

“Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development.”

Kofi Annan, 7th Secretary-General of the
United Nations

Department of Political Science

Political Economy of Development

**EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT:
THE CASE OF THE ITALIAN *MEZZOGIORNO***

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Abstract

In a dense theoretical pool, the Italian South (or Mezzogiorno) emerges as a relevant case study that interlinks education, development and democracy. The low-quality socio-economic performance of Mezzogiorno, symptom of a broken convergence, is a patchwork of failures in policy-making. What was not done to catch-up persists the educational delay increases the GDP gap between macro-areas, it damages an already-heterogeneous institutional setting and it ends in a poor socio-economic outcome. A poor formal educational system -and a persistent, noxious informal one- is transmitted to one generation to another, resulting in an educational trap. The poor competences acquired have a negative impact on the well-functioning of the political and economic institutions. Conditional convergence does not take place and development economics finds in Mezzogiorno a relevant case. The tight relation between education, human capital accumulation, institutions and socio-economic performance is displayed through mainstream literature. Mezzogiorno subsequently appears as a developing country by the book, yet hosted by a high HDI country, which runs at the speed of the most advanced economies in the world. The case proves then to be not solely a story of missed catch-ups, but one of exclusion, which in the end spoils Italy in both its resources and its possibilities and therefore as a whole. The lesson to be drawn from Mezzogiorno might therefore work as a policy-makers memorandum on the importance of tackling inequality, exclusion and on granting public education to everybody, with development as an ultimate goal.

1. Introduction

Citizens' key competences prove crucial in addressing development and democracy. 'Development' is looked at in Sen's terms as 'freedom', i.e. the citizens' expansion of capabilities (Sen, 1999). Democracy is apolitically¹ seen as *"a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections"* (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). A useful definition of citizens' key competences is to be found in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning as: *"a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes [...] which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment"* (European Network on Information Literacy, 2006).

The European Reference Framework² defines in detail eight key competences:

- 1) Communication in the mother tongue;
- 2) Communication in foreign languages;
- 3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
- 4) Digital competence;
- 5) Learning to learn;
- 6) Social and civic competences;
- 7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and
- 8) Cultural awareness and expression.

Education plays a crucial role in the development of key competences and, through them, in the functioning of political and economic institutions and socio-economic performance of countries.

The relationship between education, economic development and democracy, as explained by mainstream theories, will be considered in Section 1. The first link between education and democracy is to be outlined with particular reference to Glaeser et al. (2007). The second link, between education and economic development, is mainly examined based upon the work of

¹ It needs to be said that democracy is not seen with/taken in any political acceptance: it is not seen as a preferred outcome for a developmental process as there is here no necessity for political considerations. Rather, the strengthening of democracy is merely seen as the strengthening of the *status quo*.

² The Reference Framework is defined in the annex to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning.

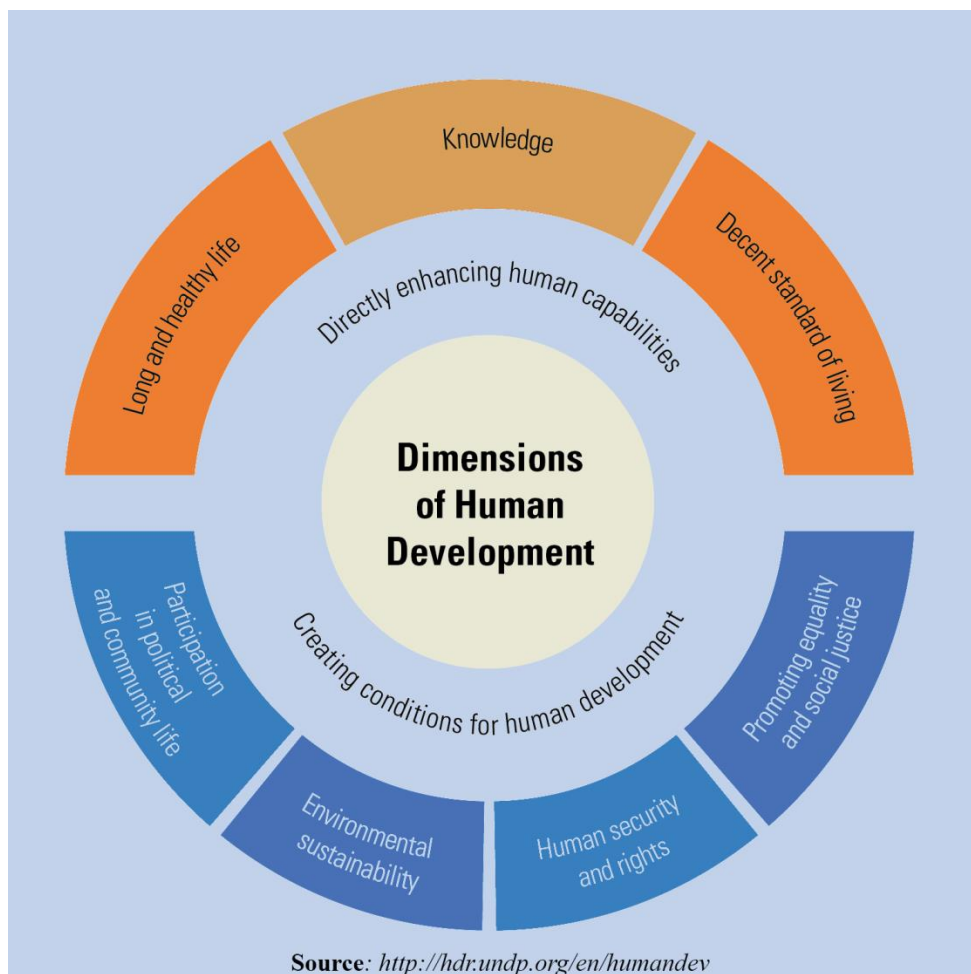
Hanushek (2005). Section 2 focuses on the *Mezzogiorno* as a case study useful to analyze the consequences of an intergenerational transmission of an educational delay into developmental delays/underdevelopment. Section 3 concludes with some policy implications. In Section 3, some policy options that could be pursued to escape the trap are illustrated.

1. Education as an investment for democracy and economic development

1.1 Political and economic institutions and economic development

Development is a multi-dimensional process enhancing human capabilities through which people's well-being is improved. In the words of Sen (1988), development is the *expansion* of capabilities i.e. “*the individual's capability of achieving the kind of lives they have reason to value*” and poverty is conceived as the incapability of living the life wished. Sen's work spurred the formulation of the Human Development Index (HDI) where capabilities are related to people's health state, their education and income (Dowding et al., 2009). Health, education and income are seen as direct means to sustain development. The indirect means supporting development (i.e. those that create the conditions for human development) are: participation in political and community life, environmental sustainability, human security and rights, promoting equality and social justice (Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Dimensions of Human Development



In this work not all these dimensions are to be encompassed and the focus will rather be on education.

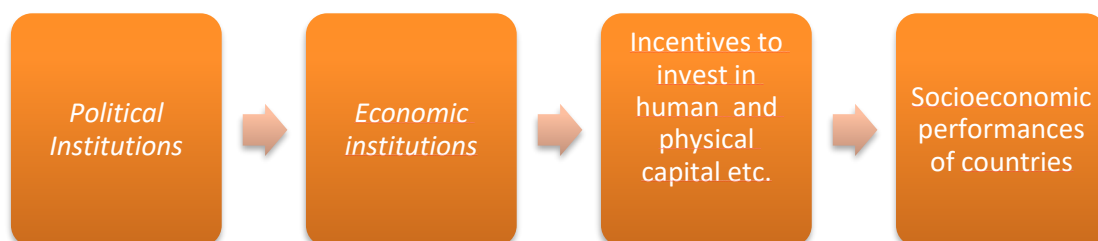
Education provides citizens with the skills needed to make choices in manifold spheres of their lives (as parents, workers, consumers and electors etc.). Therefore the goodness of those choices will be heavily affected by the quality of the skills acquired and/or the sort of education received.

