth after World War II (1861-1947), the period from the elections for the first republican legislature of 1948 to the late seventies (1948-1979) and, finally, the decade following the introduction of the P.D. 11 July 1980, No 382, reforming the Italian university system (1980-1989), considered by the author particularly important to grasp the changes produced by recent legislations.

Actually, rather than a documented and critical reconstruction of the historical development of laws and policies undertaken in universities and higher education in the united Italy, Miozzi's work seemed a kind of rapid and, at times, superficial chronicle *excursus* on the events of the Italian university, not without schematisms and simplifications, so as to raise many criticisms and concerns by the scholars. In a careful review of the book, for example, Mauro Moretti underlined the predominance in it «di un interesse più propriamente cronachistico-politico che storiografico. Inoltre, esaminando in concreto la ricostruzione proposta, soprattutto per quel che riguarda il cinquantennio liberale, il lavoro risulta assai schematico e povero. Vi si rinvergono luoghi comuni tanto radicati quanto erronei, come quello relativo all'estensione della validità del titolo II della legge Casati all'intero territorio del regno» [an interest more precisely chronicle-political and not historiographic. In addition, examining specifically the reconstruction proposal, especially with regard to the half-century liberal, labour is very schematic and poor. There are recovered *clichés* so deeply rooted as to be incorrect, such as that concerning the extension of

<sup>21</sup> Miozzi, *Lo sviluppo storico dell'università italiana*, cit.

the validity of Title II of the Casati Law to the entire territory of the kingdom]<sup>22</sup>.

It is interesting to notice that, in that same 1993, La Scuola di Brescia published a work which, for the original methodological approach and the undoubted abundance of archival and printed sources used, was intended to represent a real turning point in the studies on Italian universities in the Nineteenth century.

We refer to Simonetta Polenghi's detailed book on *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica (1848-1876)*<sup>23</sup>, which still represents one of the most complete and detailed contributions on the events of higher education and universities in the liberal Italy<sup>24</sup>.

Starting from the Boncompagni Act of 1848 on public education in the Kingdom of Sardinia, Polenghi's work traced, with considerable interpretive sharpness, the political events, the parliamentary debates and the reorganization and reformation bills arranged by the governments on universities and higher education, until the political change in 1876, the year of the fall of the Right and of the advent of the Depretis Left to guide the Unitary State, focusing also on the concrete articulation of the academic life, and on the events concerning the renewal of scientific and humanistic-literary studies, and the influence exercised in the Italian universities by French and German cultural traditions and academic models. As underlined by Nicola Raponi, one of the most important features of Simonetta Polenghi's book is undoubtedly «la ricchezza dei temi trattati che emergono via via con completezza ed originalità: il problema della libertà d'insegnamento, il conflitto con il mondo cattolico, il reclutamento e le carriere dei docenti, l'ordinamento degli studi e degli esami, la struttura delle facoltà, il diverso livello scientifico esistente

<sup>22</sup> See Moretti, *La storia dell'Università italiana in età contemporanea. Ricerche e prospettive*, in Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del convegno. Padova, 27-29 ottobre 1994*, cit., p. 338.

<sup>23</sup> Polenghi, *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica (1848-1876)*, cit.

<sup>24</sup> Cfr. G. Ignesti, N. Raponi, G. Talamo, G. Verucci, *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica (1848-1876). Dibattito a più voci su un saggio di S. Polenghi*, «Annali di storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche», 1, 1994, pp. 277-294.

fra i vari atenei, il problema delle università minori, di quelle libere, di quelle così dette incomplete» [The wealth of the topics discussed that emerge gradually with completeness and originality: the problem of liberty of teaching, the conflict with the Catholic world, the recruitment and careers of teachers, the order of studies and examinations, the structure of faculty, the different scientific level existing between the various universities, the problem of minor universities, those flames, those so-called incomplete]<sup>25</sup>.

Floriana Colao's important and documented essay on *La libertà d'insegnamento e l'autonomia nell'università liberale. Norme e progetti per l'istruzione superiore in Italia*, published in 1995 by Giuffrè<sup>26</sup>, was also dedicated to the debate on the reorganization of higher education and university autonomy in liberal Italy. Based on a rich archival and printed documentation and characterized by an essentially historical-legal approach, Colao's volume also included the most important events of national university history at the turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth century, starting from the organization of higher education in Piedmont after 1948 to the Gentile reform. In particular, this work focused on the constant dialectical tension – sometimes intended to result in a real conflict – between the demands for centralized government, typical of liberal governments, and the growing demands for autonomy of individual universities and local administrative realities. Undoubtedly interesting were also the chapters dedicated by the author to the conceptualisation of the relationship between State and university in legal thought, to the analysis of the guarantees and privileges conferred to faculty and university authorities, to issues related to the legal status of universities and to the local financial interventions to support and reinforce individual universities.

<sup>25</sup> See Nicola Raponi's intervention in *ivi*, pp. 279-280.

<sup>26</sup> Colao, *La libertà di insegnamento e l'autonomia nell'università liberale. Norme e progetti per l'istruzione superiore in Italia (1848-1923)*, cit. Certain themes treated by the author in this volume were investigated by Colao herself in a previous work. In this respect, see Ead., *La libertà d'insegnamento e l'autonomia universitaria nell'Università liberale*, in Romano (ed.), *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento*, cit., pp. 355-383.



In the early Nineties, many were the publications demonstrating the emergence in Italy of a new thematic and methodological approach to the history of universities and higher education. For example, in 1991, the miscellaneous volume *L'Università in Italia fra età moderna e contemporanea. Aspetti e momenti*<sup>27</sup>, by Gian Paolo Brizzi and Angelo Varni was published. It contained some of the most important interventions of an important study seminar held in Bologna in 1988. Characterized by two separate thematic sections, the first was dedicated to the role of universities between autonomy and political power, the second aimed at examining the evolution of academic life and the characteristics of teachers and students, the book focused on the changes occurring, during a period from the fifteenth century until our times, within the relationship between universities and the public bodies, so as on the «modelli del sapere sottesi al mondo accademico italiano, modelli con cui, ora accettandoli, ora contestandoli, si sono misurate generazioni di docenti e di discenti [models of knowledge underlying to the Italian academic world, models which now accepting now contesting, were measured generations of teachers and students]»<sup>28</sup>, providing a reading at several levels of university reality. As far as the modern age is concerned, the above mentioned volume, together with more general issues such as the one offered by Piero Del Negro in *Il Principe e l'Università in Italia dal XV secolo all'età napoleonica* [The Prince and the University in Italy from the fifteenth century to the Napoleonic age], offered a series of contributions dedicated to innovative themes, poorly treated by the sector historiography, such as those relating to students and colleges: it's sufficient here to mention the rich and well documented work by Gian Paolo Brizzi on *La presenza studentesca nelle università italiane nella prima età moderna. Analisi delle fonti e problemi di metodo* [The presence of students in Italian universities in the early modern age. Analysis of sources and methodological

<sup>27</sup> G.P. Brizzi, A. Varni (eds.), *L'Università in Italia fra età moderna e contemporanea. Aspetti e momenti*, Bologna, Clueb, 1991.

<sup>28</sup> See Bellatalla, *Didattica e storia dell'Università in Italia*, cit., p. 63.

problems]<sup>29</sup>, and Marina Roggero's equally articulated book on *I collegi universitari in età moderna* [The university colleges in the modern age]. In relation with contemporary university, particularly interesting, also for the new historiographic perspectives suggested, appeared to be the contribution by Arturo Colombo *Per una storia dei modelli di università dalla legge Casati all'autonomia degli atenei* [For an history of the models of university: from Casati Law to autonomy of universities], the one by Roberto Finzi and Luisa Lama on *I conti dell'università. Prime indagini: 1880-1923* [The accounts of the university. First investigations: 1880-1923], and finally Andrea Pizzitola's one on *Gli studenti della nuova Italia* [The students of New Italia].

Treating and summarizing the main stages of higher education in Italy from the Casati law to our time, Arturo Colombo primarily focused on the different existing models of university organization in Europe in the Nineteenth century (English, Belgian, French and German)<sup>30</sup> and on the hybrid character of the system «nostrano, nel quale – he writes – convivono due modelli, difficilmente compatibili tra loro, di università scientifica e di università professionale» [homegrown, in which live two models, hardly compatible with one another, scientific university and professional university]<sup>31</sup>. In the rest of his analysis the author reflected on the Italian contemporary university, becoming, after sharp contradictions accumulated over the years<sup>32</sup>,

<sup>29</sup> In his contribution, Gian Paolo Brizzi underlined that, despite some signs of «una nuova attenzione alla storiografia sulle università, per l'Italia il quadro restasse nell'insieme dominato da un sensibile ritardo rispetto ai risultati maturati altrove»; in particular, this delay was evident for what concerned the new lines of investigations and the more relevant research themes, such as «gli studi sulla popolazione studentesca nella prima età moderna» [the studies of the student population in the early modern] (G.P. Brizzi, *La presenza studentesca nelle università italiane nella prima età moderna. Analisi delle fonti e problemi di metodo*, in Brizzi, Varni (eds.), *L'Università in Italia fra età moderna e contemporanea. Aspetti e momenti*, cit., p. 89).

<sup>30</sup> On this issue, see also M. Moretti's well documented work, I. Porciani, *Il volto ambiguo di Minerva. Le origini del sistema universitario italiano*, in R. Simili (ed.), *Ricerca e istituzioni scientifiche in Italia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1998, pp. 74-92.

<sup>31</sup> See A. Colombo, *Per una storia dei modelli di università dalla legge Casati all'autonomia degli atenei*, in Brizzi, Varni (eds.), *L'Università in Italia fra età moderna e contemporanea. Aspetti e momenti*, cit., p. 34.

<sup>32</sup> See Ivi, p. 47. About the vicissitudes and difficulties encountered by the Italian university system in the years after World War II see also: A. Romano, *A trent'anni*

«una vera e propria area di parcheggio, dove masse di giovani passano un periodo non breve della loro esistenza (in media, da cinque a otto anni, se si considerano i diffusissimi ‘ritardi’) prima di conquistare quel pezzo di carta con il quale sfuggire i persistenti rischi della disoccupazione intellettuale, ottenendo magari uno dei non molti posti disponibili nello Stato, nel parastato o nel vasto sottobosco degli enti pubblici (o addirittura degli enti ‘inutili’)» [a real parking area, where masses of young people spend a short period of their existence (on average, between five and eight years, if you consider the ubiquitous ‘late’) before conquering that piece of paper with which to escape the persistent risks of intellectual unemployment, getting perhaps one of not many places available in the State in the para-State or in the vast undergrowth of public bodies (or even of the bodies ‘useless’)]<sup>33</sup>.

Particularly significant, as already mentioned, were also the contributions published in the volume by Roberto Finzi and Luisa Lama on one hand (*I conti dell’università. Prime indagini: 1880-1923*) and Andrea Pizzitola (*Gli studenti della nuova Italia*) on the other. In the first case, the topic treated, *i.e.* the evolutionary dynamics of public support to the Italian university system, offered the authors the possibility of examining a further aspect still little known, but undoubtedly important: the relationship between politics and universities, providing an original insight into the Economic control strategies implemented by liberal governments, between the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, and then, after the World War I, by the fascism<sup>34</sup>.

dal '68. “*Questione universitaria*” e “*riforma universitaria*”, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 2, 1998, pp. 9-35; G. Ricuperati, *Sulla storia recente dell’università italiana: riforme, disagi e problemi aperti*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 5, 2001, pp. 9-30; S. Cassese, *Il valore legale dei titoli di studio*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 6, 2002, pp. 9-15; and A. Romano, *Alcune considerazioni sul valore legale delle lauree universitarie: note storiche e prospettive*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 13, 2009, pp. 9-44.

<sup>33</sup> Colombo, *Per una storia dei modelli di università dalla legge Casati all’autonomia degli atenei*, cit., p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> On the issue of public funding to the Italian university system, see also: G. Catturi, R. Mussari, *Il finanziamento del sistema pubblico universitario dal dopoguerra all’autonomia*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 7, 2003, pp. 9-27.

Andrea Pizzitola's contribution focuses on students' reality in the united Italy, with a wide-ranging survey aiming at recreating the number of college members, their social status, their geographical origin, the costs for university education, as well as the first associative realities and the first forms of student protest, to the career opportunities related to the attainment of a doctoral title. Problems, these, destined to be widely reverted by later historians and to become subject of additional and important research<sup>35</sup>.

In the following years, in fact, several works dedicated to the students' world appeared in Italy. Among these it is important to mention the full contribution of Giuliano Catoni on *I goliardi senesi ed il Risorgimento. Dalla guerra del Quarantotto al movimento del Novantatre* (1993)<sup>36</sup>, and the volume *Gaudeamus igitur. Studenti e goliardia 1888-1923*<sup>37</sup>, published two years later, in which the texts and iconographic materials of the 1995 exhibition curated by the University of Bologna in collaboration with the Association of Bologna graduates *Alma Materis Alumni* were collected. In the introductory essay with which he opened the last publication, Gian Paolo Brizzi underlined that the purpose of the research, resulting in the large exhibition in Bologna, was to provide a complete history of the university situation, not only limited to the work of institutional leaders and to scientific and cultural activities, but focused on the experience of the students' world and on students' events, of which he tried to recreate expectations, behaviours, interests and cultural expressions, aspects of material life, through documentation such as city chronicles, legal and literary sources, newspapers, letters, diaries, etc.<sup>38</sup>, alternative to the university archives.

<sup>35</sup> As everybody knows, on university students' reality very few contributions were recorded, among them it is important to recommend: S. Lanaro, *Alle origini del movimento studentesco italiano*, «Ideologie», 7, 1969, pp. 61-78; Id., *I moti studenteschi del 1885 a Torino*, ivi, pp. 79-119.

<sup>36</sup> G. Catoni, *I goliardi senesi ed il Risorgimento. Dalla guerra del Quarantotto al movimento del Novantatre*, Siena, Università degli studi di Siena, 1993.

<sup>37</sup> *Gaudeamus igitur. Studenti e goliardia 1888-1923*, Bologna, University Press, 1995.

<sup>38</sup> For what concern the Nineties, among the studies on university students' reality it is important to mention: M. Tangheroni, C. Giorgioni, M. Moretti, G. Gelli

In the late Nineties three important conferences dedicated to the accurate analysis of students' reality and undergraduates' events between the modern and the contemporary age were also celebrated. The first, entitled «Università e studenti nel XIX secolo» [Universities and students in the Nineteenth century], held in Milano in October 1997<sup>39</sup>, was basically devoted to student protests and disorders occurred during the Nineteenth century; the second, held in Padova in February 1998, focused on «Studenti, Università, città nella storia padovana» [Students, Universities, city in the history of Padova]<sup>40</sup>, the third and the last of the three meetings, finally, was held in Bologna in November 1999 and its subject was «Studenti e dottori nelle università italiane (origini – XX secolo)» [Students and doctors in Italian universities (origins – XX century)]<sup>41</sup>, *i.e.* issues concerning

(eds.), *L'Università di Pisa. Docenti e studenti nella sua storia*, Pisa, Alap, 1994; A. Cammelli, A. Di Francia, *Studenti, Università, professioni: 1861-1993*, in M. Malatesta (ed.), *Storia d'Italia, Annali, 10, I professionisti*, Torino, Einaudi, 1996, pp. 7-77; and A. Cammelli, *Contare gli studenti. Statistica e popolazione studentesca dall'Unità ad oggi*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 4, 2000, pp. 9-23. But see also the important works which appeared in these years on undergraduates' journals and university students' associationism: N. De Giacomo, G. Orsina, G. Quagliariello, *Catalogo delle riviste studentesche*, Manduria, Lacaita (Archivio per la storia dell'associazionismo e delle istituzioni studentesche), 1999; M. Griffo, *L'Archivio per la storia dell'associazionismo e delle istituzioni studentesche*, «Le Carte e la Storia», 1, 1995, pp. 133-137; but also the more recent: P. Dessi, D. Negrini, M. Zuccoli, *Stampa studentesca e digital library: l'esperienza dell'Università di Bologna*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 10, 2006, pp. 407-411; F.A. Bianco, P. Nello, *Cenni sulla goliardia pisana dal fascismo al '68*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 14, 2010, pp. 303-311; S. Oswald, *Hitler sbeffeggiato. Il GUF bolognese e la Festa della Matricola del 1935*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 15, 2011, pp. 351-365.

<sup>39</sup> See *Università e studenti nell'Italia dell'Ottocento. Atti del Convegno, Milano, 9-10 ottobre 1997*, «Storia in Lombardia. Quadrimestrale dell'Istituto lombardo per la storia della Resistenza e dell'età contemporanea», 21, 2001, III (it is a monographic dossier entirely devoted to the conference proceedings).

<sup>40</sup> F. Piovan, L. Sitran Rea (eds.), *Studenti, Università, città nella storia padovana. Atti del convegno. Padova, 6-8 febbraio 1998*, Trieste, Edizioni Lint, 2001. An articulate conference presentation can be found in A.I. Pini, *Studenti, Università, città nella storia padovana*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 6 (2002), pp. 295-297. On Padova students' reality see also: F. Piovan (ed.), *Gli studenti nella storia dell'Università di Padova. Cinque conferenze*, Padova, Università degli studi, 2002.

<sup>41</sup> G.P. Brizzi, A. Romano (eds.), *Studenti e dottori nelle università italiane (origini-XX secolo). Atti del Convegno di studi. Bologna, 25-27 novembre 1999*, Bologna, Club, 2000. A complete conference presentation can be found in B. Benini, *Studenti*

student population in the context of academic life and the problems associated with the formation of the ruling classes and the career opportunities for the newly-graduates.

Although characterized by very different methodological and historiographical approaches and characterized by reports and interventions intended to position themselves in an extremely variegated chronological and thematic horizon, the above mentioned study conventions have focused their attention on a number of fundamental issues which, more recently, have been subject to further significant studies and research.

Undoubtedly, the first concerns the relationship between students' reality and urban context, *i.e.* the role played on educational university experiences and on students' living conditions by university cities of great tradition, but very different from one another, like Bologna, Pavia and Padova, to name but a few examples, the second issue concerns student mobility and its evolution in medieval and modern age, as well as in contemporary times, the third, finally, regards the relationship university-world of work and, more generally, the link between academic education and career opportunities<sup>42</sup>.

*e dottori nelle università italiane (origini-XX secolo)*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 4, 2000, pp. 227-233. On Bologna students' reality see also: A. Cammelli, F. Casadei, *Studenti e vita studentesca a Bologna, 1860-1890. Materiali per una ricerca*, Bologna, Clueb, 1991.

<sup>42</sup> On these issues see also: D. Novarese, *Strutture universitarie e mobilità studentesca nella Sicilia dell'età moderna*, in Romano (ed.), *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento*, cit., pp. 327-346; S. Serangeli, *I laureati dell'antica Università di Macerata (1541-1824)*, Torino, Giappichelli, 2003; G. Piccoli, L. Sitran Rea (eds.), *Studenti istriani e fumani all'Università di Padova dal 1601 al 1974*, Treviso, Antilia, 2004; S. Castro, *Tra Italia e Svizzera. La presenza degli studenti svizzeri nell'Università di Pavia (1860-1945)*, Milano, Cisalpino, 2004; S. Negruzzo, *Devozioni e vita quotidiana degli studenti nell'Italia moderna*, in B. Dompnier, P. Vismara, *Confréries et dévotionis dans la catholicité moderne (mi-XV<sup>e</sup>-début XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Roma, École Française de Roma, 2008. For what concerns students' role in fascist regime we recommend: F. Busetto, *Studenti universitari negli anni del Duce. Il consenso, le contraddizioni, la rottura*, Padova, Il Poligrafo, 2002; G.P. Brizzi (ed.), *Studenti per la democrazia. La rivolta dei giovani contro il nazifascismo*, Bologna, Clueb, 2005; S. Duranti, *Lo spirito gregario. I gruppi universitari fascisti tra politica e propaganda (1930-1940)*, Roma, Donzelli, 2008; G.P. Brizzi, *Rettori in camicia nera, studenti partigiani*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2014. Finally, on students' mobility from medieval age to contemporary times see: G. Di Renzo Villata, B. Nascimbene,

A further and significant issue investigated in this phase, with a particular reference to Italy in the Nineteenth century, is the role of university students (and, more generally, the academic world as a whole) in the patriotic events of the Risorgimento and in the process of national Unification. Already subject to special attention during the conference held in Milano in 1997<sup>43</sup>, this issue has been the subject, in recent years, of certain valuable contributions<sup>44</sup>, the first of which has been Luigi Pepe's documented and stimulating work entitled *Universitari italiani nel Risorgimento* (2002)<sup>45</sup>.

In this context can be also added to the recent and original international study seminar entitled «Le istituzioni universitarie e il Sessantotto» [Academic Institutions and the 1968]. The conference, held in Pisa on December 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011 (a second and final seminar was held the following year in Bologna)<sup>46</sup> aimed at investigating an aspect analysed until now only in part by scholars and that is that of the role played by the institutional bodies of the universities, by academic authorities and by teachers' and students' associations in the turbulent years of the «student unrest». Starting from the reflections emerged in the meeting in Pisa, the scholars have been able to

C. Sanna, *Università ed Europa*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 10, 2006, pp. 9-32; G.P. Paolo Brizzi, *La mobilità degli studenti universitari nel Seicento*, in L. Pepe (ed.), *Galileo e la scuola galileiana nelle Università del Seicento*, Bologna, Clueb, 2011, pp. 31-45; V. Calabrò, *Mobilità e presenza studentesca a Messina: 1877-1900. Repertorio dei licenziati e dei laureati dell'Ateneo peloritano*, Milano, Giuffrè, 2011; A. Dröscher, *La mobilità degli studenti germanici tra i cinque maggiori Studi italiani tra il XVI e XVIII secolo. Primi risultati ed ipotesi di lavoro*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 16, 2012, pp. 275-296.

<sup>43</sup> See *Università e studenti nell'Italia dell'Ottocento. Atti del Convegno*, Milano, 9-10 ottobre 1997, cit., *passim*.

<sup>44</sup> See in particular: G. Ciampi, *I giovani e le lotte studentesche dell'Ottocento*, in A. Varni (ed.), *Il mondo giovanile in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1998, pp. 53-67; R. Balzani, *Nati troppo tardi. Illusioni e frustrazioni dei giovani del post-risorgimento*, ivi, pp. 69-85.

<sup>45</sup> L. Pepe (ed.), *Universitari italiani nel Risorgimento*, Bologna, Clueb, 2002.

<sup>46</sup> See A. Breccia (ed.), *Le istituzioni universitarie e il Sessantotto*, Bologna, Clueb, 2013. A complete conference presentation can be found in L. Pomante, *Le istituzioni universitarie e il Sessantotto*, «Annali di Storia delle Università italiane», 16, 2012, pp. 411-413. About «the 1968» see also: F. Bonini, *Trento, Pisa e il Sessantotto. Iniziative di storia contemporanea delle università italiane*, «Le carte e la storia», 18, n. 2, 2012, pp. 185-188.

investigate a period of Italian universities which, although short temporally, saw the involvement of all the academic components and was a fundamental factor in the process of evolution and change of the whole Italian university system. The conference, structured in three sessions (*International contexts and the Italian case, For a history of the 1968 in Milano, The universities and the revolt*) developed over two days, was opened from Romano Paolo Coppini who introduced the various reports of the seminar, aimed at retracing the events of the year 1968 with historical depth and a great deal of detail, thanks to the help of institutions and academic authorities and, above all, by means of consultation and examination of archival and documentary sources – kept in various universities and in the ministerial archives – related to the work of the various bodies of the time, from the academic Senates to the Board of Directors, to the Board of Faculty. In particular the second session of the seminar was animated by a real round table. The central theme of the debate between four prominent scholars was the year 1968 in Milano, analysed through a series of reports dealing respectively with the Commercial University “Luigi Bocconi” (Marzio Achille Romani), with the Polytechnic of Milano (Giancarlo Consonni), with the Catholic University of “Sacro Cuore” (Luciano Pero) and with the Public University of Milano (Brunello Viguzzi). Through the comparison between the different youth positions and protests reconstructed with plenty of detail, it was possible to point out differences and similarities on the different ways to «live» the experience of the 1968 in the various universities of Milano. The third and final session of conference was entirely devoted to the situations of the different local cases of the individual universities. The analysis of the speakers, assuming as preferred (but not exclusive) time frame the biennium 1967-1968, focused on the main historical events of the student movement and on the reasons for the youth protest, paying particular attention to the attitude of the academic authorities toward the protest. The various interventions, through the scrupulous analysis of the archival material available in the single locations and the examination of the newspapers and magazines of the time, tried to provide evidence of the connection



between the students' attitudes and protests and the measures taken by the academic bodies within the university of Torino, (Diego Giachetti, *Professori, Presidi di Facoltà e "resistenti" nel '68 torinese*) [Professors, Deans and "resisters" in Torino '68], of the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa (Paola Carlucci, *Un senso di insoddisfazione? La Scuola Normale e il Sessantotto*) [A sense of dissatisfaction? The Scuola Normale and the 1968], of the University of Pisa (Alessandro Breccia, *Alessandro Faedo, le istituzioni universitarie e la rivolta. Prime riflessioni sul caso dell'Università di Pisa 1964-1968*) [Alessandro Faedo, academic institutions and revolt. First reflections on the case of the University of Pisa 1964-1968], of the University of Roma "La Sapienza" (Marco Paolino, *Le autorità accademiche romane e la contestazione studentesca nel 1968*; Tommaso Dell'Era, *La politica dell'ateneo romano di fronte alla protesta studentesca 1966-1969*) [The academic authorities in Roma and the student protests in 1968; The policy of the University of Roma in front of the student protest 1966-1969], of that of Padova (Paola Caldognetto, *Il mondo studentesco e il '68 a Padova*; Alba Lazzaretto, *Il mondo accademico padovano di fronte al '68*) [The student world and the 1968 in Padova; The academic paduan world in front of the 1968] and, finally, of the University of Pavia (Pierangelo Lombardi, *"Una grande Università di provincia". Il caso pavese*) ["A great universities of the province". The case of Pavia].

Among the main areas of research, in the Nineties, the attention of Italian and European historians was also addressed to the so-called «minor universities», subject, in the past, to little attention by the historiography of the field, that had preferred for a long time the large academic locations and the better known and celebrated university centres, at the expense of an appropriate focusing on the characteristics and the role, especially in Italy, of the small provincial universities. In fact, for a long time were the major universities to enjoy the privileged attention of the university and higher education historians. Their cultural prestige and their international irradiation, in fact, had aroused the increasing interest of researchers who had particularly addressed their studies to these academic centres, able to

strongly affect the scientific and cultural debate in the country and to accept a significant number of students, thanks to their great number in the area.

In the course of time, however, thanks also to a more careful reading of Italian cultural and political events, small universities obtained an important role in promoting higher education in the country and in the same cultural, social and economic growth of the areas in which they were located. Thanks to two key conferences held respectively in Sassari in 1992 on «Le Università minori in Italia nel XIX secolo» [The minor universities in Italy in the Nineteenth century]<sup>47</sup>, and in Alghero in 1996 on «Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX)» [Minor universities in Europe (XV-XIX)]<sup>48</sup>, a discussion which has been further enriched in recent years with various contributions dedicated to certain «minor universities» of ancient tradition<sup>49</sup> was initiated. These conferences undoubtedly contributed to laying the foundation for a systematic approach to the issue of minor universities and to inspire the first fundamental research in this field.

In the first of the above mentioned conferences, the one held in Sassari and dedicated to «Le Università minori in Italia nel XIX secolo», the scholars struggled to identify, in the small size of the universities and in their peripheral nature, peculiar elements able to account for the differences in the university

<sup>47</sup> Da Passano (ed.), *Le Università minori in Italia nel XIX secolo*, cit.

<sup>48</sup> Brizzi, Verger (eds.), *Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX)*. *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi. Alghero, 30 ottobre-2 novembre 1996*, cit. For an accurate presentation of the four study days in Alghero, see: D. Novarese, *Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX)*. *Convegno internazionale di studi. Alghero, 30 ottobre-2 novembre 1996*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 1, 1997, pp. 270-273; and R. Braccia, *Comunicazione*, «Rivista di storia del diritto italiano», 70, 1997, pp. 385-389.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example: Porciani, *Un ateneo minacciato. L'Università di Siena dalla Restaurazione alla prima guerra mondiale*, cit.; F. Casadei, *Per una storia delle università marchigiane nell'Italia liberale*, «Proposte e ricerche», 32, 1994, pp. 137-155; L. Pomante, *L'Università di Macerata nella prima metà dell'Ottocento*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», 4, n. 2, 2009, pp. 73-106; Id., *L'Università di Macerata nel periodo post-unitario: le tappe di una faticosa rinascita*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 13, 2009, pp. 125-144; Id., *Per una storia delle università minori. Il caso dello Studium Generale Maceratense tra Otto e Novecento*, cit.

situation of the Nineteenth century. The study session meeting, divided into two general introductory discussions – held respectively by Ilaria Porciani on *La questione delle piccole Università dall'unificazione agli anni Ottanta* [The issue of small universities from Unification to the Eighties], and by Mauro Moretti on *La questione delle piccole Università dai dibattiti di fine secolo al 1914* [The issue of small universities from debates end of the century to 1914] and a series of local interventions intended to show the position of some small Italian universities (Sassari, Cagliari, Messina, Ferrara), underlining that the different academic traditions and laws, as well as the different policies initiated in the previous decades in higher education by pre-unitary governments, were the source of serious imbalances and of a considerable heterogeneity of conditions in which these «minor universities» had to operate after the completion of the unity process. In the next phase, however, the lack of a real political will or of a clear overall design, combined with local resistances, were at the core of the failure of several attempts to rationalize, from a territorial point of view, the system of higher education and, consequently, to raise its quality standards, perhaps by abolishing those realities considered more marginalized and lifeless and making the most, conversely, through a complex process of function diversification on the basis of the specific vocations of the territories, of those more rooted in local realities and better able to serve as a lever for the development of the productive fabric and of the cultural needs of the different provinces. An aspect, this, particularly underlined by Ilaria Porciani, who did not fail to notice that «la vicenda dei piccoli atenei» clearly illustrated «nel suo versante locale, quel consolidato rapporto università-città che fu particolarmente evidente nel caso degli atenei ospitati in centri minori» [the affair of the small universities – clearly illustrated – in his local side, the consolidated city-university relationship that was particularly evident in the case of the universities accommodated in small towns]<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> See Porciani, *La questione delle piccole Università dall'unificazione agli anni Ottanta*, cit., p. 9.

The concept of minor university and the peculiarities connected to it were further explored in the conference held in Alghero on «Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX)», in which an attempt was made to define, from a historiographical point of view, the basic characteristics of these peculiar types of universities in the light of the variegated academic and university realities, typical of the old continent between the modern and the contemporary age.

Rejecting *a priori*, as historically inadequate and even misleading in some ways, the mere identification of the minor universities with those raised in small towns (small university = small town)<sup>51</sup>, and accepting the assumption by which the definition of minor university must be adopted for certain universities, with reference not to the small size of the urban centre or to the reduced catchment areas and students' recruitment, but to the «marginal» function they covered in the general context of higher education and of socioeconomic development of the respective countries, particular attention was paid to the relationship between «minor» and «major» universities within the same legal-political organization, on the presence of auxiliary services such as schools, libraries and botanical gardens, on the problems associated with the awarding of doctoral qualifications and with the financial and administrative organization of every single location.

In particular, in the dense mass of reports and interventions presented at the conference and devoted to the analysis of Italian and European realities<sup>52</sup>, Gian Paolo Brizzi, in his contri-

<sup>51</sup> See G.P. Brizzi, J. Verger, *Presentazione*, in Brizzi, Verger (eds.), *Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX). Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi. Alghero, 30 ottobre-2 novembre 1996*, cit., p. 7, where we can read: «Cambridge e Tübinga erano piccole città, che hanno ospitato delle università di grande importanza. Di contro le università di Genova, Barcellona o Bordeaux sono rimaste istituzioni modeste, malgrado l'importanza della città ove esse erano installate, per non parlare delle grandi città senza università, come Londra, Lione o Palermo» [Cambridge and Tübingen were small city that have hosted the universities of great importance. Against the University of Genova, Barcelona and Bordeaux have remained modest institutions, in spite of the importance of city where they were installed, not to mention the big cities without universities, as London, Lyon or Palermo].