In order to investigate the relationship between education and development is useful to look at the fundamental causes of development.

According to Acemoğlu (2005), the fundamental causes of development, i.e. the main factors shaping the development path of countries are: luck, geography, institutions and culture. Following Acemoğlu's analysis, this work will mainly focus on the role of education in bringing about good socio-economic performance through good institutions. Indeed, institutions also increase people's well-being since they *"enable citizens to feel that they control their own lives, and that investment of their time and resources will be rewarded. In turn, this will lead to higher incomes in a virtuous circle"* (OECD, 2006). Institutions can be divided up into formal (e.g. laws and regulations), and informal (e.g. shared customs and beliefs).

Formal institutions include political and economic institutions. *"Political institutions, formal and informal, determine both the constraints and incentives faced by key players in a given society"* (Pereira and Teles, 2010). Political institutions shape economic institutions with a significant impact. Economic institutions (e.g. labor market regulation, IPRs regulation) are a major source of economic growth across countries (Rodrik 2007; fig. 2), for their substantial influence on the incentive to invest in physical and human capital and new technologies (Pereira and Teles, 2010).

Fig. 2 Institutions and socioeconomic performance



Institutions (political and economic, formal and informal) are linked to the educational system since they can favor or deter people's investment in education and, therefore, the accumulation of human capital (Acemoğlu, 2007). Good institutions are then essential to accumulate human capital, which is a key driver of development.

The relation between education and economy can be described as follows:

- (Competent) economic decision-making requires skilled and well informed economic actors
- Education improves people's skills
- Education is an essential driver for the well-functioning of a market-based economy

In fact, the assumption underlying the smooth functioning of market-based economies is that economic actors are perfectly informed. Investing in human capital through education provides citizens with a diverse variety of skills that serve both their self-development and economic efficiency. The positive relationship between education and economic growth can also be explained in terms of education playing a role in resolving coordination failures since *“social activities hinge on interpersonal exchange of information.”* Education, therefore, also sustains coordination: if citizens are part of the same linguistic and cognitive sphere, they will coordinate more efficiently and exploit strategic complementarities.

This theoretical conclusion is supported by empirical evidence: data show a causal effect of education, measured through the learning outcomes, on economic growth (Hanushek and Wößmann, 2010).

1.2 On good citizens and good politicians

The best investment for development to take place is an education that makes citizens active and good³ citizens. Data (Glaeser et al., 2007) show that there is a positive correlation between education and democracy, even if this does not imply a direction of causation.

As anticipated in the Introduction, citizens' key competences are essential to the good functioning of a market-based democracy. Generally speaking, education raises the benefits of living in a democracy also through fostering socialization. In particular, education is essential for citizens to experience the highest degree possible of inclusiveness. If included, citizens will make efficient use of the human capital gained, also pushing other individuals to

³ By 'good' is meant acting for the common good.

participate in the political and economic life. Through a ‘peer effect’, citizens will also make use of the skills they learned in class, such as persuasion. If included, these ‘new entries’ will both enjoy the fruits of democracy -since they understand its meaning- both they will give back to democracy its *democratic* nature (Glaeser et al., 2007). This can explain the observed positive correlation between education and social participation⁴. In fact, citizens often find themselves politically unsatisfied or marginalized because they do not understand the democratic mechanisms, which are certainly complex and require a diverse number of skills and competences.

To sum up, the relation between education and democracy can be described as follows:

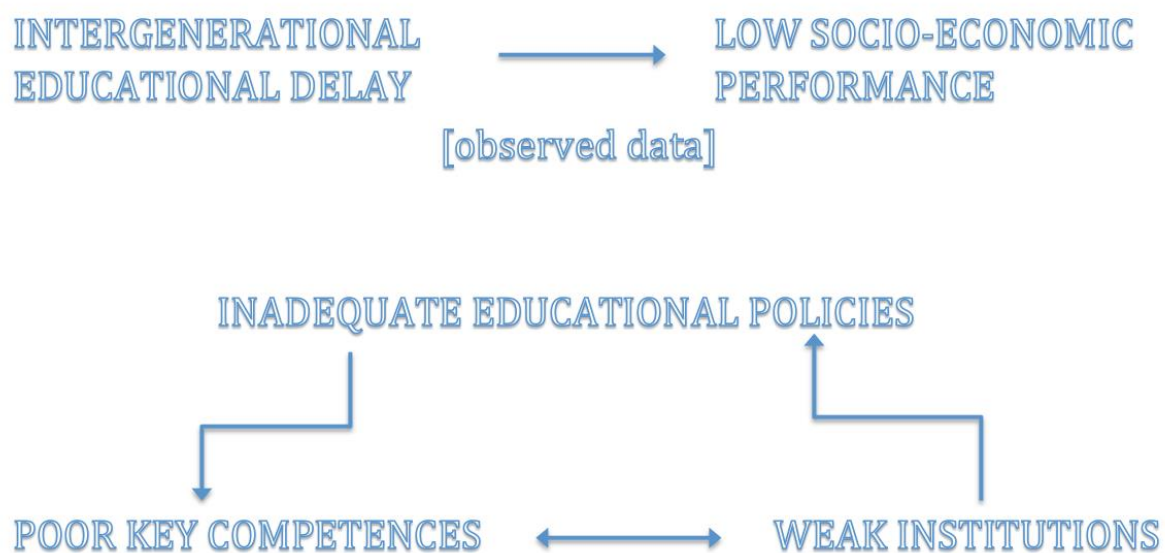
- Education is an investment in human capital and skills
- Human capital is needed to assess political options and to act as informed citizens
- Informed citizens make market-based democracies accountable and efficient

As illustrated in Fig. 2, the relationship between education, democracy and economies’ socioeconomic performance hinges on the fact that good political institutions spur the implementation of good economic institutions

When a country suffers from an educational delay and peoples’ key competences are inadequate the socio-economic outcome will be mediocre and the country may be trapped in underdevelopment equilibrium. This trap will be enforced by the intergenerational transmission of the educational delay if appropriate education and social policies are not implemented. In fact, starting from a given educational delay, policy makers should work to catch-up the delay. If they do not succeed due to a policy failure, the delay persists and it is transmitted to future generations. This legacy has an impact on political and economic institutions. Then, the relationship between poor key competences and institutions is bi-directional. This relation is part of an educational trap that includes the inadequate educational policies as in the Figure 3.

⁴ Sharply positive and statistically significant ($t = 3.31$) relationship between education and participation in social groups (Glaeser et al., 2007)

Figure 3: The educational trap



This vicious circle is hard to break.

In the following Section 2 the educational trap is illustrated with reference to the Italian *Mezzogiorno* as a case study.

2. The Italian *Mezzogiorno*, a case study

The second section of this thesis focuses on the case study of Southern Italy or *Mezzogiorno* as an example of how poor key citizens' competences may translate in poor socioeconomic performances through their impact on the quality of institutions. This deficiency is attributed to the intergenerational transmission of poor skills due to inadequate educational policies through time, which left behind a large portion of the population.