<sup>52</sup> Although it was a conference that preferred, in terms of periodization, the Middle Ages and, above all, the modern times, the problems of contemporary

bution dedicated to *Le università minori in Italia: identità ed autoconsapevolezza* [The minor universities in Italy: identity and self-awareness]<sup>53</sup>, presented a very variegated overview of cases and experiences, characterized not only by minor universities but also by semi-universities (*i.e.* institutions authorized to confer academic degrees only in certain faculties), collegiate universities and colleges with great autonomy and specific and ancient academic prerogatives. While on one hand the author has properly underlined the elements of fragility, structural deficiencies and the many negative factors that characterized minor universities for a long time<sup>54</sup>, on the other hand, conversely, he does not fail to emphasize, through the use of an abundant documentation, mostly unpublished or little known, the undoubtedly important and irreplaceable role they played not so much – or as a priority – on scientific innovation and advancement of academic disciplines («modesti sono stati i contributi della maggior parte di queste scuole, qualora siano rapportate alle università maggiori» [modest were the contributions of most of these schools, if they are reconciled with major universities]), but, rather, on the spreading and circulation of knowledge and on the increase of cultural standards of the productive urban classes and of the territories of many centres in Italy<sup>55</sup>.

A further and equally fruitful line of research on the history of universities and higher education started in the past two

university situation were treated in several important contributions, in particular in: Moretti, *Piccole, povere e "libere": le università municipali nell'Italia liberale*, cit.; S. Carpinelli, *Regolamenti universitari ed organi accademici. L'Università di Siena nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento*; G. Fois, *I concorsi dell'Ottocento nell'Università di Sassari*. It is important to mention also the contribution of L. Pepe, *La questione delle Università minori in Italia nel periodo napoleonico*, on which we return later on in this review. Pepe's contribution resumed and developed certain very important issues already treated by the scholar in a previous intervention: L. Pepe, *Università o Grande Ecoles: il Piano Mascheroni e il dibattito al Gran Consiglio della Repubblica Cisalpina*, in Romano (ed.), *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento*, cit., pp. 511-524.

<sup>53</sup> See also Brizzi, *Le università minori in Italia in età moderna*, cit.

<sup>54</sup> See Brizzi, *Le università minori in Italia: identità ed autoconsapevolezza*, cit.

<sup>55</sup> *Ivi*, p. 188.

decades. It concerns the complex relationship between university education and professional realities, particularly in the area of liberal professions<sup>56</sup>. The first appearance of this reflection can be identified in the above mentioned conference held in 1992 in Napoli on «Università e professioni giuridiche in Europa nell'età liberale»<sup>57</sup>. Here, Aldo Mazzacane, having called for an ever-increasing cooperation between jurists and historians, defined the Nineteenth century as the «secolo delle università e secolo delle professioni» [century of the universities and century of the professions]<sup>58</sup>. So the University, freed in the Nineteenth century from the sense of torpor and decadence that had placed it at the margins of the scientific development and of the social reform, experienced a new centrality, and, in the Italian case, a specific role in the «nation building» process.

The core or, if you prefer, the *file rouge* of the reports presented at the Neapolitan conference was the reflection on the «funzione cruciale dell'università quale centro dell'elaborazione scientifica e sul ruolo della scienza (accademica) quale tramite per l'accesso alle stesse professioni» [crucial role of the university as a centre for scientific elaboration and on the role of science (academic) as a vehicle for access to the same occupations]<sup>59</sup>. Again, the two routes existing in the experience of European universities resulted evident and distinct: on one hand the Humboldt conception, that entrusted the higher education with the task of a «general» training at a high level, designing the university essentially as a «community of schol-

<sup>56</sup> On the origins of modern professions, see the excellent work by M.L. Betri, A. Pastore, *Avvocati, medici, ingegneri. Alle origini delle professioni moderne (secoli XVI-XIX)*, Bologna, Clueb, 1997. Among the more recent texts, although with reference to other scientific fields, see also A. Risi Rota (ed.), *Formare alle professioni. Diplomatici e politici*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2009; E. Becchi, M. Ferrari (eds.), *Formare alle professioni. Sacerdoti, principi, educatori*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2009; M. Ferrari, P. Mazzarello (eds.), *Formare alle professioni. Figure della sanità*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2010; A. Ferraresi, M. Visioli (eds.), *Formare alle professioni. Architetti, ingegneri, artisti (secc. XV-XIX)*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2012.

<sup>57</sup> See Mazzacane, Vano (eds.), *Università e professioni giuridiche in Europa nell'età liberale*, cit.

<sup>58</sup> Ivi, p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> See Fois, *La ricerca storica sull'Università italiana in età contemporanea. Rassegna degli studi*, cit., p. 245.

ars», on the other, the view supported by many in the years of industrialization, according to which the specific task of the university was to provide specialized knowledge and technical-practical skills exploitable in the workplace.

After a series of reports and interventions on some general aspects of the history of the Nineteenth-century European university, including the ones by Fulvio Tessitore on *L'università di Humboldt e l'unità del sapere* [The University of Humboldt and the unity of knowledge], by Pierangelo Schiera on *Università e società come snodo strutturale nell'età moderna* [Universities and society as a structural joint in the modern age], and by Ilaria Porciani on *L'università dell'Italia unita* [The university of unified Italy]<sup>60</sup>, the Neapolitan study conference focused its attention on the issues concerning the relationship university-professions, with a specific reference to the legal ones. The Nineteenth century was, in fact, the century of law and legal culture that found its main source exactly in the universities, and in the legal science developed in it by a class of specialized legal scholars. Hence, a series of specific contributions devoted to university legal education and to the determination of a new relationship between academic knowledge and professions practice. This is the case, in particular, of the above mentioned intervention by Aldo Mazzacane on *Pratica ed insegnamento: l'istruzione giuridica a Napoli nel primo Ottocento* [Practice and teaching: the Education Legal in Napoli in the early Nineteenth century]<sup>61</sup>, by Francesco Genovese's one on *La riforma delle facoltà di giurisprudenza e l'introduzione dell'Ordinamento giudiziario nelle università italiane (1859-1865)* [The reform of the law school and the introduction of the judicial system in Italian universities (1859-1865)]<sup>62</sup>, by Stefania Torre's on «L'in-

<sup>60</sup> See in Porciani, *L'università dell'Italia unita*, cit.

<sup>61</sup> By the same author see also: A. Mazzacane, *Università e scuole private di diritto a Napoli nella prima metà dell'Ottocento*, in Romano (ed.), *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento*, cit., pp. 549-576.

<sup>62</sup> For further discussions on this topic see also: C. Pecorella, *Cenni storici sulle Facoltà di Giurisprudenza (a partire dal XVIII secolo)*, in Id., *Studi e ricerche di Storia del diritto*, Torino, Giappichelli, 1995, pp. 245-265; as well as the important studies collection: V. Piergiovanni (ed.), *Sapere accademico e pratica legale fra Antico*

*roduzione enciclopedica alle scienze giuridiche»: parabola di un insegnamento* [The encyclopedic introduction to legal science: parable of a teaching]<sup>63</sup>; and by other interventions relating to the legal professions in the strict sense of the word<sup>64</sup>. Hence, an extensive and articulated reflection, through the Italian and foreign scholars' contributions, on the training of functionaries, on the corporative organization of the class of lawyers, on

*Regime ed unificazione nazionale*, Genova, Accademia Ligure di Scienze e Lettere, 2009. See also: F. Colao, *La Facoltà di Giurisprudenza a Siena negli "anni opachi dell'attesa"*, «Rassegna storica toscana», 56, n. 1, 2010, pp. 147-210.

<sup>63</sup> Stefania Torre's intervention is only one of the many works devoted to the history of disciplines or to the individual faculties. For a rich bibliography in this sense see Fois's already mentioned studies review, *La ricerca storica sull'Università italiana in età contemporanea*. *Rassegna degli studi*, cit., pp. 254-255. Among the more recent contributions we also recommend: A. Dröscher, *Le Facoltà medico chirurgiche italiane (1860-1915). Repertorio delle cattedre e degli stabilimenti annessi, dei docenti, dei liberi docenti e del personale scientifico*, Bologna, Clueb, 2002; D. Cherubini, *Le Facoltà di Scienze politiche in Italia. Le origini del Corso di Laurea in Scienze politiche dell'Università di Siena*, «Rassegna storica toscana», 56, n. 1, 2010, pp. 7-121; M. Cini, T. Fanfani, *L'insegnamento dell'economia e le scuole di pensiero negli studi economici e aziendali*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 14, 2010, pp. 249-262; P. Bini, S. Spalletti (eds.), *Dalle Accademie Agrarie all'Università. L'istituzionalizzazione dell'economia politica a Macerata e nelle Marche*, Macerata, eum, 2010; L. Pepe (ed.), *Europa matematica e Risorgimento italiano*, Clueb, Bologna, 2012; A. Dröscher, *Le facoltà di scienze fisiche, matematiche e naturali in Italia (1860-1915). Repertorio delle cattedre e degli stabilimenti annessi, dei docenti, dei liberi docenti e del personale assistente e tecnico*, Bologna, Clueb, 2013.

<sup>64</sup> As underlined by Marco Santoro, in the conference only certain legal professions were examined: «Quella dei giuristi accademici, quella dei funzionari pubblici, quella degli avvocati e quella dei magistrati. Colpisce l'assenza di una quinta professione giuridica, o riconosciuta come tale, di particolare visibilità almeno nell'Italia e nella Francia ottocentesca, e cioè quella dei notai [...]: si tratta di una lacuna certamente non grave nell'economia del discorso complessivo – tutto sommato, i notai erano comunque allora professionisti legali di seconda scelta, sicuramente subordinati ai più istruiti e potenti avvocati – che pure avrebbe permesso, se colmata, di evidenziare *a contrario* l'importanza simbolica e pratica dell'istruzione universitaria nei processi di professionalizzazione e i conflitti sociali cui essa può dare origine» [That of Academic Lawyers, the public officials, the lawyers and the magistrates. Affects the absence of a fifth legal profession, or recognized as such, of particular visibility at least in Italy in France and in the Nineteenth century, and namely that of notaries [...]: this is a serious gap certainly not in the economy of the overall speech – all in all, the notaries were still legal professionals then second choice, definitely subordinate to the more educated and powerful lawyers – which also would allowed, if filled, to highlight the symbolic importance and practice of higher education in the process of professionalization and social conflicts which it can give rise]. See M. Santoro, *Università e professioni giuridiche in Europa nell'età liberale*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 1, 1997, p. 233.



the education and legal culture of politicians and members of Parliament, on the nodes of the career of lawyers, on the links between lawyers and the political system, on judges' recruitment, on education and organization of judicial bodies<sup>65</sup>.

A further step, with respect to the above-mentioned studies, was made in 2001 with the publication of the miscellaneous volume, edited by Ilaria Porciani, on *Università e scienza nazionale*<sup>66</sup>. The work was the result of the contribution of several specialists and on one hand intended to investigate the relationship between scientific research and academic institutions, and on the other to investigate the role played by science and by the universities themselves, in the period following the establishment of the Unitary State, particularly in the period between 1860 and 1915.

In the extensive and detailed introduction to the collection of essays, Ilaria Porciani underlined how, after the completion of the unitary process, the reflection of the ruling class on «National Science» inevitably intertwined with the one concerning the new political order to give to the nascent Italian university system. «Le università – underlined the scholar – apparivano come un vero e proprio nazionale tesoro scientifico che era necessario potenziare per la scienza e per la patria, perché avrebbero potuto svolgere una funzione decisiva nel ridar vita all'antico 'genio nazionale' che aveva dato all'Italia 'tanta gloria e primazia'» [The universities seemed like a real national scientific treasure that it was necessary to strengthen for the science and for the country, because they could play a critical role in reviving the old 'national genius' who had given to Italy 'so much glory and primacy']<sup>67</sup>. Defining science «national» and connecting it to the State, meant, however, to undermine an ancient knowledge bond with the Church, moving so, with great resolution,

<sup>65</sup> See Mazzacane, Vano (eds.), *Università e professioni giuridiche in Europa nell'età liberale*, cit., *passim*. The above mentioned themes were investigated with a particular reference to certain specific countries: Italy, Germany, France, Poland, Spain and Greece.

<sup>66</sup> Porciani (ed.), *Università e scienza nazionale*, cit. This volume collects some revised and updated reports presented in a conference entitled *Università e scienza nazionale tra Otto e Novecento*, held in Pontignano in 1991.

<sup>67</sup> Ivi, p. XIX.

towards the secularization of the Italian university system. The reference to «national genius» and, conversely, the affirmation of strong secular and anticlerical policies were destined to lead to the exaltation of science as «civil priesthood» and of the university as a place and a space for the development of a truly national and secular knowledge opposed to the traditional ecclesiastical knowledge. Porciani herself, also underlined the strong link between the «science» and «war» characteristics of the Italian reality, clearly exemplified, in a symbolic level, by the double meaning of the Minerva emblem, goddess of both science and war<sup>68</sup>.

The preliminary reflection introduces the different contributions collected in the book, and despite considering the issue from various perspectives, they provide a substantially uniform reading of the complex relationship between universities and national science in Italy and Europe in the Nineteenth century. It is the case, for example, of Claudio Cesa's essay on national science, which focuses on the debate that developed in Italy in the liberal age and, in particular, on the discussions and the positions on this issue of De Sanctis, Spaventa, Labriola and De Meis, leading figures of Neapolitan idealism, who considered, better than others, science as an interior bond capable of unifying the country. Rich of ideas is also Giulio Cianferotti's essay on *Università e scienza giuridica nell'Italia unita* [University and legal science into a unified Italy], in which he reconstructs the main steps of the national legal science development and of the renewal of Italian jurist figures thanks to the contribution of the pandectistic German doctrine.

Antonio Cardini's contribution on *Gli economisti tra accademia e apparati pubblici* [The economists between academia and public structures]<sup>69</sup> is devoted to the evolution of economic

<sup>68</sup> In this respect see also Moretti and Porciani's previous work, *Il volto ambiguo di Minerva. Le origini del sistema universitario italiano*, in Simili (ed.), *Ricerca e istituzioni scientifiche in Italia*, cit., pp. 74-92.

<sup>69</sup> On this issues see also: P. Massa Piergiovanni, *Università e istruzione superiore economico-commerciale tra Otto e Novecento*, in Romano (ed.), *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento*, cit., pp. 647-664.

science in the post-unitary age and to the debates that developed among Italian economists in the years between 1870 and 1914 (Ferrara, Luzzatto, Cossa, Nitti, Loria, Mazzola) while Roberto Maiocchi, in his essay entitled *Scienza e nascita dell'industria elettrica italiana* [Science and birth of the Italian electricity] focuses on the origins and development of the electricity industry in Italy<sup>70</sup>.

It is also important to focus on Mauro Moretti's contribution to *I cadetti della scienza. Sul reclutamento dei docenti non ufficiali nell'Università post-unitaria* [The cadets of science. On the recruitment of unofficial teachers in the University post-Unification], because he investigates with an abundance of analysis and documentation a basic theme – certainly the most complex and important, despite its being neglected or even ignored for a long time by a large part of the traditional historiography of the field – and also because it is connected with a theme, or rather with a dimension, the one concerning the recruitment of university teachers and their characteristics, undoubtedly central and ineluctable, when we intend to go to the heart of the university and higher education characteristics and specificities in contemporary times, also in relation with the political and cultural evolution and the economic and productive development of a particular country and of the entire European continent.

In disagreement with some work which had previously appeared and that was considered lacking in the approach and in the documentation used<sup>71</sup>, and even characterized by an «aneddotico e frammentario» [anecdotal and fragmentary]<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Connected with these issues are the works by A. Silvestri, A. De Maio, *Cultura tecnica e università in epoca contemporanea*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 9, 2005, pp. 9-28. For a careful analysis of the relationship between higher education and the world of work and industry, see C.G. Lacaita, *Università e impresa*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 12, 2008, pp. 9-21.

<sup>71</sup> A. Verrocchio, *I docenti universitari tra Ottocento e Novecento. Carriere, condizione economica e stato giuridico*, «Italia contemporanea», 206, 1997, pp. 65-86. See also A. Zannini, *Stipendi e status sociale dei docenti universitari. Una prospettiva storica di lungo periodo*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 3, 1999, pp. 7-39.

<sup>72</sup> See A. Santoni Rugiu, *Chiarissimi e Magnifici. Il professore nell'Università italiana (dal 1700 al 2000)*, Scandicci (Firenze), La Nuova Italia, 1991. It is important

system, Mauro Moretti, author of clear and articulate contributions on this matter<sup>73</sup>, focused on a category of university teachers, the non-official ones, undoubtedly interesting to investigate the various access forms to higher education that characterized the Italian universities of the Nineteenth century in the period following the Unification, and on the following complex mechanisms of academic power. It is also important to underline the undoubted «modernity» of the framework offered by the scholar, in which the constant references to the «quality education» and the «superior values» of academic scientific research, typical of the parliamentary discussions and of the debates among professors, had to be viewed in a context marked by the fragile – and sometimes desperate – financial situation of the universities, where many times unofficial teachers were employed so as to save money and non-permanent academic teaching positions were offered to provide additional income to the under-paid university staff.

Italian research in the field of the history of universities and higher education owes a lot to Mauro Moretti and Ilaria Porciani's passionate tenacity and competence, also for the preparation of a series of investigative instruments (repertories, bibliographies, etc.) and for the collections of unpublished printed sources thanks to which real progress in the entire field of study has been possible. In particular, we refer to the publication,

to notice that on this volume, actually very modest in every aspect, Mauro Moretti had already spoken expressing a very negative judgement, a sort of real demolition. See in this regard: Moretti, *La storia dell'Università italiana in età contemporanea. Ricerche e prospettive*, in Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del convegno. Padova, 27-29 ottobre 1994*, cit., pp. 347-350.

<sup>73</sup> See M. Moretti, I. Porciani, *Il reclutamento accademico in Italia. Uno sguardo retrospettivo*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 1, 1997, pp. 11-39; and Moretti, *L'«Associazione Nazionale fra i Professori universitari» e la politica universitaria nell'età giolittiana. Note ed osservazioni*, in Romano (ed.), *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento*, cit., pp. 581-600. On the exam regulation see also Polenghi's above mentioned work, *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica*, cit.; and Colao's one, *La libertà d'insegnamento e l'autonomia nell'Università liberale. Norme e progetti per l'istruzione superiore in Italia (1848-1923)*, cit. On the problems related to academic selection see M. Mirri (ed.), *La professione universitaria. Una discussione sul reclutamento dei docenti*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1990.

between 2000 and 2002, of the valuable documentary anthology *L'istruzione universitaria (1859-1915)*, edited by Gigliola Fioravanti, Mauro Moretti and Ilaria Porciani, as well as to the collections *L'università italiana. Repertorio di atti e provvedimenti 1859-1914*, edited by Ilaria Porciani and *L'università italiana. Bibliografia 1848-1914*, edited by Ilaria Porciani and Mauro Moretti<sup>74</sup>.

The volume *L'istruzione universitaria (1859-1915)* presents a selection of documentary sources preserved in the Central State Archive (with the exception of the Superior Council of Public Education minutes, partly deposited in the same ministry) and concerning the university situation of the Italian Kingdom in the period between the eve of the Unification and the outbreak of WWI. After an *excursus* on the history of the Italian university in the liberal age, the text offers the reader a rich selection of documents and archival materials (letters, reports, etc.) of the Central State Archive. Very appropriately, the 65 documents selected were divided into four sections, devoted respectively to the characteristics of the university system during the transition from the pre-unitary States to the Kingdom of Italy, *i.e.* from 1859 to 1864 (Section I), to the proposals and the attempts to reform the higher education system in the period from 1865 to 1878 (Section II), to the ordinary management of the system, with documentary materials covering the period 1875-1914 (Section III), and finally, to the most important aspects of university life (teachers' recruitment, the functioning of scientific and research structures, financing methods and expenditure of State resources, faculty rules, student mobilization, etc.) during the period between 1880 and 1915 (Section IV).

Equally valuable are the other two instruments mentioned above, *i.e.* the analytical repertory of acts and official measures for the university and higher education promulgated between

<sup>74</sup> See G. Fioravanti, M. Moretti, I. Porciani (eds.), *L'istruzione universitaria (1859-1915)*, Roma, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, 2000; I. Porciani (ed.), *L'università italiana. Repertorio di atti e provvedimenti ufficiali 1859-1914*, Firenze, Olschki, 2001; I. Porciani, M. Moretti (eds.), *L'università italiana. Bibliografia 1848-1914*, Firenze, Olschki, 2002.

1859 and the eve of World War I, and the organic bibliography on the Italian university concerning this same period<sup>75</sup>: two works that have the credit of making a great deal of sources available for scholars and researchers, sources hitherto unrecognized, and still largely neglected by the historiography of the field<sup>76</sup>.

The repertory includes, in a strict chronological order, 10,675 documents and regulatory acts, and for each of them the author has provided the contents and, when necessary, further useful information for the researchers, as well as the archival or bibliographic data of the source from which the document reproduced has been taken, in order to facilitate its easy and certain retrieval. Furthermore, 4,423 *records* make up the *Bibliografia*, which includes printed materials of various kinds (articles, monographs, opening speeches, reviews, professors' petitions, calendars) related to the panorama of national academic life. It is a very complete framework and represents the result of the examination of a considerable amount of academic documents, newsletters, miscellanies and papers of various kinds.

In recent years, besides a remarkable increase in studies and research, the field of history of universities and higher education has experienced, with particular reference to modern and contemporary age, a significant broadening of research themes and routes. In this respect, it is important to mention the conference held in Parma in December 2001 and entitled *Gesuiti e università in Europa (secoli XVI-XVIII)* [Jesuits and university

<sup>75</sup> See G.P. Brizzi, *L'università italiana. Repertorio di atti e provvedimenti ufficiali. 1859-1914*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 7, 2003, pp. 394-395; and G. Tortorelli, *L'università italiana. Bibliografia 1848-1914*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 8, 2004, pp. 405-407.

<sup>76</sup> See Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del convegno. Padova, 27-29 ottobre 1994*, cit., pp. 3-157; and S. Negruzzo, F. Zucca (eds.), *Gli archivi storici delle Università italiane e il caso pavese. Atti del convegno nazionale. Pavia, 28-29 novembre 2000*, «Annali di storia pavese», 29, 2001.

in Europe (XVI-XVIII centuries)]<sup>77</sup>, which drew the attention on the complex relationship established, from the middle of the sixteenth century, between the Society of Jesus and the universities in Italy and Europe<sup>78</sup>, and on the more general and decisive role played by the religious institution founded by Ignatius of Loyola in the renewal of higher education and in the organization of the studies leading to university. This was a first organic approach to an issue of great significance and of undoubted historical importance, ignored for too long a time, or, at least, neglected, by the historians of the field<sup>79</sup>.

Among the various issues recently investigated by scholars, particularly interesting are those related to the relationship between universities and city institutions, as well as those concerning the development, during the centuries, of the university autonomy principle. As far as the first is concerned, it is worth mentioning Antonio Ivan Pini's excellent monograph

<sup>77</sup> Brizzi, Greci (eds.), *Gesuiti e università in Europa (secoli XVI-XVIII)*. *Atti del Convegno di studi*. Parma, 13-14-15 dicembre 2001, cit.

<sup>78</sup> On the relationship between Jesuits and universities see in particular: G.P. Brizzi, *Università e gesuiti in Italia*, in *Dal mondo antico all'età contemporanea. Studi in onore di Manlio Brigaglia offerti dal Dipartimento di storia dell'Università di Sassari*, Roma, Carocci, 2001; P. Grendler, *The University of Mantua, the Gonzaga and the Jesuits*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University press, 2009. On the educational and scholastic operation carried out by the Jesuits from the sixteenth century, we now have a great deal of contributions of considerable value. See in particular: F. de Dainville, *L'éducation des jésuites (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Paris, Les Editions de Minuit, 1978; G.P. Brizzi (ed.), *La «Ratio Studiorum». Modelli culturali e pratiche educative dei Gesuiti in Italia tra Cinque e Seicento*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1981; J.W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, Harvard, 1993; italian translation: *I primi gesuiti*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1999; P. Caiazza, *I gesuiti: pedagogia ed etica*, in G. De Rosa, T. Gregory, A. Vauchez (eds.), *Storia dell'Italia religiosa. 2. L'età moderna*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1994, pp. 211-230; M. Zanardi, *The «Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu»: tappe e vicende della sua progressiva formazione (1541-1616)*, «Annali di storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche», 5, 1998, pp. 135-164; M. Roggero, *L'educazione delle classi dirigenti: il modello gesuitico*, in Firpo, Tranfaglia (eds.), *La storia: i grandi problemi dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea. L'Età moderna, 2. La vita religiosa e la cultura*, cit., pp. 359-378; Sani, «*Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*». *Istituti religiosi, educazione e scuola nell'Italia moderna e contemporanea*, cit., pp. 23-61; U. Baldini, G.P. Brizzi (eds.), *La presenza in Italia dei gesuiti iberici espulsi. Aspetti religiosi, politici, culturali*, Bologna, Clueb, 2010.

<sup>79</sup> See E. Verzella, *Gesuiti e università in Europa (secoli XVI-XVIII)*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 7, 2003, p. 371.

on *Studio, università e città nel medioevo bolognese*<sup>80</sup>, a real reference point for scholars, at least as far as the late medieval age is concerned, and the documented contributions presented at the conference held in Padova in December 2003 on the theme «L'Università e la città. Il ruolo di Padova e degli altri atenei italiani nello sviluppo urbano» [The University and the city. The role of Padova and other Italian universities in urban development]<sup>81</sup>, that can be considered a sort of forerunner for a line of research destined, in recent years, to be enriched with further valuable works<sup>82</sup>.

Antonio Ivan Pini's work clearly identifies the role played by the *Studium* as the core of the economic development and of the civil and cultural growth in the Emilia capital, destined to become the «medieval university city» par excellence. In complex relationships, sometimes harmonious, sometimes strongly conflictual, between the university and the city judiciary it is possible to identify a very important factor for the growth and evolution of Bologna's reality<sup>83</sup>.

The contributions presented at the conference in Padova focused in particular on the impact of academic realities on

<sup>80</sup> A.I. Pini, *Studio, università e città nel medioevo bolognese*, Bologna, Clueb, 2005. In this respect, also other contributions are worth to be mentioned: M.R. Di Simone, *Università e oligarchie nell'Italia del Settecento*, «Rassegna storica del Risorgimento», 80, 1993, pp. 435-450; V. Di Gioia, *L'insediamento universitario a Roma. Dall'Unità italiana alla città universitaria (1870-1935)*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 4, 2000, pp. 95-120; A. Mattone, *La città di Sassari e la sua università, un rapporto speculare*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 6, 2002, pp. 21-50; E. Signori, *Minerva a Pavia. L'ateneo e la città tra guerre e fascismo*, Milano, Cisalpino, 2002.

<sup>81</sup> G. Mazzi (ed.), *L'Università e la città. Il ruolo di Padova e degli altri Atenei italiani nello sviluppo urbano. Atti del Convegno di studi. Padova, 4-6 dicembre 2003*, Bologna, Clueb, 2006.

<sup>82</sup> See for example: I. Naso, *Lo Studio e la città fra antagonismi, compromessi, trasformazioni*, in Id., *Alma Felix Universitas Studii Taurinensis. Lo Studio Generale dalle origini al primo Cinquecento*, Torino, Alma Universitas Taurinensis, 2004, pp. 119-156; F. Ceccarelli, *Architettura universitaria e città degli studi a Bologna negli anni del Regno d'Italia*, in E. Brambilla, C. Capra, A. Scotti (eds.), *Istituzioni e cultura in età napoleonica*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2008, pp. 552-566; A. Mattone, *La città e la sua università, un rapporto speculare*, in Id. (ed.), *Storia dell'Università di Sassari*, cit., vol. I, pp. 15-37.

<sup>83</sup> See R. Greci, *Presentazione*, in Pini, *Studio, università e città nel medioevo bolognese*, cit., p. 10.



the urban development of their locations. In chronological terms, the choice was to concentrate on a long term perspective, focusing, as in the case of the same reality of Padova, on the whole modern and contemporary age (up to the Twentieth century), while for what concerns the urban and academic realities made subjects of investigation, the conference focused on a great number of cases and on very different types of Italian universities: Bologna, Cagliari, Messina, Padova, Pavia, Pistoia, Roma, Torino, Urbino and Venezia. Hence the extraordinary complexity of the framework offered by the conference of Padova, in which an unusual but fruitful comparison between specialists of the university history and of economic and social institutions and the historians of architecture and urbanism<sup>84</sup> was also recorded.

For what concerns the issue of university autonomy since medieval times and the *statuta* evolution in our times, some important researches published in recent years<sup>85</sup> and, in particular, the contributions presented at the conference held in Messina in April 2004 on «Gli Statuti universitari: tradizione dei testi e valenze politiche. Dall'originarietà degli Studi Generali all'autonomia delle Università (secoli XI-XXI)» [The Statutes of the university: the tradition of texts and political values. From the

<sup>84</sup> See M.B. Bettazzi, *L'Università e la città. Il ruolo di Padova e degli altri Atenei italiani nello sviluppo urbano*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 11, 2007, pp. 443-444.

<sup>85</sup> See D. Girgensohn, *Gli statuti medioevali delle Università di giurisprudenza italiane: conservazione, materie regolate, interdipendenze*, in Romano (ed.), *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento*, cit., pp. 159-170; G. Paruto, *Gli statuti dell'autonomia universitaria*, Bari, Cacucci, 2001; S. Serangeli, L. Ramadù-Mariani, R. Zambuto, *Gli Statuta dell'antica Università di Macerata (1540-1824)*, Torino, Giappichelli, 2006; F. Stella (ed.), *750 anni degli statuti universitari aretini. Atti del convegno internazionale su origine, maestri, discipline e ruolo culturale dello "Studium" di Arezzo. Arezzo, 16-18 febbraio 2005*, Firenze, Sismel-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2006; E. Bellini, *L'università a Perugia negli statuti cittadini (secoli XIII-XVI)*, Perugia, Deputazione di storia patria per l'Umbria, 2007; G. Fois, *Gli statuti dell'Università di Sassari nel periodo fascista*, in Mattone (ed.), *Storia dell'Università di Sassari*, cit., vol. I, pp. 165-171; E. Mura, *Gli statuti dell'Università di Sassari dal fascismo all'autonomia*, in Mattone (ed.), *Storia dell'Università di Sassari*, cit., vol. I, pp. 173-179.

original character of the *Studia Generalia* to the autonomy of the universities (XI-XXI centuries)]<sup>86</sup> must be recommended.

The main purpose of the study days in Sicily was to investigate, in a very wide chronological time-frame and with a comparative perspective, the government papers on the autonomy of universities, studying the different European experiences between medieval and contemporary times. The evolution of the university *statuta* and the increase of the «autonomy» levels of individual universities was reconstructed in a broad perspective, aiming at capturing the different movements of a process that, at a European level, presents many aspects and significant changes during the centuries, as can be inferred by the investigation of a documentation ignored for too much time or neglected by historians, as, for example, the city statutes and the colleges and academy ones, linked in different ways to universities, as well as the real «jungle» of privileges, royal constitutions and laws governing the life of universities. In particular, through some significant examples of Italian and European university situations – Alcalà, Avignon, Bologna, Budapest, Firenze, Helmstedt, Lovanio, Macerata, Madrid, Messina, Munich, Moscow, Napoli, Padova, Parma, Pavia, Pisa, Roma, Salamanca, Salerno, St. Petersburg, Sassari, Siena, Torino and Valencia – the Messina conference focused on the contents and specificities of statutory regulation, both the main instrument and the highest expression of university autonomy, highlighting also the cultural and civil significance and the social and economic impact of the regime of university autonomy on the respective urban centres.

Worthy of consideration are also the researches conducted on a front that has been, for a long time, subject of the attention of education and school historians<sup>87</sup>, but that, only recently,

<sup>86</sup> A. Romano (ed.), *Gli Statuti universitari: tradizione dei testi e valenze politiche. Dall'originarietà degli Studi Generali all'autonomia delle Università (secoli XI-XXI). Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi. Messina – Milazzo, 13-18 aprile 2004*, Bologna, Clueb, 2007. A chronicle of the conference is proposed in E. Pelleriti, *Gli Statuti universitari: tradizione dei testi e valenze politiche*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 8, 2004, pp. 434-437.

<sup>87</sup> As an example, we recall: I. Porciani (ed.), *Le donne a scuola. L'educazione femminile nell'Italia dell'Ottocento*, Firenze, Il Sedicesimo, 1987; S. Soldani (ed.),

have attracted the interest of historians of universities and higher education in a strict sense. We refer, specifically, to women's higher education and, more generally, to the slow and laborious process of women's integration in universities and professions of the united Italy.

A significant, and in many ways pioneer, attention to this theme has been granted, since the early Nineties, by Simonetta Polenghi, whose essay on *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica (1848-1876)* (1993) devoted many pages to the significant issue of women's higher education, using the rich unpublished documentation preserved in the Central State Archive. The author placed the debates and discussions on women's higher education within the wider process of women's emancipation developed in Italy at the turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth century, yet recognizing that the «university issue» constituted necessarily a «minor» aspect of the broader and more incisive issues concerning the access of the women belonging to the working class or to rural environments to full schooling and to post-primary education. In Polenghi's essay, however, central issues, still almost ignored by the historians of the field, such as women's admittance to universities (1875), and then, the contrasted access of graduates to the professional world<sup>88</sup> were methodically investigated.