The starting point for the case study is the Italian Unification where the focus is on the illiteracy rates at regional level. Italy at the time (1861) had a mean illiteracy rate of 75%, some regions in the South reached 89% (Sicily), while some in the North reached just 54% (Piedmont). Yet, the European neighbors ranged between 40% and 10% (Cipolla, 1971). This educational delay at the Unification time summed with the inadequate educational policies through time, at least for half a century after the Unification, enduring the educational delay particularly in the *Mezzogiorno*. Such delay implied that various generations of citizens acquired poor competences, mainly due to inadequate primary education, which had a negative effect on the functioning of political and economic institutions. The malfunctioning of those institutions is responsible for a developmental delay in *Mezzogiorno*, which persists today and that can be detected through the indicators (such as educational standardized tests, GDP, employment rate) showing the comparative socioeconomic performance of *Mezzogiorno* with respect to the rest of the country. Starting from a significant divide in literacy rate in 1861, *Mezzogiorno* kept a lower socio-economic performance (Figure 4 and 5) and resulted in a persistent lower performance in PISA tests as in Figure 6. Through the empirical evidence of the international standardized tests (PISA and PIAAC), Ferrante (2017) inquires the nature of Italian educational delays: he looks at the ratio behind the fact that regions that share a same institutional setting, included the educational one, perform differently in the tests.

Where do the root causes of such differences lay if regions formally lived under same educational regimes? According to his analysis, the (poor) quality of education is a 'legacy of the past,' i.e. it is shaped by the (poor) quality of education of past generations (Ferrante, 2017). His analysis agrees with the empirical evidence exposed in Figure 7 showing a divergent path of growth, i.e. lack of convergence in GDP per capita.

In this transmission of education, the social and familiar glue -that transmitting the delays- was stronger than the institutional influence was on new generations. In other words, in the interaction between formal and informal institutions, informal ones sort of prevailed on the educational outcome of new generations. The reason, argues Ferrante, is informal institutions' resilience -as it will be also discussed in 2.2

Figure 3: Italy, illiteracy rate per macro-areas, 1861.

	1871		1901		1921		1951		1951	1971	2001	2010		
MACRO-AREAS	Illiteracy	Primary Enrolment	Illiteracy	Primary Enrolment	Illiteracy	Primary Enrolment	Illiteracy	Primary Enrolment	Average years of schooling among 25-64 years old individuals					
North-West	42.4	63.3	21.0	67.5	8.2	71.1	2.9	68.7	5.2	5.7	8.9	11.0		
North-East	68.2	41.1	40.7	58.7	18.0	72.7	6.3	72.7	4.6	5.3	8.6	11.0		
Centre	70.5	31.8	49.3	48.2	28.8	61.0	11.3	70.0	4.4	5.3	8.8	11.3		
South	83.9	22.2	69.6	33.4	47.2	45.0	24.2	68.3	3.1	4.1	7.4	10.2		
Italy	68.5	38.5	48.5	49	27.4	57.6	12.9	68.3	4.1	5.0	8.3	10.8		

Source: re-adaptation of Bertola, G. Sestito, P. (2011) "Economic History Working Papers. A comparative perspective on Italy's Human Capital Accumulation." Economic History Working Papers. Pag. 33.

Figure 4: Rates of employment 1881-2011, per Italian regions

YEAR	Piedmont	Aosta Valley	Liguria	Lombardia	Trentino-Alto Adige/ South-Tyrol	Bolzano/ Bozen	Trento	Veneto	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	Emilia-Romagna	Tuscany	Umbria
1881	78,7	78,7	66,0	78,2	70,6	....	....	66,9	76,7	68,1	69,0	72,3
[...] (c)	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]
1901	72,5	72,5	63,9	71,8	65,4	....	....	67,6	70,8	65,9	64,9	67,8
1911	70,6	70,6	59,7	66,7	65,6	....	....	61,7	63,7	64,7	64,0	66,7
1921	63,4	63,4	55,3	52,8	61,4	....	....	56,8	54,5	60,6	58,6	61,1
1931	62,1	62,1	54,8	-	59,8	....	....	59,2	54,9	61,6	57,5	59,1
1936	61,5	61,5	51,9	59,8	56,8	....	....	58,4	55,6	59,7	54,8	56,3
[...] (c)	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]
1951	57,0	57,0	48,5	56,2	52,4	....	....	54,0	53,5	56,9	51,6	53,2
1961	51,2	51,2	44,1	50,6	50,0	....	....	47,3	47,1	51,5	46,6	46,6
1971	50,0	48,5	43,3	51,3	49,8	52,3	47,6	48,5	46,0	50,9	46,4	45,4
1981 (d)	52,3	51,0	44,7	53,6	51,6	54,5	48,8	51,2	48,0	53,6	50,0	48,3
1991	50,4	51,7	44,5	52,0	51,9	54,2	49,8	51,1	47,7	51,8	49,3	47,3
2001 (e)	50,5	54,2	44,5	52,9	54,8	57,4	52,4	52,5	49,8	52,7	49,4	47,3
2011	52,2	55,6	48,5	54,8	58,2	60,7	55,8	54,8	52,5	55,3	52,4	51,4
YEAR	Marches	Lazio	Abruzzo (f)	Molise (f)	Campania	Apulia	Basilicata	Calabria	Sicily	Sardinia	Italia	
1881	73,4	70,4	73,5	73,5	67,0	70,4	71,4	81,6	58,0	52,4	70,6	
[...] (c)	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	
1901	70,2	61,6	68,8	68,8	63,6	61,8	69,2	74,8	53,6	49,7	65,8	
1911	68,2	59,7	63,5	63,5	60,3	59,2	65,8	67,2	53,3	51,4	62,9	
1921	63,6	58,7	64,8	64,8	57,9	58,1	64,9	65,3	49,7	50,2	58,7	
1931	64,9	55,6	60,4	60,4	56,1	57,8	63,4	59,0	48,9	48,9	58,1	
1936	62,4	40,4	58,2	58,2	53,4	57,1	62,2	57,2	47,1	48,7	56,4	
[...] (c)	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	[...]	
1951	58,0	50,0	53,9	53,9	50,0	53,2	59,1	51,7	43,6	45,6	52,6	
1961	51,5	44,0	47,0	47,0	45,4	50,0	52,8	45,4	40,3	40,5	47,3	
1971	49,5	46,2	45,0	51,4	45,4	48,5	48,9	45,5	41,4	42,8	47,5	
1981 (d)	51,6	48,7	46,4	47,2	49,0	48,7	49,3	46,2	42,7	46,7	49,7	
1991	50,4	49,1	47,4	47,5	48,7	47,6	48,9	47,8	45,2	48,4	49,3	
2001(e)	50,2	49,1	46,4	44,9	43,8	43,7	45,4	42,7	42,9	47,3	48,6	
2011	53,2	51,7	49,5	46,9	44,8	45,4	47,6	45,4	44,7	50,0	50,8	