During the past decade, many things have changed on this front and the line of research on women's higher and academic education has been enriched with valuable works. It is sufficient here to mention the work by L. Branciforte, P. Bresso, P. Govoni and by other scholars, on the «other half» of the university students' world, those by G. Visintini, N. Sbano, F. Tacchi and

*L'educazione delle donne. Scuole e modelli di vita femminile nell'Italia dell'Ottocento*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1989; S. Olivieri (ed.), *Educazione e ruolo femminile. La condizione delle donne in Italia dal dopoguerra a oggi*, Scandicci, La Nuova Italia, 1992. More recently see also C. Ghizzoni, S. Polenghi (eds.), *L'altra metà della scuola. Educazione e lavoro delle donne tra Otto e Novecento*, Torino, SEI, 2008 and A. Avanzini, *The Education of Women: «La Voce delle Donne» (1865-1867) and the Fight for Women's Rights in Post-Unitary Italy*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», 6, n. 1, 2011, pp. 93-103.

<sup>88</sup> See Polenghi, *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica (1848-1876)*, cit., in particular see pp. 430-447, 564-565.

G. Vicarelli on the graduates in Law and Medicine and on their difficulties of integration in workplaces characterized by a traditional male dominance, and the significant surveys by V.P. Babini, R. Simili and A. Galbani on women's presence in scientific faculties, polytechnics and research institutions, and by C. Giorgi, G. Melis and A. Varni on graduates' professional integration in public administration<sup>89</sup>.

On this theme, but with a very peculiar approach, are also the investigations on the diffusion and fortune, in Italian universities, of the so-called *women's* or *gender studies*, particularly

<sup>89</sup> See G. Visintini, *La prima donna giurista in Italia*, «Materiali per una storia della cultura giuridica», 83, 1998, pp. 317-321; L. Branciforte, *Le donne nell'Università di Catania. Percorsi, presenze, ruolo e condizione*, Catania, Società di storia patria per la Sicilia orientale, 2001; A. Galbani (ed.), *Donne politecniche*, Milano, Scheiwiller, 2001; M.L. Bianco, *Donne all'Università. Studentesse e docenti nell'accademia italiana contemporanea*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 8, 2004, pp. 9-34; G. Coccolini, *Le donne in cattedra, uno dei primati di Bologna*, «Strenna storica bolognese», 54, 2004, pp. 107-128; N. Sbano (ed.), *Donne e diritti. Dalla sentenza Mortara del 1906 alla prima avvocatessa italiana*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2004; G. Vicarelli, *Le donne possono essere medichesse? Eccezionalità e simbolo delle laureate in medicina tra Ottocento e Novecento*, «Medicina e Storia», 8, 2004, pp. 57-76; F. Tacchi, *Dall'esclusione all'inclusione. Il lungo cammino delle laureate in Giurisprudenza*, «Società e storia», 103, 2004, pp. 97-125; C. Giorgi, G. Melis, A. Varni (eds.), *L'altra metà dell'impiego. La storia delle donne nell'amministrazione*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2005; P. Bresso, *Le donne nell'Università di Torino. Studentesse, docenti, personale tecnico amministrativo (1876-1940)*, «Quaderni di storia dell'Università di Torino», 8, 2006, pp. 27-80; P. Govoni, *Donne e scienza nelle università italiane, 1877-2005*, in Ead. (ed.), *Storia, scienza e società. Ricerche sulla scienza in Italia nell'età moderna e contemporanea*, Bologna, Dipartimento di filosofia, CIS, 2006, pp. 239-288; V.P. Babini, R. Simili (eds.), *More than pupils. Italian Women in Science at the Turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Firenze, Olschki, 2007; P. Govoni, «*Donne in un mondo senza donne*». *Le studentesse delle facoltà scientifiche in Italia (1877-2005)*, «Quaderni storici», 130, 2009, pp. 213-247; S. Serangeli, L. Pomante, *L'inatteso dono di un abbandonato album fotografico: Iriade Tartarini e i suoi compagni d'Università del 1897*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 13, 2009, pp. 175-185; A. Peretti (ed.), *Storie di donne non comuni. Le prime laureate in Medicina dell'Università di Pisa*, Pisa, Edizioni Plus, 2010; A. Galoppini, *Le studentesse dell'Università di Pisa (1875-1940)*, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2011; M.P. Paoli, *Percorsi di genere alla Scuola Normale: le allieve (1889-1929/1952-1955)*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 15, 2011, pp. 273-288. References to the more or less recent history of women's presence in university education and in the professions can also be found in some important researches centred on the current reality. See, in this regard: R. Palomba (ed.), *Figlie di Minerva. Primo rapporto sulle carriere femminili negli Enti Pubblici di Ricerca italiani*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2000; Istat, *Donne all'Università*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2001.

developed, starting from the seventies, in the English reality, in relation to which we recommend the extensive and detailed research by B. Gelli, R. D'Amico and T. Mannarini on *L'Università delle donne. Saperi a confronto* [The University of women. Knowledge in comparison]<sup>90</sup>.

At the end of 2006 two important meetings of historical studies took place, in Padova and Bologna the first, in Aosta the second, dedicated respectively to «Le università napoleoniche. Uno spartiacque nella storia italiana ed europea dell'istruzione superiore» [The Napoleonic universities. A watershed in the Italian and European history of higher education]<sup>91</sup> and to «La storia delle università alle soglie del XXI secolo. La ricerca dei giovani studiosi tra fonti e nuovi percorsi di indagine» [The history of the universities at the turn of the XXI century. The research of young scholars between sources and new ways of investigation]<sup>92</sup>, that, while starting from themes and investigation lines already considered in the recent past by universities and higher education historians, offered, both from a methodological point of view and in terms of sources and of general research approach used, elements of undoubted novelty and interesting ideas for historiographical reflections.

The first of the two above mentioned conferences, dedicated to the events of the Italian universities during the Napoleonic age, starting from indications and proposals of research which had already previously emerged<sup>93</sup>, preferred the European hori-

<sup>90</sup> B. Gelli, R. D'Amico, T. Mannarini, *L'Università delle donne. Saperi a confronto*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2002. See also the review of M.A. Cocchiara, *L'Università delle donne. Saperi a confronto*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 8, 2004, p. 386.

<sup>91</sup> Del Negro, Pepe (eds.), *Le università napoleoniche. Uno spartiacque nella storia italiana ed europea dell'istruzione superiore. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi. Padova-Bologna, 13-15 settembre 2006*, cit.

<sup>92</sup> Gheda, Guerrini, Negruzzo, Salustri (eds.), *La storia delle università alle soglie del XXI secolo. La ricerca dei giovani studiosi tra fonti e nuovi percorsi di indagine. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi. Aosta, 18-20 dicembre 2006*, cit.

<sup>93</sup> See A. Varni (ed.), *I "giacobini" nelle Legazioni. Gli anni napoleonici a Bologna e a Ravenna, Atti dei convegni di studio svoltisi a Bologna il 13-14-15 novembre, a Ravenna il 21-22 novembre 1996*, 3 vols., Bologna, Costa, 1997; L. Pepe, *Istituti nazionali, accademie e società scientifiche nell'Europa di Napoleone*, Firenze, Olschki, 2005; A. Robbiati Bianchi (ed.), *La formazione del primo Stato italiano e Milano capitale, 1802-1814. Convegno internazionale, Milano 13-16 novembre*

zon and an approach focused on the «long term», in an attempt, largely successful, to understand the remote and more recent reasons, the genesis and the characteristics of the deep processes of transformation of European higher education introduced in the Napoleonic years 1796-1814, also to highlight the real turning point registered on this side by the continental university policies and their impact on the subsequent universities' modernization and evolution in the bourgeois sense during the Nineteenth century.

In regards to the above, it is not surprising that Jacques Verger's and Paul Grendler's introductory reports, focusing respectively on *L'Università delle origini: i modelli parigino e Bolognese* [The University of origins: the models in Paris and Bologna] and on *L'Università del Rinascimento e della Riforma* [The University of the Renaissance and the Reformation], centred on the European university reality focusing their analysis on a periodization very far from the Napoleonic era. Their contribution, in fact, investigating in evolutionary terms the institutional and organisational characteristics of the old regime universities, allowed to grasp the radical nature of the actions undertaken and the changes introduced on an institutional and organisational level (but also in the teachers' status and in the didactic and scientific systems) in the Napoleonic era.

More directly centred on the period between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth century were instead the contributions presented at the Padova/Bologna conference by Gian Paolo Romagnani on *L'università imperiale in Italia* [The imperial university in Italy], and by Elena Brambilla on *L'Università della Repubblica italiana e del Regno italico: continuità e mutamenti* [The University of the Italian Republic and the Italian Kingdom: continuity and changes], which emphasized the vicis-

2002, Milano, Istituto lombardo – Accademia di scienze e lettere, LED, 2006; Brambilla, Capra, Scotti (eds.), *Istituzioni e cultura in età napoleonica: Repubblica italiana e Regno d'Italia. Atti del Convegno di Milano, 18-22 ottobre 2005*, cit.; M. Canel-la (ed.), *Armi e nazione: dalla Repubblica Cisalpina al Regno d'Italia (1897-1914)*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2009; A. Ferraresi, *La militarizzazione degli studenti in età napoleonica*, in Del Negro (ed.), *Le Università e le guerre dal Medioevo alla Seconda guerra mondiale*, cit., pp. 69-95.

situdes and changes occurring in the Italian peninsula. Both Mauro Moretti, reflecting on the theme *L'eredità napoleonica nell'Università contemporanea* [The napoleonic legacy in the contemporary University], and Andrea Romano, who traced the evolution of the principle of *La libertà d'insegnamento* [The liberty of teaching] in jurisprudence and in political and cultural debates referred to the complex and controversial issue of academic freedom in the Italian university system. More sectional nature, although intended to explore themes and poorly investigated issues of undoubted importance, is recognized in other reports presented at the Padova/Bologna study conference, among which great consideration must be given to Ugo Baldini's one on the evolution of laboratories, scientific labs and science museums attached to faculties and colleges (*Gli stabilimenti della ricerca scientifica prima e dopo Napoleone*) [The establishments of scientific research before and after Napoleon], Piero Del Negro's on the gradual abandonment of Latin as a linguistic *media* in the old regime academy and on the introduction, in the Napoleonic era, of national languages both in university didactics and in scientific research (*Le lingue della didattica e della ricerca: dal latino alle lingue nazionali*) [The languages of didactics and research: from the Latin to the national languages]; Andrea Zannini's report on the complex and articulate process of «nationalization» of university teachers (*I docenti tra corporazioni e servizio dello Stato*) [The teachers between corporations and government service], Gian Paolo Brizzi's on the new flows and characteristics of student mobility (*Organizzazione e provenienza degli studenti*) [Organization and student's] and, finally, Luigi Pepe's report on the controversial relationship between the traditional academies and the university institutions before and after the Napoleonic experience (*Accademie e Università nell'Italia Napoleonica*) [Academies and Universities in Italy under Napoleon].

Giuseppe Ongaro's and Maria Rosa Di Simone's reports, dedicated respectively to *I curricula filosofici e medici* [Philosophical and medical *curricula*] and to *I curricula giuridici* [Legal *curricula*], represented, finally, the two sides of a diptych connected to one of the most significant and important aspects

of the transformations of the European university system introduced in the Napoleonic era: the specifically educational and professional one; while those by Andrea Cammelli and Andrea Silvestri provided, the first, an accurate statistical overview of Italian students and graduates between the Nineteenth and Twentieth century (*Studenti e laureati: il quadro statistico italiano tra Otto e Novecento*) [Students and graduates: the statistical italian framework in Nineteenth and Twentieth century], the latter, a careful reconstruction of the university formative paths with a specific reference to the technological area and to the «emerging» professions, such as those of engineers, architects and land-surveyors (*Prima e dopo Napoleone. Università e professioni*) [Before and after Napoleon. Universities and professions].

The other important conference to which we have referred, the one held in December 2006 in Aosta on «La storia delle università alle soglie del XXI secolo» [The history of the university at the turn of the XXI century], kept in mind the need «di superare le tradizionali divisioni temporali a favore di categorie interpretative che po[tesser]o contenere invece riflessioni condotte a partire dagli *studia* medievali fino ad arrivare al modello di università contemporanea» [to overcome the traditional temporal divisions in favour of interpretive categories that may contain instead discussions held from the medieval studies up to the contemporary model of university]<sup>94</sup>, and was divided according to four distinct themes – «The sources», «The teachers», «The students» and «The relationship between university/service institutions» – in which numerous reports were treated in the conference<sup>95</sup>.

In the first section, the one devoted to «the sources», a significant contribution is represented by the use of documenta-

<sup>94</sup> *Introduzione*, in Gheda, Guerrini, Negruzzo, Salustri (eds.), *La storia delle università alle soglie del XXI secolo. La ricerca dei giovani studiosi tra fonti e nuovi percorsi di indagine*, cit., p. 9.

<sup>95</sup> See the extensive and accurate conference presentation published by F. Totaro, *La storia delle università alle soglie del XXI secolo. La ricerca dei giovani studiosi tra fonti e nuovi percorsi di indagine*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 11, 2007, pp. 468-472.



ry and iconographic material still poorly used, with a particular reference to the history of universities and academic life in the late medieval and in the modern age. Equally interesting are the contributions included in the sections relating to «The teachers» and «The students»: the first focused on the biography of some great scholars and on the school they created, as well as on the political and social role exercised by academic authorities (rectors, senior chancellors, etc.) and by the academics themselves, through the presentation of some symbolic cases; with regard to the student universe, innovative investigations, regarding the social typologies and the «professional destiny» of Bologna graduates, the characteristics and careers of students enrolled in Swiss universities, the so-called *peregrinatio academica* were presented at the conference; and for what concerns the contemporary age, the phenomenon of student associations in Italy in the Fascist period.

The relationship between the universities, considered as culture and knowledge centres, and the civil and ecclesiastical institutions in the territory were the subjects of a group of reports presented in the fourth and final section, which registered an attempt, largely successful, to extend the investigations from the universities to particular structures that influenced the statutory order and the determination of university regulations, such as colleges, dormitories, residences, cultural academies: undoubtedly a fruitful theme, that the meeting in Aosta began to investigate, and for whose investigation specific methodological suggestions<sup>96</sup> were provided.

Among the more recent initiatives it is certainly appropriate to refer also to an important international conference held in Bologna in October 2008 on the theme of university textbooks or, rather, on the function of the *book* (manuals, lecture notes

<sup>96</sup> On the reality of the colleges, residences and university foundations and on the historical evolution of the rules concerning the study right see: G. Gemelli (ed.), *Fondazioni universitarie. Radici storiche e configurazioni istituzionali*, Bologna, Baskerville, 2005; G.P. Brizzi, A. Mattone (eds.), *Dai Collegi Medievali alle Residenze Universitarie*, Bologna, Clueb, 2010; A. Mariuzzo, *Scuole di responsabilità. I "collegi nazionali" nella Normale gentiliana (1932-1944)*, Pisa, Edizioni della Normale, 2010.

etc.) in the transmission of academic knowledge and in the process of university teaching / learning, and on the evolution of these media from the birth of a printing press with moveable letters (and before, from the use of manuscripts) to the innovations of the technological era. This is the study meeting entitled «Dalla *pecia* all'e-book. Libri per l'Università: stampa, editoria, circolazione e lettura» [From *pecia* to e-book. Books for University: printing, publishing, circulation and reading]<sup>97</sup>, in which the scholars involved tried to investigate the close link between the «book» and the university in all its aspects, in a diachronic and wide time-frame that from the late medieval age arrives until our times, characterized by the new challenges represented by internet, by the extraordinary possibility to reproduce printed texts at low cost, and by the real incipient process of «dematerialization» of traditional bibliographic instruments to prefer the use of e-books.

Still more recently and of particular interest is the international congress held in Pavia in June 2011 and which affected another strand of the history of the university. In the year of the celebrations for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Italian Unification the Centre for History of the University of Pavia and CISUI have promoted and organized an interesting conference entitled «Le Università e l'Unità d'Italia (1848-1870)» [Universities and Italian Unification (1848-1870)]<sup>98</sup>. The conference was introduced by Victor Karady's speech (*Nation States and Universities in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*). The speaker, with an admirable ability to synthesize and thanks to a global historical-geographical perspective, was able to retrace the main stages of the development of Euro-

<sup>97</sup> G.P. Brizzi, M.G. Tavoni (eds.), *Dalla pecia all'e-book. Libri per l'Università: stampa, editoria, circolazione e lettura. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi. Bologna, 21-25 ottobre 2008*, Bologna, Clueb, 2009. For a comprehensive account of the works of the Bologna conference see: P. Tinti, *Dalla pecia all'e-book. Libri per l'Università: stampa, editoria, circolazione, lettura*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 13, 2009, pp. 463-465.