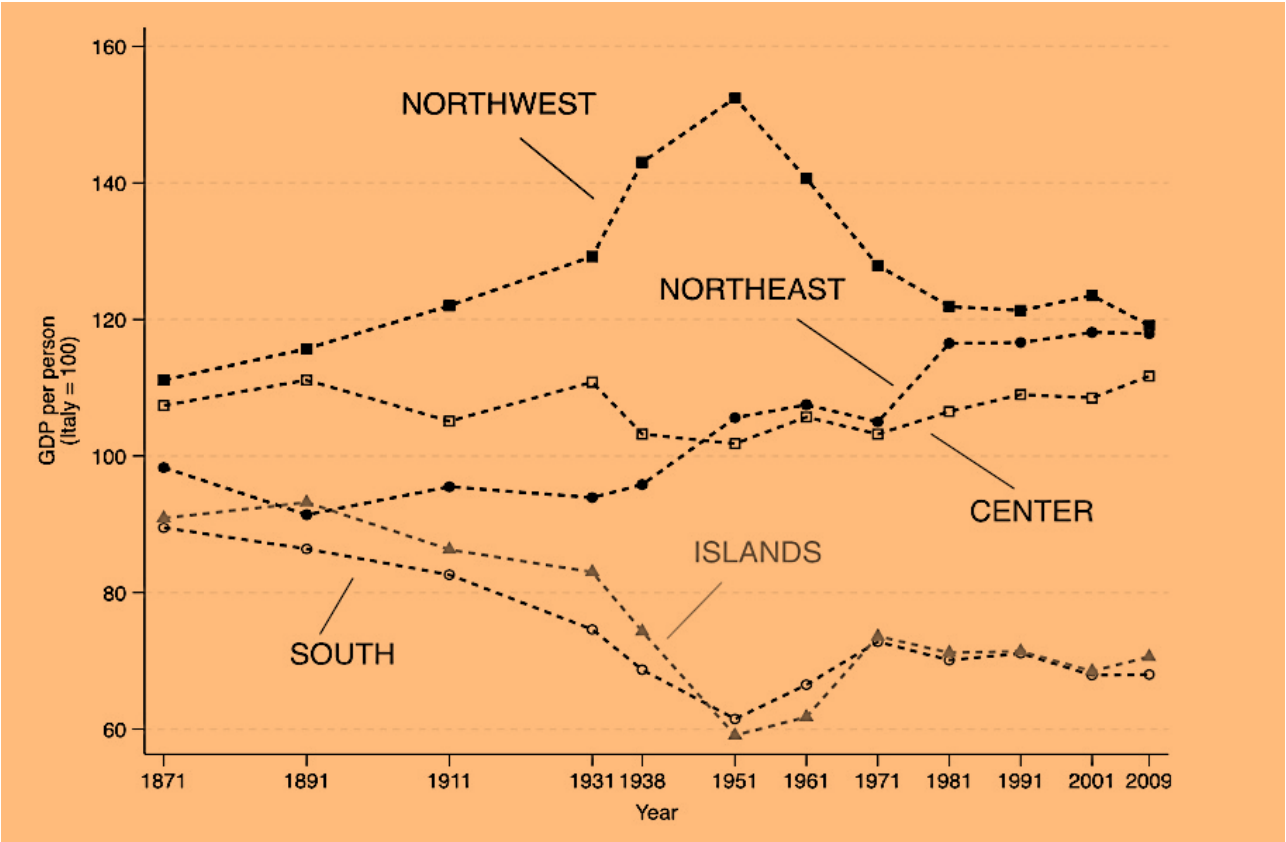
Source: Italian Ministry of Agriculture, industry and trade (up to 1921), Istat (since 1931), general population census.

(a) Employment rates, up to 1961, were obtained by correlating the active population (rebuilt by C. D'Agata with reference to the population of 10 years and older, 1965) to an estimated population of 10 years and older, obtained by applying of the population resident the incidence of this age range estimated by O. Vitali (1970). From 1881 to 1961 the rates of employment refer to people aged 10 and over, from 1971 to 1991 to those aged 14 and over and from 2001 to those aged 15 and over.

(b) Until 1961, data from Piedmont and Aosta Valley are aggregated and therefore coincide.

- (c) The general censuses of the population of 1891 and 1941 were not carried out for reasons of organizational and financial order the first, for war reasons the second.
- (d) Since 1981, questions about professional status refer to the week before the census date.
- (e) In 2001, the criteria for identifying the employed and the unemployed changed.
- (f) Until 1961, the data of Abruzzo and Molise are aggregated and therefore coincide, as the territory of the two regions was united.

Figure 5: Italian GDP per macro-areas (1871-2009)



Source: Felice, E., Vecchi, G. (2015) "Italy's Growth and Decline, 1861–2011." Journal of Interdisciplinary History.

Figure 6: PISA results per Italian region, 2012

	Mathematics	Reading
Abruzzo	476	480
Basilicata	466	474
South Tyrol	506	497
Calabria	430	434
Campania	453	464
Emilia Romagna	500	498
Friuli Venezia	523	518
Lazio	475	480
Liguria	488	490
Lombardia	517	521
Marches	496	497
Molise	466	476
Piedmont	499	506
Apulia	478	493
Sardinia	458	464
Sicily	447	455
Tuscany	495	488
Trentino	524	521
Umbria	493	492
Aosta Valley	492	502
Veneto	523	521
Source: PISA test results, 2012		

Figure 7: Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills, OECD 2016.

Difference in literacy scores between contrast categories, by socio-demographic characteristics
After accounting for age, gender, education, immigrant and language background and parents' educational attainment

	Age	Gender	Immigrant and language background	Educational attainment	Parents' educational attainment
	<i>Difference between youngest (25-34) and oldest (55-65) adults</i>	<i>Difference between men and women</i>	<i>Difference between native born/native language and foreign born/foreign language</i>	<i>Difference between adults with tertiary and lower than upper</i>	<i>Difference between adults with at least one parent who attained tertiary and neither parent who attained upper secondary</i>
<i>some OECD countries and economies</i>	<i>Score difference</i>	<i>Score difference</i>	<i>Score difference</i>	<i>Score difference</i>	<i>Score difference</i>
Denmark	22.2	1.1	46.1	46.6	17.9
England (UK)	4.0	2.6	37.8	44.8	29.6
France	18.2	0.9	36.1	53.9	20.3
Germany	26.8	1.3	30.5	54.8	22.7
Greece	-8.3	-4.8	20.7	30.6	26.2
Italy	11.8	-0.9	31.7	39.1	20.9
Netherlands	24.2	3.9	44.6	50.2	15.0
Spain	23.8	5.9	36.9	46.5	16.7
United States	6.9	1.3	31.3	63.6	29.0
OECD average	15.6	2.3	33.6	48.4	20.3

Source: Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015)

2.1 *Mezzogiorno*'s developmental delays

At Unification time, Italy had a deeper educational delay both respect to more advanced economies (i.e. Germany), both respect to less advanced ones (i.e. Japan). As said, in 1861, 30% of the Italian population was malnourished, 40% of it was living in extreme poverty. Getting people out of poverty was the top priority. In the poorest Italian areas, bread was 'the alphabet's enemy' (Tomasi, 1978). In fact, in some regions in the North the public expenditure devoted to education could reach 21.4%, while in some regions in the South 5,7% (MAIC, 1882). Through time, the period of mandatory schooling was extended: in 1877, students could end the mandatory schooling period at 9, in 1919 at 14 years old. Nevertheless, free and mandatory schooling was not enough, many regions still suffered from extreme poverty and the alphabetization process took 90 years to complete. Despite the efforts, literacy was progressively spread all over the peninsula. In 2011, data (Vecchio, 2011) show a convergence on literacy rates among Italian regions. Yet, Italy ranks second in Western Europe for illiteracy.

Surely the Italian educational delay had a regional nature, the persistence of the delay can be linked to:

1. Pre-Unitarian issues: ^[L]_[SEP]

-Despite, the homogenizing force of the Italian State, pre-Unitarian institutions took time to be dismantled and informal ones, i.e. shared values and beliefs, showed strong persistence. This had a profound impact on the educational delay, on the intergenerational transmission of competences and the socio-political and economic institutional settings mainly through the enforcement of formal rules

- Illiteracy was a stronger phenomenon in the South. This meant that often teachers themselves were illiterate. Such scenario endured the delay and segregated the most illiterate regions since students were not provided with high levels of human capital. ^[L]_[SEP]

-The economic divide which even if present was not particularly significant at the Unification time, was endured by the educational delay, the scarce production of human capital and the poor institutional setting. ^[L]_[SEP]

^[L]_[SEP]

2. Post-Unitarian issues: the main post-Unitarian issue was the malfunctioning of political and economic institutions, which lead to (and was caused at the same time by) a malfunctioning of the local administration. Corruption, in the institutionalized way of Mafia (a pre-Unitarian presence perhaps), worked as a powerful counterforce to the *Mezzogiorno* catching-up.

In Italy, some public policies are a shared competence of the State and the local authorities depending on which area (education, labor market, etc.) they are touching. The State setting

up the general educational standards while the rest is coordinated at the regional and local (municipalities) level (European Committee of the Regions). Therefore, the Italian State is performing at two different levels: the national and the local. These two entities -and especially the coordination between the two- was particularly relevant to the *Mezzogiorno* educational delay, as most of the scholars seem to argue. Yet, regionalism is not enough to *cause* the delay since, in practice, regions were such in the 70's when the delay was already present and persistent.

A third relevant actor is the so-called *Cassa del Mezzogiorno*: a public fund aimed at recovering the *Mezzogiorno* underdevelopment (Viesti, 2001). The *Cassa* gives a hint of the degree of maladministration. Active from 1950 to 1984, it did not fully accomplish its mandate as soon as corruption and nepotism sneaked it. Rather, the *Cassa* partly contributed to the failure of the educational policies. In short terms, even though the *Cassa* might have been effective it was not corruption-proof. Rather, it had been permeated by the same inefficiencies that slowed down the rest of the system (Viesti, 2001).

In fact, the structure of the post-Unitarian Italy largely influenced educational outcomes. Given diverse funds, funding modes and administration, schooling and literacy policies had actually heterogeneous impacts. The effort of providing Italy with a homogenous educational reality failed. Such heterogeneity, endured that already present, and it radically changed the economic path of the *Mezzogiorno*, which implied that conditional convergence never took place (as clear in Figure 5), as one would expect from 'economies' (those inside Italy) sharing the same institutions to do. Despite the experience of the economic boom in which the *Mezzogiorno* experienced some growth, the educational delay had had already a disastrous impact on the well functioning of political and economic institutions in the *Mezzogiorno* and growth (and neither development) was not meant to outlive. In 1951, literacy rates still reached 24% on the overall population and were higher for adults. It implied that the ruling class, the working class and the electorate were not able to make informed political and economic choices. This also explained the failing action of the *Cassa del Mezzogiorno*.

What just said makes clear how much the case of *Mezzogiorno* is the interplay of various causes, which are often multilaterally directed. In fact, *Mezzogiorno* underdevelopment perfectly fits in the puzzle shown in Figure 1. With the aim of solving the puzzle, the causes of *Mezzogiorno*'s underdevelopment are exposed in the following pages. At its root, there are the educational policies, which clearly have also an impact on the social and economic spheres.

There are, therefore, three main focuses in this second section: the educational, the socio-political and the economic one. Failing educational policies had a disastrous impact in

catching up the educational delay and left citizens with poor key competences. As it is described in deep in the following part, educational policies had not a failing effect overall, but in specific regions due to specific problems. Due to this poverty in competences, citizens had difficulties in coping with the socio-political and economic system. Similarly, the socio-political and economic system was damaged by this poverty. Incompetent agents, as it will be presented, play inefficient games. The mix of these three inefficiencies has been explored in deep by the academia.

The present educational delay can be seen in Figure 5 and in the PISA test. Data (Istat, 2013) show that 1) there is still a substantial percentage of people that did not attain upper secondary diploma and 2) that there is still a significant divide among regions. This tells that the educational delay present in the Southern regions at the Unification time was not caught up.

In 1861, when Italy unified, it was an underdeveloped country by the book. At the Unification moment, in Italy, 4 out of 5 Italians were illiterate, life expectancy at birth was of 30 years old, the GINI coefficient was 0.5. More, 30% of the population was malnourished, 40% of it was living in extreme poverty, 63,2% of them were employed in agriculture and child labor was over 80%.

At the time when Italy was merely a “geographical expression,” (Toniolo, 2013) data show the smallest North-South divide (*ibidem*; fig. 5). Economically speaking, *Mezzogiorno* development was negatively influenced by child labor, lack of investment and ‘fiscal federalism⁵’ (Viesti, 2011). Differently from Toniolo (2013), Viesti (2011) denies Italy to be a missed catch-up in developmental terms, rather it experienced growth overall, but it did not developed. In fact, he argues, through time, Italian GDP was not too far from the European mean, this implied that the root problem was then not to be found in Italian economic growth, but in its economic development. Since Unification times, argues, Viesti, Italian *Mezzogiorno* spread a malaise through the peninsula: public administration, since public policies were “*the problem and not the solution*” (*ibidem*).

Investment in education means investment in human capital, Bertola and Sestito (2011) specifically look at the production of it. For this purpose, they get into the post-Unification educational policies and describe Italian educational system as a patchwork with no coherent purpose. In this patchwork, *Mezzogiorno* resulted to be particularly penalized. The authors justify it with a manifold matrix. Dividing the history of the Italian educational system, the authors talk of a mid-19th century Italy, an end-19th’s and a 20th century one. In their work, a particularly relevant role is attributed to the familiar values as a counter-force to education in

the *Mezzogiorno* and as a pushing force in the North. This pattern will recur throughout the thesis and will be analyzed more in deep in Part 2.3.

Quite outstandingly, Vecchi (2011) argues Italy to be exactly the story of a missed catch-up. Vecchi reports how *Mezzogiorno* slowed Italian catch-up down. In fact, while in the North the major factor of underdevelopment was economic in the South it was mainly caused by a social push. For instance, Vecchi (2011) mentions how the United Nations, in the Millennium Development Goals, estimated that to alphabetize the world are needed 15 years; Italy took 90. Vecchi goes in deep into the root-causes of such delay: the main pushing factor of a 90-year process of alphabetization was lack of enforcement of mandatory primary education and poor educational quality.

In 1877, according to Vecchi's analysis (ibid.), seven were the causes of school absence: (Figure 8)

1. Poverty of the families
2. Families resistance in sending children to school
3. Difficulties in accessing scholastic structures
4. Municipal poverty⁶
5. Inertia of the Municipalities
6. Low-level educational quality (both in teaching as in buildings)
7. Other causes.

Figure 8: causes of school absence in Italy (1889-90), in percentage.

	Poverty of the families	Families resistance in sending children to school	Difficulties in accessing scholastic structures	Municipal poverty	Inertia of the Municipalities	Low-level educational quality (both in teaching as in buildings)	Other causes	Total
Italy	25	9	20	4	28	10	4	100
North-West	27	9	30	3	12	12	8	100
North-East	22	6	26	1	28	11	6	100
Center	24	10	23	1	39	3	1	100
South	29	11	8	5	37	9	1	100
Islands	21	8	14	9	31	15	1	100

Source: A'Hearn, B., Auria, C., Vecchi, G., (2011) "In ricchezza e povertà. Il benessere degli italiani dall'Unità a oggi". Chapter 5: Education. Adaptation of Tab. 5.2, pag. 192

⁶ Please take not that, as mentioned in Sestito (2011), schools were administrated and funded at the Municipal level and, as a consequence, it as the decision of the local politicians whether and how to allocate funds for schools. Or again, Municipalities were not themselves receiving funds from the central state or those funds were misallocated.

The causes mentioned clearly coincide with the standard causes that push children to skip school in developing countries nowadays (Wodon, 2015). What is also clear is Italy's missed chance of following the example of neighboring countries in making efficient use of its economic resources (Vecchi et al, 2011, p. 203).

Exactly in Vecchi is to be found the most suitable (because closely linked to the key competences) interpretation of *Mezzogiorno* underdevelopment. The synthesis he provides is that “while parents could not afford to send their children to schools, Municipalities were choosing not to enforce law” (*ibid.*). In fact, as shown in Figure 6, the stronger forces against school attendance were: inertia of the municipalities, poverty of the families, and difficulties in accessing the structures. This thesis agrees with Vecchi position and it focuses mainly on the inertia and corruption of the administrative system since it partly caused by the poor education of the ruling class. In fact:

1. The administrative inertia is clear in the scarce results of the *Cassa del Mezzogiorno*
2. That corruption and Mafia are institutional failures mainly caused by civic mis-education.