<sup>98</sup> A. Ferraresi, E. Signori (eds.), *Le Università e l'Unità d'Italia (1848-1870)*, Bologna, Clueb, 2012. See the extensive and accurate conference presentation published by L. Pomante, *Universities and Italian Unification (1848-1870). The Results of an Important Conference in Pavia*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», 6, n. 2, 2011, pp. 479-484.

pean universities since their birth in the Middle Age until the complete realization during the Nineteenth century. From the variegated origins of the *studia* between 1200 and 1300 to their didactic characterizations, from the essential connection with society and with the events of the time to the identification of the various academic reference models established during 1800 (above all, the Germanic and French ones): according to Karady, these are fundamental issues to fully understand the central role of universities as symbols and expressions of the power of the nascent States, especially during the Nineteenth century. Ilaria Porciani and Mauro Moretti's speech (*The Casati Law and Universities: Sources and Issues*), which opened the first session of the conference, was, instead, essentially dedicated to the role of the sources and to their importance; Carlo Lacaita (*The University Turn in the Higher Education*) was interested, instead, in a wider chronological period (from the thirties until the Eighties of the Nineteenth century). He highlighted the close relationship between the university problems and the historical, social and ideological transformations of the nation; among the great changes of post-Unification period, one of the most evident was certainly the one that involved the theological faculties, as pointed out by Cristina Sagliocco (*The Abolition of the Theological Faculties in the Universities of the State*). Sagliocco, starting from the most authoritative historiographical considerations on the subject (Scaduto, Ferrari and Pazzaglia, *in primis*), reconstructed «a real history of the blows inflicted» to the Faculty of Theology, since 1848, when they tried to put a stop to the bishop's authority as Chancellor of the University, until the law of final abolition of the faculty in 1873. The morning of the second day of the conference and, specifically, the second session of this, was, instead, entirely focused on the situation of the local cases of the single universities. The speakers' analysis, taking as a preferred (but not exclusive) time span the fifteen years between 1848 and the early years of the post-Unification period, focused on the historical, academic, educational and even economic events that have marked the University of Torino (Ester De Fort, *The University of Torino between the Kingdom of Sardinia and that of Italy*), that of the

Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia (Alessandra Ferraresi, *Projects of University Reform in Lombardy-Venetia after 1848*), that of Padova (Giampiero Berti, *The University of Padova from the Restoration to the Annexation of Venezia to the Kingdom of Italy*), that of Bologna (Fiorenza Tarozzi, *The University of Bologna in the Transition from the Papal System to the Kingdom of Italy. Antonio Montanari's Figure and Works*), that of Pisa (Romano Paolo Coppini and Alessandro Breccia, *The University of Pisa between the Grand Duchy and the Kingdom of Italy*), that of Siena (Pasquale Ruggiero, *Accounting and Administrative Practices Adopted by the Universities of Pisa and Siena in the Years of Italian Unification*) and that of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Maurizio Lupo, *The "University System" in the Two Sicilies before and after the Unification*). In the second and third days of the conference, the academic disciplines have been the protagonists of the third session of the studies, in an extremely varied survey that ranged from law to architecture, from literature to math, through six speeches (Fabio Rugge, *The Sciences of the State*, Maria Rosa Di Simone, *The Legal Studies at the University of Roma in the Transition between the Papal State and the Kingdom of Italy*, Gian Mario Anselmi, *The Identity Value of Italian Literature and its Teaching between the Risorgimento and Italian Unification*, Ariane Dröscher, "Fallacious Stranger Systems" of Italian Teachers in front of the Reform of Medicine, Livia Giacardi, "Pel Lustrò della Scienza Italiana e pel Progresso dell'Alto Insegnamento". *The Commitment of the Italian Mathematicians of the Risorgimento*, Andrea Silvestri and Ornella Selvafolta, *The Knowledge of Engineering and Architecture at the Polytechnic of Milano*). The fourth and last session of the conference focused, then, on students and teachers' role in Italian universities.

Concluding this review on studies, it is important to indicate the considerable and fundamental *Storia delle Università in Italia* (2007)<sup>99</sup>, promoted by the Cisui and edited by Gian Paolo Brizzi, Piero Del Negro and Andrea Romano. This is a comprehensive history of Italian universities (in 3 volumes)

<sup>99</sup> Brizzi, Del Negro, Romano (eds.), *Storia delle Università in Italia*, cit.

and is presented as a work of synthesis able to reconstruct the whole history of the Italian university system and to reflect the enormous importance that universities have had in the history of our Peninsula. This is a work that – on the basis of similar initiatives previously carried out in other European countries, as, for example, the *Histoire des universités en France*<sup>100</sup>, directed by Jacques Verger, and *A History of the University in Europe*<sup>101</sup>, coordinated by Walter Rüegg – has involved over a hundred experts and that now represents an undisputed point of reference for those who want to approach the history of Italian universities and higher education in the Italian scientific and cultural panorama.

<sup>100</sup> J. Verger (ed.), *Histoire des universités en France*, Toulouse, Privat, 1986.

<sup>101</sup> W. Rüegg (ed.), *A History of the University in Europe*, 4 vols., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992-2011.



## Chapter 4

Preserving memory. The archives of the Italian universities and the organization of historical research in higher education field

Leopoldo Sandri, one of the fathers of Italian archival doctrine<sup>1</sup>, used to start his own lessons of Archival Science with the following statement: «The archive is what remains from a great shipwreck». This was a sentence that, as effectively remembered by Gigliola Fioravanti, immediately introduced the students of the Special School for Archivists and Librarians of the University of Roma “La Sapienza” into an «absolutely dramatic context but, at the same time, of immediate significance in relation to the urgency of the problem and the unavailability of a solution»<sup>2</sup>. Sandri’s words indicated the destiny of

<sup>1</sup> Leopoldo Sandri (28 August 1907-20 November 1984) is considered one of the most important representatives of Italian archival doctrine, thanks to his long career in the administration of archives, started in 1934 in Trieste. In the fifties he was superintendent for the Archives of Lazio, Umbria and Marche. Director of the State Archive of Trent (1949-1951), he worked mostly in the State Archive of Roma, of which he became director in 1956 and where he was also a teacher of the annexed School of Palaeography, Diplomatic and Archival Sciences. In 1959, he reached the most prestigious degree in archival administration: the Superintendence of the Central Archives of the State. Sandri was also chairman of the Special School for Archivists and Librarians at the University of Roma, as well as honorary president of the ISAO (Historical and Artistic Institute of Orvieto). On him, see: M. Del Piazzo, *Ricordo di Leopoldo Sandri*, «Bollettino della Deputazione di storia patria per l’Umbria», 71, 1984, pp. 203-207.

<sup>2</sup> See G. Fioravanti, *Dall’archivio come «ciò che resta da un naufragio» all’archivio come bene culturale*, in G. Penzo Doria (ed.), *Cartesio. Atti della 4ª Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (Padova, 24 e 25 ottobre 2002)*

the papers produced in the past and left, too often, to their fate. Luck and chance, therefore, became the cause of their destruction or dispersion or, in the most favourable cases, of their survival, which allowed scholars to have still the opportunity to consult them and save them. These were the «ingredients of a little bit rhapsodic chain that had handed down the precious testimonies of the medieval period, of the modern one and the contemporary documentation»<sup>3</sup>.

Such documentation is characterized by a dual and contradictory element. On the one hand, it is possible to find well-ordered archives, sometimes chaotic in their abundance, so as to suggest a sort of necessary reduction in order to facilitate the consultation; on the other, you can also find lacking collections, not organic and therefore with whole decades missing, with dispersions, often related to neglect or unconscious reject. This same problem affects each kind of archive, from that of the small provincial town to the richest university archives up to the rich funds kept in the Central State Archive.

From the last decade of the Twentieth century, the scientific literature on the history of the universities has focused its attention to the theme of the university archives. A great impetus to the investigation and the renewal of the studies on this topic is certainly given by the establishment of specific research groups and specialized centres dedicated to the study of the sources and the in-depth analysis of the history of the universities and of the higher education system in Italy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries<sup>4</sup>. In this same period, in several Italian universities,

*e della 5ª Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (Padova, 8 e 9 giugno 2006), Padova, Cleup, 2006, pp. 123-132 (quotes from p. 123).*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> We refer, in particular, to the Inter-University Centre for the Studies of the history of the universities, *Unistoria*, established in December 1991 and directed by prof. Aldo Mazzacane and whose promoters – *i.e.* the University of Napoli “Federico II”, the University of Siena and the Italian-German Historical Institute in Trento – have given rise to a wide and varied program of research on the history of universities, then resulted in a series of important conferences and seminars as well as scientific publications, among which we remember Mazzacane, Vano (eds.), *Università e professioni giuridiche in Europa nell'età liberale*, cit.; Porciani (ed.), *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei e il caso italiano*, cit.; Varriale, *La Facoltà di Giurisprudenza nella Regia Università di Napoli. Un archivio ritrovato (1881-*



specific documentary and research centres on the history of the university were established, often originated from the need to coordinate and implement specific projects of reorganization of local historical archives, further animating the historiographical reflection. Finally, in the universities of secular tradition that already possess such structures, there was a marked recovery of the research activity, with a significant development of the investigation on contemporary age and on the importance of university archives for the detailed and precise reconstruction of the history of each university<sup>5</sup>.

In the wake of these important initiatives, designed to support the revitalization of the studies in the field, the conference «La storia delle università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca» [The History of Italian Universities. Archives, sources, research means], held in Padova from the 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1994, intended to examine the situation of archival collections and available documentary sources, as well as to establish a first debate between the experts, on the state of research in

1923), cit.; Porciani (ed.), *Università e scienza nazionale*, cit. In 1996, however, the Inter-University Centre for the History of Italian universities (CISUI) was established in Bologna as the peak of the first phase of reorganization and revitalization of the studies on the history of the universities and higher education, thanks to the work of a group of scholars from the universities of Bologna, Padova, Messina, Sassari and Torino. Its purpose was to increase the research activities in the field of university history. Since its foundation, the CISUI has presented itself as a structure of coordination between different institutes and research centres dealing with the university history in various Italian universities, becoming in a few years a fundamental point of reference for the sector research in Italy and in Europe and gathering scholars and researchers from 23 Italian universities. Currently the CISUI, whose secretary is prof. Gian Paolo Brizzi, regularly organizes international conferences and seminars on the history of the universities and revise the edition of many valuable and prestigious scientific publications. For the updated list of these volumes please refer to the website of CISUI [www.cisui.unibo.it](http://www.cisui.unibo.it) (last checked: April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014). For an in-depth analysis on this topic, but also, more generally, on the renewal of the studies on the history of Italian universities occurred over the Twentieth and Twenty-first century, see the third chapter of this book.

<sup>5</sup> It's important to recommend here, among the oldest and most prestigious, the Centre for the History of the University of Bologna (1906) and that for the history of the University of Padova (1922), as well as the more recent documentary and research centres (variously named) established in the university of Ferrara, Genova, Macerata, Messina, Modena, Parma, Pavia, Perugia, Pisa, Roma, Sassari and Torino. See Brizzi, *Premessa*, cit.

Italy and on the new addresses of international historiography<sup>6</sup>. The meeting was organized by the Centre for the History of the University of Padova in order to study the history of the universities from three points of view: the archives, the edition of the sources, the historiography. The first part of the meeting in Padova had, then, as an object of interest the university archives. The well-known archivist Elio Lodolini drew a clear, detailed overview of the situation of the time in the work *La memoria delle «Sapienze». Normativa e organizzazione degli archivi universitari* [The memory of the «Sapienze». Legislation and organization of university archives]<sup>7</sup> in which he illustrated the legislation on the archives of public and private universities, examining, after a careful survey, carried out with the help of archival Superintendents, the situation of thirty-six archives of Italian universities, providing more or less accurate news on the historical events of the single universities as well as a summary of the possessed material.

Georgetta Bonfiglio Dosio's contribution, in the same conference in Padova, *Un'inchiesta sugli archivi delle università italiane* [An inquiry about the archives of the Italian universities]<sup>8</sup> presented a different approach, but equally important for the future studies. It effectively summed up the results of the first project having as purpose the identification and analysis of the administrative documentation of Italian universities. The initiative was promoted by The Centre for the history of the University of Padova that developed a questionnaire based on the models that the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities made available to the archival Superintendents for the imple-

<sup>6</sup> The contents of this conference were the subject of the following publication: Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle Università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del Convegno. Padova 27-29 ottobre 1994*, Trieste, cit. On the contents of the conference see the careful report of E. Veronese Ceseracciu, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 2, 1998, pp. 258-259.

<sup>7</sup> See E. Lodolini, *La memoria delle «Sapienze». Normativa e organizzazione degli archivi universitari*, in Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle Università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del Convegno. Padova 27-29 ottobre 1994*, cit., pp. 3-55.

<sup>8</sup> See G. Bonfiglio Dosio, *Un'inchiesta sugli archivi delle università italiane*, in *ivi*, pp. 57-86.

mentation of their institutional work. The questionnaire, sent to sixty-two Italian universities, involved the compilation of three tables: the first relating to general information about the University, the second relating to the general archive, the third, more specific, aimed at obtaining technical information about the archive.

Only twenty-six universities<sup>9</sup> answered the questionnaire. The non-participation and the visibly hurried compilation of the questionnaires revealed the lack of interest for the archival heritage of universities. In addition, according to Bonfiglio Dosio, the analysis of the results showed a situation in which the strong decentralization of the bureaucratic system was the cause of the decentralization in the production and preservation of administrative documents, which inevitably led to a dangerous proliferation of different centres of conservation of the documents within the same structure, with their consequent possible dispersion.

Given the importance of these two just mentioned contributions but also of all the other presented (and then faithfully reported in following proceedings<sup>10</sup>), this conference can be undoubtedly considered the starting point of a new phase of studies in this area. Since then, in fact, the bibliography has recorded a significant increase in the contributions on this subject, often the result of a teamwork and an essential interdisciplinary collaboration. In addition to the contributions on

<sup>9</sup> The Polytechnics of Bari, Milano and Torino, the University Institute Orientale of Napoli, the IULM and the universities of Bologna, Cagliari, Camerino, Catania, Ferrara, Genova, L'Aquila, Lecce, Macerata, Messina, Modena, Napoli (Second University), Padova, Parma, Pavia, Perugia, Pisa, Sassari, Siena, Urbino and Viterbo (University of Tuscia) answered the questionnaires.

<sup>10</sup> As already mentioned the theme of the university archives was the subject only of the first of the four parts of the book edited by Luciana Sitran Rea. In addition to the already mentioned Lodolini's and Bonfiglio Dosio's contributions, for further studies on the theme of this article see the other five works of the miscellaneous text: M. Bortolotti, *Gli archivi storici delle università italiane*, in Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle Università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del Convegno. Padova 27-29 ottobre 1994*, cit., pp. 87-92; C. Salmini, *La gestione informatica degli archivi storici*, in *ivi*, pp. 93-101; G. Catoni, *L'inventario dell'archivio storico dell'Università di Siena*, in *ivi*, pp. 103-107; G. Adorni, *L'Università di Roma e i suoi archivi*, in *ivi*, pp. 109-131; G. Fioravanti, A.M. Sorge, *Le fonti dell'Archivio centrale dello Stato per la storia dell'istruzione superiore*, in *ivi*, pp. 133-157.

single historical archives, some of which are particularly significant and produced before the meeting in Padova<sup>11</sup>, it is appropriate to mention at least other four collective works of great value. We refer to the proceedings of the conference held in Pavia on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2000 entitled *Gli archivi storici delle Università italiane e il caso pavese* [The historical archives of the Italian Universities and the case of Pavia] published in «Annali di storia pavese» of 2001, edited by Simona Negruzzo and Fabio Zucca<sup>12</sup>; to the *Primo rapporto sugli archivi delle università italiane* [First report on archives of the Italian Universities] edited by the Group of Coordination of the National project «Studium 2000», published by Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali, Direzione generale per gli archivi [Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities, Directorate General for Archives] in 2002<sup>13</sup>; to *Studium 2000. Atti della 3<sup>a</sup> Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (5-6 aprile 2001)* [Studium 2000. Acts of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference organisational of archives of the Italian universities (April 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 2001)] edited by Gianni Penzo Doria, published in 2002<sup>14</sup>; and finally to *Cartesio. Atti della 4<sup>a</sup> Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (Padova, 24 e 25 ottobre 2002) e della 5<sup>a</sup> Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (Padova, 8 e 9 giugno 2006)* [Cartesio. Acts of the 4<sup>th</sup> Conference organisational of archives of the Italian universities (Padova, 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> October, 2002) and the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference organisational of archives

<sup>11</sup> Remember, in particular, G. Adorni, *L'archivio dell'Università di Roma, in Roma e lo Studium Urbis. Spazio urbano e cultura dal Quattro al Seicento. Atti del convegno, Roma 7-10 giugno 1989*, Roma, Ministero per i Beni culturali e Ambientali, 1992 (Pubblicazione degli Archivi di Stato. Saggi, 22); Università degli Studi di Siena, *L'Archivio dell'Università di Siena*, Siena, La Nuova Italia, 1990.

<sup>12</sup> See Negruzzo, Zucca (eds.), *Gli archivi storici delle Università italiane e il caso pavese. Atti del convegno nazionale. Pavia, 28-29 novembre 2000*, cit. For a synthetic overview of the contents of this publication, see A. Turchini, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 6, 2002, pp. 264-265.

<sup>13</sup> See Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali, *Primo rapporto sugli archivi delle università italiane*, ed. by the Group for the Coordination of the National project «Studium 2000», Padova, Cleup, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> See G. Penzo Doria (ed.), *Studium 2000. Atti della 3<sup>a</sup> Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (5-6 aprile 2001)*, Padova, Cleup, 2002. For a synthetic overview of the contents of this publication see E. Angiolini, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 8, 2004, pp. 401-403.

of the Italian universities (Padova, 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> June, 2006)], a volume edited in 2006 by Gianni Penzo Doria<sup>15</sup>.

All this miscellaneous works, very often the result of the interest emerged during important conferences, are aimed at common objectives: the protection and enhancement of the documents preserved in the archives of the universities; the rational and uniform management of the developing university archives, the will to outline a comparative view that permits to analyse the situation of the archive of a single university in relation to that of other Italian universities. For example, precisely corresponding to the latter purpose, in the already mentioned Simona Negruzzo and Fabio Zucca's volume *Gli archivi storici delle Università italiane e il caso pavese*, we can find not only a considerable number of contributions about the archive in Pavia<sup>16</sup> but also valuable works on the archive of the University of Bologna (Gian Paolo Brizzi, Daniela Negrini), Padova (one by Piero Del Negro, the other by Gianni Penzo Doria), Torino (an essay by Donatella Balani, one by Rita Binaghi), Parma (Roberto Greci), Ferrara (Luigi Pepe) and Roma and Perugia (Carla Frova)<sup>17</sup>.

The fascinating challenge, therefore, of succeeding both in taking a census of the possessed material and in indicating the

<sup>15</sup> See Penzo Doria (ed.), *Cartesio. Atti della 4a Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (Padova, 24 e 25 ottobre 2002) e della 5a Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (Padova, 8 e 9 giugno 2006)*, cit.

<sup>16</sup> We remember, among the various contributions: E. Signori, *L'Archivio storico universitario e la storia delle comunità accademiche. Orientamenti di ricerca per l'età contemporanea*, in Negruzzo, Zucca (eds.), *Gli archivi storici delle Università italiane e il caso pavese. Atti del convegno nazionale. Pavia, 28-29 novembre 2000*, cit., pp. 69-73; S. Negruzzo, *L'Archivio storico dell'Università di Pavia depositato presso l'Archivio di Stato di Pavia*, in *ivi*, pp. 75-81; E. Barbieri, *L'Archivio dell'Università presso il palazzo San Tommaso*, in *ivi*, pp. 83-85.

<sup>17</sup> See G.P. Brizzi, D. Negrini, *L'Archivio storico dell'Università di Bologna*, in Negruzzo, Zucca (eds.), *Gli archivi storici delle Università italiane e il caso pavese. Atti del convegno nazionale. Pavia, 28-29 novembre 2000*, cit., pp. 17-21; P. Del Negro, *L'Archivio storico dell'Università di Padova*, in *ivi*, pp. 23-28; G. Penzo Doria, *L'Archivio Generale di Ateneo: una realtà dell'Università degli Studi di Padova*, in *ivi*, pp. 49-68; D. Balani, *L'Archivio storico dell'Università di Torino*, in *ivi*, pp. 29-32; R. Binaghi, *I mandati di pagamento conservati nell'Archivio storico dell'Università di Torino*, in *ivi*, pp. 33-35; R. Greci, *L'Archivio dell'Università di Parma*, in *ivi*, pp. 37-40; L. Pepe, *L'Università di Ferrara e i suoi archivi*, in *ivi*, pp. 41-42; C. Frova, *Archivi universitari di Roma e Perugia*, in *ivi*, pp. 43-47.

most appropriate ways for its use for the purposes of scientific research and teaching, seemed to be taken on by many scholars. This growing interest in the university archives is confirmed by the fact that, during the last two decades, the archive has become the real subject of research and no longer a simple tool of it, including in historiographical areas less specialized in the archival issues. Just think that the three major Italian magazines on the history of the universities, the oldest «Quaderni per la storia dell'Università di Padova» and «Fonti e studi per la storia dell'Università di Pavia» and the latest «Annali di storia delle università italiane», the latter edited by CISUI, reserve systematically, in each number, a particular attention to the archive through a series of works carried out by archivists, historians and librarians who have recently thrown light on a documentary heritage preserved in the archives of the Italian universities and considered in the past missing and no longer available.

For example, in the seventeen volumes of the «Annali di storia delle università italiane» published until now, we can recommend, just to mention some of them, Marilena Scali, Alessandro Leoncini, Nicola Semboloni's contribution, *L'Archivio dell'Università di Siena*; Paola Novaria's one, *L'Archivio generale dell'Università di Torino: progetti in corso*; Pio Cartechini's one, *L'Archivio dell'Università di Macerata dalla Restaurazione all'Unità (1816-1860)*; Fabio Zucca's one, *Le fonti archivistiche nelle Università italiane. Il caso del recupero dell'Archivio storico dell'Università degli Studi di Pavia*, Maria Alessandra Panzanelli Fratoni's one, *Gli archivi dell'Università degli studi di Perugia*, Thomas Cammilleri's one, *L'Archivio storico dell'Università degli Studi di Trento* and Alessandra Barretta, Maria Piera Milani's one *Il Fondo docenti dell'Archivio storico dell'Università degli Studi di Pavia: i risultati di un progetto di recupero e valorizzazione*<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> See M. Scali, A. Leoncini, N. Semboloni, *L'Archivio dell'Università di Siena*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 3, 1999, pp. 231-233; P. Novaria, *L'Archivio generale dell'Università di Torino: progetti in corso*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 10, 2006, pp. 395-399; P. Cartechini, *L'Archivio dell'Università di Macerata dalla Restaurazione all'Unità (1816-1860)*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 13, 2009, pp. 113-124; F. Zucca, *Le fonti archivistiche nelle*

In recent years, moreover, thanks to the autonomy granted by the Ministry of the University and Scientific Research to the academic bodies, it was possible to reconsider the main problems that affected the Italian archival system, through several «study, cataloguing and research projects», carried out thanks to the fruitful synergy of scholars and institutions, in order to analyse and enhance the value of the archives of the Italian universities from different points of view.

In this sense, it is worth mentioning the first project «Titulus 1997», promoted by the University of Padova, one of the most active on that research field<sup>19</sup>, with the aim to propose common rules for the management of the archives to the Italian universities in the full respect of their autonomy<sup>20</sup>. This project, whose purpose is the sharing of the filing plans for the classification of the documents in the universities, one for the central administration and one for the centres, the faculties and the departments, is aimed mainly at the management of the archives and

*Università italiane. Il caso del recupero dell'Archivio storico dell'Università degli Studi di Pavia*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 15, 2011, pp. 381-386; M.A. Panzanelli Fratoni, *Gli archivi dell'Università degli studi di Perugia*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 16, 2012, pp. 321-337; T. Cammilleri, *L'Archivio storico dell'Università degli Studi di Trento*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 16, 2012, pp. 355-359; A. Barretta, M.P. Milani, *Il Fondo docenti dell'Archivio storico dell'Università degli Studi di Pavia: i risultati di un progetto di recupero e valorizzazione*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 17, 2013, pp. 487-494.

<sup>19</sup> The University of Padova in 1994 was among the first in Italy to facilitate the establishment of a Commission of archives, in which there were teachers and employees of the university. In 1995, they entrusted to Gianni Penzo Doria, the winner of a competitive exam, the realization of a project which resulted, the following year, in the establishment of a general Archive of the University under the direction of Penzo himself.

<sup>20</sup> On «Titulus 1997» see F. Cavazzana Romanelli, M. Martignon, R. Pegoraro, *Alla scuola di Titulus. Ipotesi e problemi per un titolario degli archivi parrocchiali della diocesi di Venezia*, in Penzo Doria (ed.), *Cartesio. Atti della 4a Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (Padova, 24 e 25 ottobre 2002) e della 5a Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (Padova, 8 e 9 giugno 2006)*, cit., pp. 115-119; A. Mirandola, G. Penzo Doria, *Titulus 97: un progetto per la gestione, tutela e valorizzazione dei documenti nelle università italiane*, «Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia Patavina di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti», CIX, n. 2, 1996-1997, pp. 135-147; G. Penzo Doria, *Tre progetti per gli archivi universitari: Titulus 97, Thesisi 99 and Studium 2000*, in *Le carte sicure. Gli archivi delle assicurazioni nella realtà nazionale e locale: le fonti, la ricerca, la gestione e le nuove tecnologie*, Trieste, ANAI, 2001, pp. 343-351.

of related problems such as the legal evidentiary and administrative function of the protocol register, the adoption of the filing plan of classification and of the index of filing plan, of the catalogue of the files and the maxims of selection. «Titulus 1997», has gained the support of many Italian universities and offers important solutions to the needs arising from the university reforms implemented by the Ministerial Decree no. 509 of 1999 and the Ministerial Decree no. 270 of 2004<sup>21</sup>, which had important consequences on the organization of documents.

The absence of common rules, for what concerns the management of the thesis, then brought to the creation of the project «Thesis 99»<sup>22</sup>. Once again, this strategic agreement between the universities, coordinated by the University of Padova, and especially by Gianni Penzo Doria, aimed, on the one hand, to create a system for the management and protection of the thesis and, on the other, to promote the necessary legal adjustments<sup>23</sup>. Due to the legislative vacuum, in fact, the Law has over the years considered the thesis in a very irregular way, sometimes giving them the dignity of a literary work, sometimes considering them a public act, even if of high scientific value, but not subjected to copyright protection. Another complex issue is connected to the conservation of these documents, since the thesis presents

<sup>21</sup> Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca scientifica e tecnologica, Decree November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509 – *Regolamento recante norme concernenti l'autonomia didattica degli atenei* [Regulation containing rules governing the curricular autonomy of universities], «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana» (from here onwards: GU), 2, January, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2000; Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Decree October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004, no. 270 – *Modifiche al regolamento recante norme concernenti l'autonomia didattica degli atenei, approvato con decreto del Ministro dell'università e della ricerca scientifica e tecnologica 3 novembre 1999, n. 509* [Amendments to the the regulations concerning the curricular autonomy of universities, as approved by the Minister for Universities and Scientific and Technological Research November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, no. 509], in GU, 266, 11<sup>th</sup>, November, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> See on this problem G. Penzo Doria, *Primi appunti per la gestione, tenuta e tutela delle tesi di laurea*, «Archivi & computer: automazione e beni culturali», VIII, 1, January-June 1998, pp. 9-24.

<sup>23</sup> On «Thesis 99» see the above mentioned Penzo Doria, *Tre progetti per gli archivi universitari*: Titulus 97, Thesis 99 e Studium 2000, cit. and F. Venuda, *Thesis 99: un accordo strategico tra gli atenei*, in Penzo Doria (ed.), *Stadium 2000. Atti della 3a Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (5-6 aprile 2001)*, cit., pp. 87-98.



itself both as an administrative and a scientific document: hence the need for an harmonization between archive and library. In other words, from an archival point of view the thesis is a simple document, but, at the same time, from a librarian point of view, it has a great scientific value and acquires the dignity of «gray literature» and should therefore be subjected to a bibliographic description. Surely, at the basis of the project «Thesis 99» there is the desire to promote and spread such works and to define the international standards for the presentation and storage on computer supports and, therefore, to ensure the long-term preservation in digital format. The first results of this initiative were announced during the 2<sup>nd</sup> organisational Conference of the archives of the Italian universities, held on November 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, 1999, during which the *Carta dei diritti della tesi di laurea* [Charter of the Rights of the degree dissertation]<sup>24</sup> was presented.

Other projects, however, belong to the first decade of the new millennium: they are less ambitious than those above mentioned, but are worthy of consideration and they all have the University of Padova as the leading body. Along with «Titulus Caronte», for the implementation of a software for the management of the storage archive, concrete results have been achieved thanks to programs such as: «Ad personam», a project for the management and protection of personal dossier (staff and students), «Atlantis», a project for the drafting of a diplomatic atlas of the Italian universities, «I calzini del principe Carlo», an idea developed in the context of the third review of the filing plan for the archives of the Italian universities participating to the standard «Titulus 97»; «Aurora», acronym for «Amministrazioni Unite per la Redazione degli Oggetti e la Registrazione delle Anagrafiche» [United Administrations for the Drafting of the Objects and the Registration of Personal Data] which aims to lay down some drafting and descriptive rules in order to normalize the recordings of the object in the Protocol; «eXtra»,

<sup>24</sup> See in particular G. Penzo Doria (ed.), *Thesis 99. Atti della 2<sup>a</sup> Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (11-12 November 1999)*, Padova, Cleup, 2001.

(XML emission between university recordings) presented in 2000, following the implementation of the Decree 428 of 1998 about the computer protocol, then repealed and merged into the *Testo unico sulla documentazione amministrativa* issued by the Decree 445 of 2000; and the more recent «Rete degli archivi storici delle università italiane» [Network of the historical archives of the Italian universities], whose main objective is the creation of guidelines about the management of the university historical archives in order to implement a coordinated and cohesive system for the archives belonging to this Network<sup>25</sup>.

Equally significant, as Carla Frova<sup>26</sup> pointed out and as we have already underlined in this work, is that in the most recent contributions on the history of the universities the theme of the historical archive has obtained its own space. Just think, just to mention some of them, to the already mentioned studies carried out by Piero Del Negro on the historical Archive of the University of Padova, by Gian Paolo Brizzi and Daniela Negrini on that of the University of Bologna and by Pio Cartechini on the University of Macerata.

In this regard, before analyzing the difficult and extremely varied current situation of the historical archives of the Italian universities, we have to talk about the strategic project that can be rightly considered the more wide-ranging project in recent years. Its own purpose is the identification and the recovery of the archives of great cultural value, managed independently by each university on the basis of art. 30 of *Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio* [Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape] del 2004<sup>27</sup>. We refer to «Studium 2000», whose driv-

<sup>25</sup> For further information on these projects promoted by the University of Padova and on other initiatives developed in recent years on the issue of the reorganization and enhancement of university archives please see the website of the University of Padova (<<http://www.unipd.it/>> archive: last checked October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013) and also the interesting article by G. Penzo Doria, *Gli archivi delle università italiane*, «Atlanti», 19, 2009, pp. 221-231.

<sup>26</sup> See C. Frova, *Università, storia e archivi*, in Penzo Doria (ed.), *Cartesio. Atti della 4a Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (Padova, 24 e 25 ottobre 2002) e della 5a Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (Padova, 8 e 9 giugno 2006)*, cit., pp. 133-142.

<sup>27</sup> Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004, n. 42, *Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio*, in GU, 45, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004. For a comment

ing force was, once again, the University of Padova, but that was promoted and supported, since 1999, by the Directorate General for the Archives, Service III, of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities. The project, whose coordination group was composed of eight members<sup>28</sup>, was aimed at the census, the reorganization and the computerized inventory of the historical archives of the universities involved in the project and it was concluded with the publication of the aforementioned *Primo rapporto sugli archivi delle università italiane* [First report on archives of the Italian Universities]<sup>29</sup>.

As Maria Grazia Pastura, Director of the Service III of the Directorate General of the Archives, affirmed in the Introduction of the *Primo rapporto*, projects such as «Studium 2000» arising from the «cooperation between the State and the universities are strategic for the archival administration, which has always considered the protection of the university archives as one of the main objectives of the supervision activity. Academic institutions, in fact, by their very nature, play a very important role, being the centres of very interesting archives and having the possibility to enhance them through the use of internal resources of research»<sup>30</sup>.