It is poignant to stress that a lack of civic education is characteristic both of the ruling and administrative class both of the elective citizens since the well-functioning of a market-based democracy does not depend only on the governors but mainly on those who are governed (Baland et al., 2010). Even though scholars seem to diverge on major points, they all agree on the role of maladministration, corruption, and inefficiency.

To conclude, Italy through time was victim of a lack of precise political direction and good will, which escalated in a vicious circle of civic mis-education and maladministration. In the following part, a more critical analysis of what the *Mezzogiorno* case study can teach to policy-makers.

2.2 A lesson to be drawn from the case study

Keeping in mind that Italy here serves as a paradigm to developmental studies, *Mezzogiorno*'s educational path has many lessons to teach.

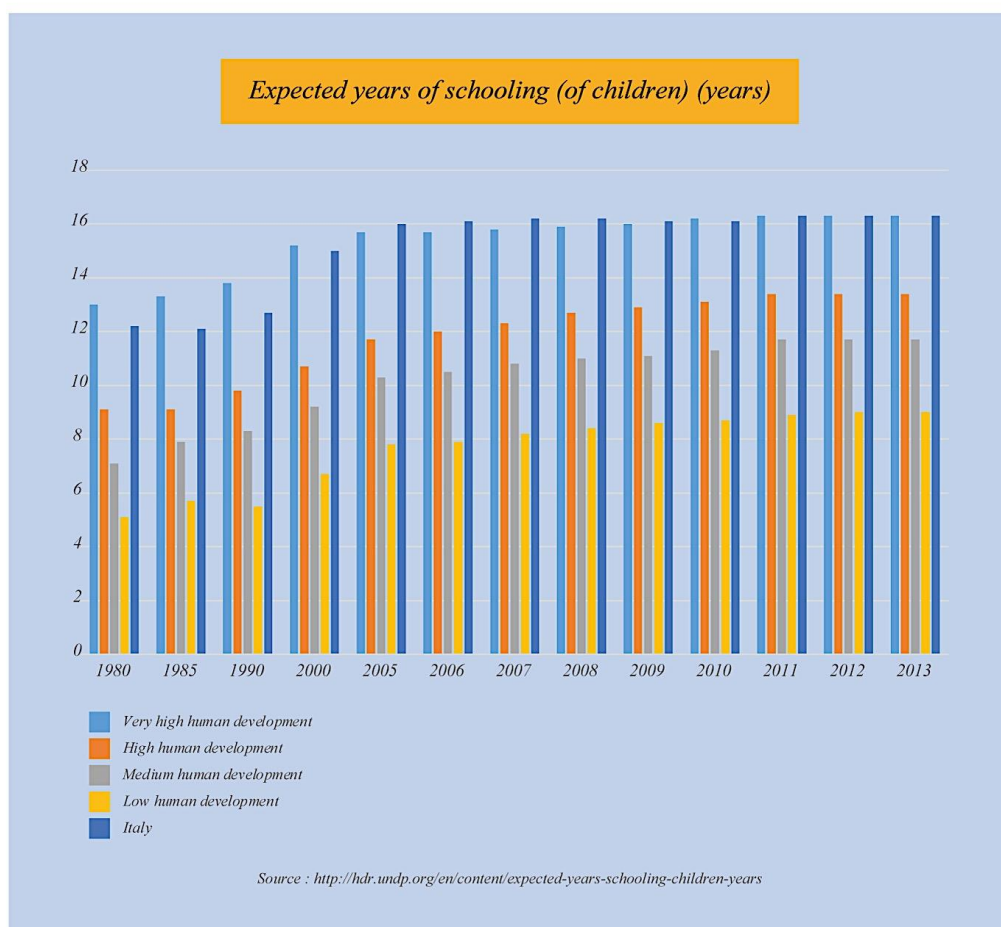
It will make lot of sense to start this section giving a real insight of the persistent educational delay of *Mezzogiorno*. Such insight is provided by the PISA and PIAAC tests. If looking at the indicators of HDI, Italy seems quite average. As in Figure 2, Italy is performing quite good in terms of life expectancy. In terms of GDP per capita, as in Figure 3, Italy is below the

OECD average, but still performs as a developed economy. In terms of years of schooling, as in Figure 9, Italy is close to the OECD mean. As in a UNDP report, (2013), in terms of year of schooling, Italy stands in the very high human development category. Italy appears then at the lowest level in the OECD area but its years of schooling is characteristic of countries with very high HDI. As a matter of fact, there is a mismatch between the expected education that students should receive and their actual performance. In other words, education quantity does not imply education quality (Hanushek, 2005). Furthermore, if one looks at the PIAAC (OECD, 2016) and PISA (OECD, 2012) results on a regional basis data say something more (Montanaro, 2008). What those results show is actually a progressive worsening in results from North to South. Regions up North perform in the tests similarly to the neighboring European countries. Educational performance seems to water down when moving to the *Mezzogiorno*.

How can one explain such outcome? The reason for that is that the quality of education depends also the quality of the learning environment, which depends also quality of the education of parents, relatives and friends.

1. It has been shown that, at the Italian Unification time there were already significant regional differences in literacy rates
2. The regional differences were not eliminated through time
3. Rather they were strengthened
4. The funds and the *ad hoc* policies failed
5. North and South share also a different set of values and *Mezzogiorno*'s values penalized the good functioning of democratic and market-based institutions

Figure 9: Italian HDI comparing expected years of schooling



Since point 5) was not presented in Part 2.2 will get space in the following section. Two are the main forces working against the acquisition of skills at school and the overall learning process. The first, as posed by Vecchi, is family's resistance in sending children to school (second cause of school absenteeism). It is also true that there in last stages of adolescence and adulthood other forces enter into force. This is the case of the 'peer effect,' which pushes individuals to perform at a lower quality; they would not differently (Gambetta and Origgi, 2009).

2.3 Familial influence

Particularly relevant is the role of ‘traditional’⁷ familiar ties. Italy presented deep cultural differences rooted in the pre-Unification identities. The perception of familiar ties, of the belonging to it and its rules was (and still is) perceived extremely different around the country. As a matter of fact, in the *Mezzogiorno*, those ties were stronger in influencing actors’ decision making. This to mean: less trusty towards the public administration and therefore less prone to send children to school and to educate them with a ‘foreign’ (foreign in the sense of external to the nucleus) education. As clear, this was a factor that spoiled the national education to be homogenous.

On the other side, in the *Mezzogiorno*, school absenteeism was not solely tied to a mistrust in the educational system, but also and mainly -as it is the case in many developing countries nowadays- in the need of workforce home. In fact, especially the *Mezzogiorno*, at the Unification time, found itself in a situation of extreme poverty and extremely high child labor rates. Lacking the right incentives, these inefficiencies were not cured, but rather perpetuated through time.

In fact, Italy has still today one of the highest percentages of ‘early leavers’ (Baggiani, 2016). By ‘early’ is meant that they leave after mandatory schooling ended, but too early to gain a higher education. In Italy the percentage is 15%⁸ (2014). Even though the percentage has decreased in the last years (19,2% in 2009), the ‘early leavers’ phenomenon is still a serious issue. In fact, it is the last step of a mix of: schooling absenteeism, lack of mandatory schooling enforcement in the earlier stages, of social and cultural disadvantage, child labor, and poverty of the families (Veneruso, L. et al., 2012). These data, belonging to a specific *Mezzogiorno* reality (that of Campania) are part of an inefficient socio-economic outcome that confirms the recurrent effect of a ‘legacy of the past.’

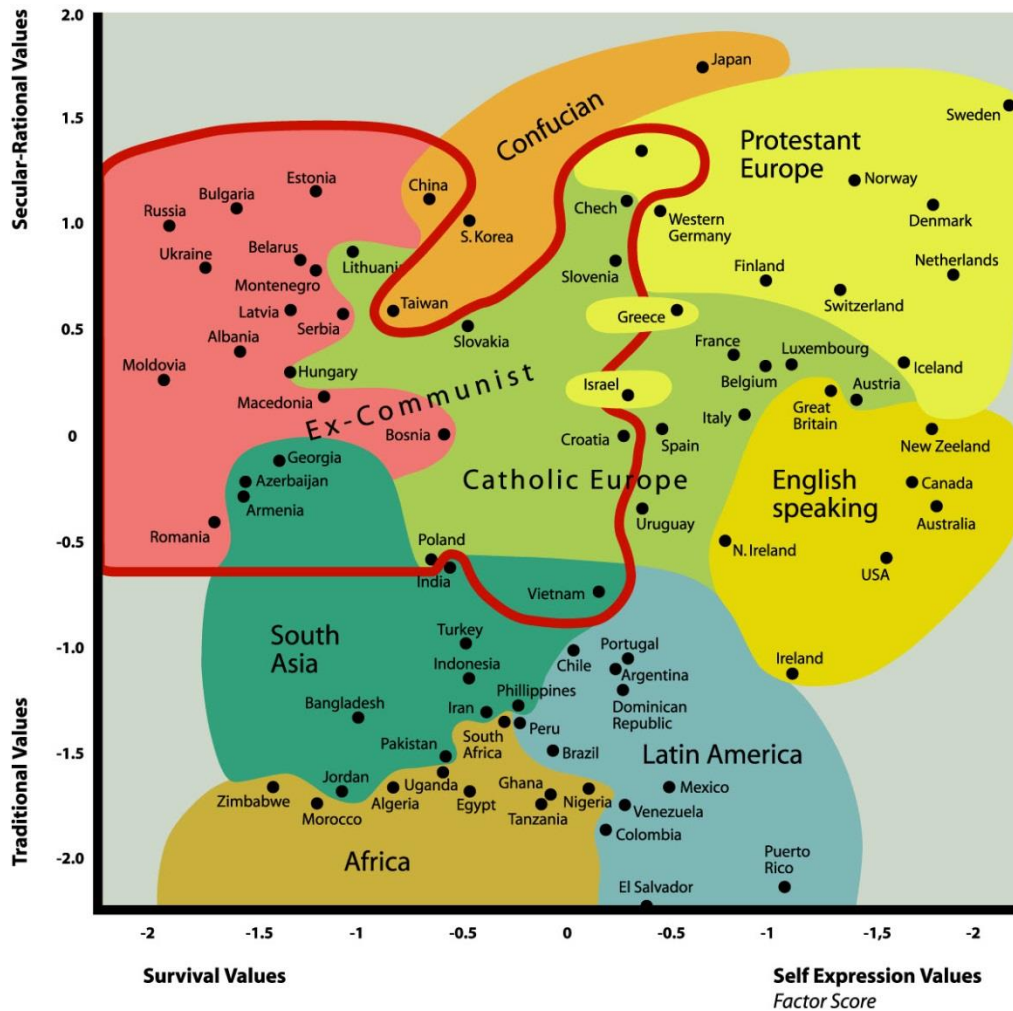
Values stand on the informal side of ‘institutions’, one of the fundamental causes of development. Being an intrinsic aspect of the institutional setting, shared values and beliefs have a profound effect on the political and economic institutions. In the *Mezzogiorno* peer and familiar ties may prevail over socially rational behaviors. In other words, informal institutions prevail over formal ones. For instance, this implies that nepotistic behaviors will outclass meritocratic ones more than in other places. Nepotistic behaviors are at the core of corruption. Corruption jams social mobility and spoils trust. Trust is at the top incentives for investment and, generally speaking, sustains those coordination strategies needed for the exploitation of potential complementarities. This is intrinsically inefficient to market-based democracies and it results in an inertial economy and inefficient democracy.

⁷ in a Western sense

⁸ This percentage is also one of the parameters used by the EU to define the progress in education by member countries and to allocate funds looking at the performance

Many countries fall close to Italy in the value map⁹ (Figure 10). They have similar institutional failures. Many share the problems Italy faced since Unification in its path of development. For this reason, the next and final section will be devoted to draw the main implications stemming from the analysis of the *Mezzogiorno* case study. It aims to teach Developing countries the *Mezzogiorno's* lesson.

Figure 10: Value Map



Source: World Value Survey (1996)

⁹ Italy falls closer to the self-expression category than the survival values and further to the traditional than the secular values. On the other side, while compared with the rest of OECD countries, Italy appears to be more traditional and less prompt to self-expression (especially when compared to Northern Europe). It implies that when compared to other EU countries, Italy would be more attached to traditional values (traditional as: a patriarchal family) than to secular-rational ones (secular/rational as: competitiveness and meritocracy).

3. Conclusions and policy implications

Italy troubled developmental path did not fully and homogeneously found development at its end. The (non-)functioning of democratic and economic institutions in the *Mezzogiorno* is emblematic of a developmental inertia.

In *Mezzogiorno* the lack of citizens' key competences undermined the efficient run of a market democracy, leaving citizens unsatisfied with the job market and the political mechanisms. Students are performing worse in standard tests since they receive poorer education especially in terms of quality. The result is a segregated *Mezzogiorno* where social exclusion spoils both economic growth and democracy in a vicious circle.

There exists wide evidence that educational delays imply poor key competences and these in turn are just one of many factors favoring weak political and economic institutions (through a vicious circle of nepotism, distorted allocation etc.), as in the case of *Mezzogiorno*. Education is a powerful transformative tool that has substantial short and long-term effects. Education, especially the formal one, is in full-control (or mostly) of the policy-makers and, therefore, it should be at the core of policy-making for development and growth.

The top priority should be enforcing mandatory schooling, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas. If children do not attend school, or occasionally attend it, no educational policies have satisfying effects. In this sense, the enforcement of mandatory schooling and the reduction of the 'early leavers' phenomenon outclass the *actual* quality of education in terms of importance. Mandatory schooling can also work as a multiple cure (e.g. it may keep children out of youth gangs, it may foster socialization, social cohesion, it may save children out of a violence domestic life, etc.)

The second phenomenon to be tackled is school absenteeism. Enforce mandatory schooling should be done reasonably i.e. tackling the causes of absenteeism. As presented in Section (Figure 6) in the post Unification times, school attendance was very low, particularly in the *Mezzogiorno*. Development economics' mainstream literature provides many cures to that. In the *Mezzogiorno*, these solutions were not intentionally accounted by policy-makers at earlier stages of Unification. For this reason, *Mezzogiorno* still has significant rates of absenteeism. In a study conducted from Veneruso et al. in 2015, causes that actually coincide, even though not for impact, with the causes presented in Figure 6. The recurrence of absenteeism, which spoils any educational policy, poses as crucial the dismantlement of root causes of absenteeism. Therefore, following up what presented in Figure 6, policy options would include:

1. 'Poverty of families'. When families are poor, children are employed in child labor and cannot attend school. There are many ways in which this issue can be tackled. Standard

tools are cash transfer programs, grants, and subsidies. All these tools relieve families of the financial burden of sending children to school, granting, in this way, children with some independence in their educational path.