This *Rapporto* gives details on fifty-eight Italian universities, both public and private, organized by region. It, defined a

on this *Codice*, which substituted the *Testo unico dei beni culturali e ambientali del 1999*, see R. Tamiozzo (ed.), *I codici dei beni culturali e del paesaggio*, Milano, Giuffrè, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> The Group of National coordination «Studium 2000» included Salvatore Consoli, Giovanna Giubbini, Angela Muscedra, Giuseppe Mesoraca, Remigio Pegoraro, Luigi Previti, Micaela Procaccia, Michelina Sessa.

<sup>29</sup> See Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali, *Primo rapporto sugli archivi delle università italiane*, ed. by the Group for the coordination of the National project «Studium 2000», cit. on «Studium 2000» see Penzo Doria (ed.), *Studium 2000. Atti della 3ª Conferenza organizzativa degli archivi delle università italiane (5-6 aprile 2001)*, cit. and Id., *Tre progetti per gli archivi universitari: Titulus 97, Thesis 99 e Studium 2000*, cit., as well as Id., *L'archivio dell'Università degli Studi di Padova: strategie e progetti per la conservazione della memoria*, «Atti e memorie dell'Accademia galileiana di Scienze, Lettere e Arti in Padova», CXV, n. 2, 2002-2003, pp. 149-189.

<sup>30</sup> See M.G. Pastura, *Introduzione*, in Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali, *1° Rapporto sugli archivi delle università italiane*, ed. by the Group for the coordination of the National project «Studium 2000», cit., p. 15

«document-report»<sup>31</sup>, is organized into two parts: one for the presentation of the project with a special *Nota per la consultazione* [Note for the consultation], the other, instead, consists of fifty-eight file cards describing universities, polytechnics, schools and Italian higher education institutions. The cards, in accordance with the «Guidelines» prepared by the Group of Coordination, reported, in addition to the data identifying the individual universities, information divided into several sections: 1) an outline of the history of the university; 2) general archive of the university; 3) the archives of the teaching and research structures; 4) the bibliography. The section on the archive is, in turn, divided into three sub-sections, concerning respectively the historical, the current and the storage archive<sup>32</sup> and then the descriptions of the acquired and joined archives follow. The report, while, on the one hand, gives a precise and detailed picture of the Italian university archives, on the other, highlights very interesting elements in relation both to the greater consistency of certain historical archives in respect to others and to the presence of many joined archives, consisting of documents produced before the founding of the university and of documents of teachers with a prominent role in these faculties, institutes or departments.

In addition, through an analysis of the collected data, it appears obvious that the Italian universities have been, over the years, a real pole of attraction for the archives produced by politicians and cultural personalities, who recognized the universities as having a prestigious and very important role in the formation of the ruling classes of the society both in modern and contemporary age.

In light of this last statement it is useful to examine, although briefly and without the pretension of a complete analysis, the

<sup>31</sup> Ivi, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> The university archives, as well as all the other kinds of archives, consist of three organisational phases corresponding to: «current archive», relating to current affairs, including documents for practical and administrative use; «storage archive», including the documents no longer necessary to the administration but not yet destined to permanent conservation, «historical archive», concerning the old documents collected over the years and concerning finished business, therefore destined to permanent preservation.

actual situation of the historical archives of Italian universities. The archives of the oldest universities, as pointed out by Gian Paolo Brizzi, the director of the Historical Archive of the University of Bologna, experienced, in fact, many troubles such as:

loss, damages, thefts, some were destroyed during wars, fires or earthquakes, in others the oldest documents were lost (as in most of the universities where the Jesuits operated), and, in general, the documentation is not located in the same site, but with reference to the body that was responsible for its academic activity, the documentation can be preserved among the papers of the municipalities, of the bishop, of a professional college of lawyers and judges or doctors and philosophers, or even of a department responsible of the supervision of the activities of the universities<sup>33</sup>.

The reasons for such dispersals are usually due to specific moments in the history of the institution that made extremely difficult the following retrieval of documents. Think, for example, to those universities entrusted, in part or in whole, to the Jesuits, such as Sassari<sup>34</sup>, or to those universities transformed into high schools during the Napoleonic era, such as Macerata<sup>35</sup>. In many other cases, the final abolition of a university during the period of restoration or the creation of the national university system started after the Unification process, were very difficult moments of transition in which the archives produced by the universities that have ceased their activity were exposed to transfer, disposal or simple neglect.

Gian Paolo Brizzi has also used the effective expression of «archives without an owner»<sup>36</sup> as a possible title for the story suffered by the documents of many Italian universities, whose

<sup>33</sup> See G.P. Brizzi, *L'Archivio storico dell'Università di Bologna*, in <<http://www.archivistorico.unibo.it/storico/archivio.asp>> (last checked: October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> For further information on the relation between Jesuits and universities in the modern age see Brizzi, Greci (eds.), *Gesuiti e università in Europa (secoli XVI-XVIII). Atti del Convegno di studi. Parma (13-14-15 dicembre 2001)*, cit. For specific events connected to the University of Sassari see Mattone (ed.), *Storia dell'Università di Sassari*, cit.; M. Batllori, *L'Università di Sassari e i collegi dei gesuiti in Sardegna: saggio di storia istituzionale ed economica*, Nuoro, Poliedro, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> For a historical reconstruction of the University of Macerata between Nineteenth and Twentieth century, see Pomante, *Per una storia delle università minori nell'Italia contemporanea. Il caso dello Studium Generale Maceratense tra Otto e Novecento*, cit.

<sup>36</sup> See Brizzi, Negrini, *L'Archivio storico dell'Università di Bologna*, cit., p. 17.

life was interrupted between the late Eighteenth century and the Unification of Italy: archives probably lost forever or that may, in the most optimistic scenario, one day emerge from the oblivion<sup>37</sup>.

Without any doubt, however, the Unification of Italy and the inclusion of the universities of the pre-unitary State into the new national university system was a moment full of consequences, also for the archival documentations: many universities, although not obliged, decided to give the oldest section of their archive to the new archives of the State, and, waiting for general rules applicable in every cases, the daily produced archives were absorbed by the central archives of the kingdom of Italy (Torino before, then Roma). We should remember, however, that in the majority of the cases such delivery to the State archives permitted the rescue of the oldest documentation, because the universities have not always shown the proper care and the competence to preserve and protect the historical archives.

In the attempt, certainly not too easy, to estimate the patrimony currently preserved in the historical archives of the Italian universities, we notice that the situation is very different from one university to another, not only for the extent and value of the documents preserved but also for the *status* of their historical archives. Some universities reorganized and made an inventory of their archive long ago, to permit the teachers, students and scholars in general to consult it, as far as possible. Sometimes, as already Elio Lodolini pointed out a few years ago, specific committees were set up to oversee the archive in order to entrust it to skilled personnel, with, not only a degree, but also a specific diploma in Archival sciences<sup>38</sup>.

The first Italian universities to obtain, by the decrees of the Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage, respec-

<sup>37</sup> This, for example, happened to the documents of the *Studium* of Cesena that, although for a short period of time, was the proud holder of the title of *Studium Generale*. Here the records of graduation that were supposed to be destroyed since the Napoleonic era, then suddenly re-emerged during the reorganization of an ecclesiastical archive.

<sup>38</sup> See Lodolini, *La memoria delle «Sapienze». Normativa e organizzazione degli archivi universitari*, cit., p. 3.

tively, of the September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1978 and the December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1980, the recognition of institutions with «particularly important archives», were those of Palermo and Bologna, the latter university has probably the richest and best preserved historical university archive in Italy. It currently preserves all the records and documents produced or received from the offices since 1860: the records of the collegial bodies, student files with their thesis, reports of examinations and graduation exams, registers of lessons, files of the teachers and the technical staff and administrative practices of the faculties and schools, protocol logs, inventories of institutions, archives of schools and of high university institutions.

Closely related to the historical archive of Bologna is also a large photographic archive consisting of over 43,000 images concerning the university building and the academic life and divided into two sections: the historical (1860-1979), fully accessible over the network, and the modern (1980 -present)<sup>39</sup>.

Among the archives of the other Italian universities those of Padova (with the division into «old, Nineteenth and Twentieth century archive»)<sup>40</sup>, Pavia<sup>41</sup>, Siena and Pisa also deserve special consideration. These universities have been ensuring for several years policies of conservation, census, consultation and development of the possessed materials. Moreover, as Simona Negruzzo wrote some years ago, «the rich documentary heritage contained in the academic treasure chests, though still kept in conditions that aren't totally satisfactory in relation to the expectations of scholars and other potential users, is recognized to be of exceptional value not only for the historical memory of the Italian and

<sup>39</sup> The historical archive of the University of Bologna has a very updated website which should be consulted for further information on this structure: <<http://www.archivistorico.unibo.it>> (last checked: October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

<sup>40</sup> The recognition of «particularly important archive» was also attributed to the archives of the University of Padova with the Ministerial Decree of March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1992. See the website to know the material preserved in it: <<http://www.unipd.it/archivio>> (last checked October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> See the website <<http://www-3.unipv.it/archivio>> (last checked: October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

European universities, but also for the research carried out on those materials, both nationally and internationally»<sup>42</sup>.

Unfortunately, this optimal situation just described for certain universities is not widespread, and many other archives are often structured in an uncertain way, mainly located in areas too narrow and inadequate, managed by personnel inadequate in number, and then without possibilities to become useful study tools for research. It is also true, however, that the preservation and use of the archival materials in the universities are very often difficult, involving particular problems, mainly due to some regulatory uncertainties of our system. In this regard, it is important to remember that the duties of the State universities in the archival field were established fifty years ago by art. 30 of Presidential Decree of September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1963, no. 1409<sup>43</sup>, modified in part by the Presidential Decree December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1975, no. 805<sup>44</sup> and more recently by the above mentioned *Codice per i beni culturali e il paesaggio* (Legislative Decree January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004 no. 42).

The system established in 1963, however, although modified by following general or particular dispositions, still remains a point of reference. According to this law the State universities have an obligation to preserve and organize their archives, including current documents; to establish «a separate section of the archive», in ordinary usage named «historical archive», for the preservation of documents «related to business concluded more than 40 years ago»; to draw up an inventory of the documentary material that constitutes the historical archive, depositing the inventory, in triplicate, at the Archival Superintendency; to allow scholars the access to the documents of the archive in the chronological limits provided by the above mentioned Presi-

<sup>42</sup> See S. Negruzzo, *Gli archivi storici delle università italiane e il caso pavese. Cronaca del convegno di Pavia, 28-29 novembre 2000*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 5, 2001, pp. 273-275 (quotes from p. 275).

<sup>43</sup> DPR September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1963, n. 1409, *Norme relative all'ordinamento e al personale degli archivi di Stato* [Rules concerning the order and the staff of the State Archives], in GU, 285, October, 31<sup>th</sup>, 1963.

<sup>44</sup> DPR December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1975, n. 805, *Organizzazione del Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali* [Organization of the Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage], in GU, 23, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1976.



dential Decree, Articles 21 and 22; to perform operations of «rejection» of the documents considered less useful, before the passage of this same documents to the historical archive<sup>45</sup>.

The situation was further complicated by the question of the legal *status* of Italian universities. The nature of public universities and, consequently, that of the archives they produced, was in fact the subject, in the sixties of the Twentieth century, of a conflict of authority between the Home Office and the Ministry of Education. The former, in fact, which administrated the State Archives, considered the universities «peripheral organs of the State» and, therefore, entrusted its archives to the State archives responsible for the territory, which would have to undertake the responsibility of the supervision function<sup>46</sup>. The Ministry of Education, instead, considered the State universities as «autonomous bodies governed by public law» or at least as «instrumental bodies of the State»<sup>47</sup> thus clarifying this position with the issuing of the circular no. 270 of June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1966 by the Directorate General of Higher Education, Special Office I. This measure forced the universities to keep their own historical archive, under the supervision of the archival Superintendencies (however, this didn't always happen). As Paola Carucci, stated «if there was a problem of supervision, they refer to the nature of State institutions; as State institutions, however, they refused the payment, referring to the nature of autonomous bodies»<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> For further information on issues concerning the duties of the universities in the archival field, please refer to Lodolini, *La memoria delle «Sapienze». Normativa e organizzazione degli archivi universitari*, cit.

<sup>46</sup> For a distinction between the function of «sorveglianza (supervision)» and that of «vigilanza (security)» and other related issues see: R. Collavo Baggio, *Archivi delle Università: sorveglianza o vigilanza*, «RAS», XXX, n. 3, 1970, pp. 658-659; Penzo Doria, *Gli archivi delle università italiane*, cit.

<sup>47</sup> The definition of «autonomous bodies governed by public law» can be found in the circular June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1966, no 270 by the Ministry of Public Education. The definition of «instrumental bodies of the State» can be find out from A.M. Sandulli, *Manuale di diritto amministrativo*, Napoli, Jovene, 1984, I, p. 536. A more complex definition of «not territorial instrumental self-sufficient body», was developed by L. Tramontano, *Legislazione universitaria*, Napoli, Simone, 1985, p. 14.

<sup>48</sup> See P. Carucci, *Problemi e prospettive dell'Archivio storico*, in Negruzzo, Zucca (eds.), *Gli archivi storici delle Università italiane e il caso pavese. Atti del convegno nazionale. Pavia, 28-29 novembre 2000*, cit., pp. 205-208 (quotes from p. 205).

The archives of the Italian universities, thus, developed without fully following the rules, although the pre-Unification archives of the older and most important universities enjoyed a positive situation, being preserved in the State archives while the post-Unification ones were preserved in the universities themselves. The main problem, however, is to organize the archives within universities. As Carucci underlined, to keep an archive does not mean, as in the case of many universities, «to hold the documents scattered in different places of the same structure, in different closets, often preserved thanks to the good will or intuition or to the sensitivity of the individual teacher», because this would make the archive a structure unsuitable for the research.

Hence the urgent need, even in a time of particular economic difficulty, to be equipped with adequate facilities and to have trained competent personnel<sup>49</sup>, able, within an historical archive where there are documents, books and museum objects, to file books according to bibliographic criteria, to organize and describe the documents according to archival criteria and to classify museum objects according to specific criteria in the field, in order to ensure easy accessibility to teachers, students and scholars.

In addition, the direction of a good historical archive should be carried out in connection with all the departments (until a few months ago with all the faculties) and with the Dean because «a key point for a correct management of the historical archive is the planning of the periodic increases of documents produced daily by the sectors operating within the University. To consider a historical archive as a static thing that should not be increased periodically means to relegate it to a secondary role in the cultural life of the institution»<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> On these urgent need for the Italian archives, see the interesting and recent «document-appeal» by the Società Italiana per lo Studio della Storia Contemporanea (SISSCO) entitled *Appello della Sissco sulla situazione degli archivi in Italia* [Appeal OF Sissco on the situation of archives in Italy] dated back to February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 and available on the website <<http://www.sissco.it/index.php?id=1713>> (last checked: October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> See Carucci, *Problemi e prospettive dell'Archivio storico*, cit., p. 207.

As Gian Paolo Brizzi, promoter of the recent international workshop *Atelier Heloïse 2013*<sup>51</sup>, an initiative interested in the increasingly important role of the university archives in the international historiographical research, stated «the Historical Archive of the University should be considered as a research laboratory, in every sense, and as such must be considered also in its management and its management strategies: it is not a simple warehouse of papers produced and received by the university context, but rather a dynamic element and a growth factor that can help determine certain conditions and developments in the institution; [...] it must be a laboratory for historiographical research but also a training ground for the organisational self-awareness, necessary for an institution always looking for a new balance, that is now regulated by a principle of autonomy that derived its prerogatives and procedures in its own historical memory»<sup>52</sup>. Therefore, we leave to an experienced and scrupulous archivist, «the architect of memory», the task of planning, controlling and testing what was rightly called «site of memory»<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> About the contents of this meeting, see: L. Pomante, *Atelier Heloïse 2013. European Workshop on Historical Academic Databases. The New Frontiers of Historical Research on Higher Education and Universities in a Recent International Conference*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», 8, n. 2, 2013, pp. 679-688.

<sup>52</sup> See G.P. Brizzi, *L'Archivio storico dell'Università di Bologna*, in <<http://www.archivistorico.unibo.it/storico/archivio.asp>> (last checked: October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

<sup>53</sup> See Fioravanti, *Dall'archivio come «ciò che resta da un naufragio» all'archivio come bene culturale*, cit., pp. 131-132.



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