Secondly, tackling the root causes of their poverty, through redistributive policies, with the aim of recovering the economy and lifting them out of poverty

2. ‘Familiar resistance to sending children to school may be countered as follows:

- Providing education of parents as to the long-term benefits of education
- Emancipation of women
- Improvement of school quality, namely reduction of the impressive imbalance between the North and Midlands region and the South
- Countering teachers’ absenteeism

3. ‘Difficulties in accessing learning facilities should be removed by:

- Increasing their number
- Increasing public transportation means and their overall services, including the extension of their routes and the frequency of the trips

4. ‘Municipal poverty’ should be addressed with:

- An efficient State-based plan to fight it back.
- A national redistribution of funds
- Fight corruption, most likely to be one of many causes of poverty in our country

5. ‘The inertia of Municipalities’ should be addressed fighting against corruption and jamming bureaucracy

6. The low-level of education should be addressed in the following way:

- For buildings: better allocation of funds.
- For teachers: improvement of overall education (as today’s students might become teachers over the next future, resulting in ever poorer education standards), improvement of the teacher’s social status also *via* wage increases.

It essential to properly and homogeneously implement formal education since it has a long-term impact on the informal one. For instance, if education is gender-inclusive it will fairly emancipate girls and change their role in the family and the informal education they will

provide to their children in the future. This means that an inclusive educational policy is also a social policy. In fact, education has an impact on various and diverse realms. For instance, educated agents will sensibly be healthy agents. Even though education is a costly investment, the accumulation of human capital is the key to growth and development. Educational policies are a powerful tool; yet they are delicate tools. The creation and the design of educational policies should first analyze the past, eventually catch-up, then go on.

Policies should also avoid cumulative effects of delays, as they would increase the divide with the underprivileged (ibid.). Rather, they should tackle inequalities as development blossoms on equal ground.

Lastly, the nature of education should focus on quality rather than quantity. As mentioned, Italy took 90 years to alphabetize, this implied that despite the years of schooling fell in the 'high human development' category, and education was not 'high' in its contents. In Hanushek and Kimko's work, it is proven how the quantity of education is insignificant in bringing growth when compared to the quality of education (Hanushek and Kimko, 2000). All this, together with a mix of luck, culture and geography, develops the self and the society as: "*in promoting friendship and loyalty, and in safeguarding the commitment to freedom and peace, basic education can play a vital part*" (Sen, 2003).

Lastly, there will be presented five cases in which the *Mezzogiorno*'s lesson might be particularly relevant. Starting from the particular case of *Mezzogiorno* the discourse shifts to a general framework that might be applied to those developing countries facing a strong educational delay.

1. Countries with weak administrative enforcement

Countries with weak enforcement or discretionary administrative power face serious challenges in seeing public policies implemented homogeneously. Many are the counter forces that administrative powers face in implementing policies. Among those, poverty, corruption and inertia are equally common and deleterious. For instance, if it is not enforced school attendance, whatever policy will have an insignificant impact due to its small room for action. Enforcement is the essential tool in policy-making. And, on a time-based planning, it should be the first to be addressed in order to assure future steps to be actually effective.

2. Countries with low social mobility

Countries with low social mobility will function inefficiently:

- a) Because they will not value all individuals locking them at low stages of employment

b) Because they will not spur investment in education since individuals will not feel rewarded.

3. Countries with low social inclusion

In fact, data show how moving up in the level of education, the class-divide rises (Ferrante, 2017). This implies that countries with low social inclusion will tend to endure the exclusion up to the higher levels of education.

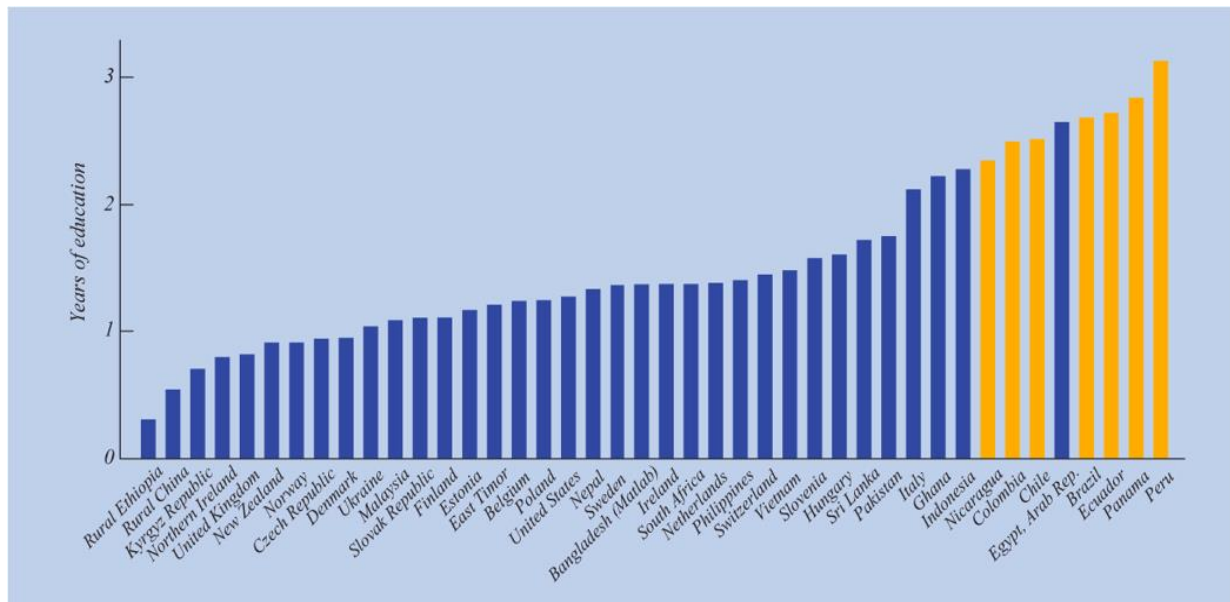
4. Countries with strict gender roles

The diverse roles of a mother home (present, absent, educated, non-educated) have substantial impact both on the education of children both on the expectations on female children (Hawley, 2016). Indeed, investing in girl's education is one of the most cost-effective investments in development economics (The World Bank, 2008). Educated girls imply educated mothers and, therefore, more educated (and healthier) children. Countries where women find themselves uneducated or in worse off have a negative impact in the intergenerational transmission of skills. Among countries, girl's education since it seems to move on a slower track probably due to emancipation issues. Yet, both parents' education is crucial in bringing about higher education, as in the following point.

5. Countries with traditional familiar values

Data (Ferreira et al., 2013) show that there is a strong correlation between parental and children education (Figure 11). The impact of parental education on children is related to role of familiar values in a society, as exposed in the last part of Section 2. Traditional values often imply stronger familiar connections, which may imply safer social nets on one side, but nepotism on the other. Values are extremely relevant when addressing a development case study since they are a relevant game changer. In general terms, if 'traditional' implies a mismatch with the system that, for instance, falls into rationality values, traditional values become an obstacle to development.

Figure 11: Association between parental education and children's years of schooling, selected countries



Source: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/11858/9780821396346.pdf>

Note: Bars represent the impact of one standard deviation of parental years of schooling on the years of schooling of children. The impact is averaged across birth cohorts born between 1930 and 1980.

As a conclusion, countries with the above-described characteristics (as it is often the case: developing countries) can mirror in the paradigm of *Mezzogiorno* when setting public policies standards. The case of *Mezzogiorno* teaches that policies should be targeted at catching-up and thus properly address the educational delay *in primis*. *Education is a multiple cure, it fosters socialization, tear down exclusion and inequality, boosts the economy and it has long-term benefits on future generations.*

This to say that adequate educational and social policies need strong, competent and committed institutions able to:

- Design policies tailored on the real needs of citizens
- Implement and enforce those policies

At the same time, it is essential for institutions to be efficient and homogenous so to allow conditional convergence to take place. For a market-based democracy to bring about development there is a priority and that is to sustain (or create) good governance as “*it is essentially the combination of transparent and accountable institutions, strong skills and competence, and a fundamental willingness to do the right thing. Those are the things that enable a government to deliver services to its people efficiently... An independent judiciary, a free press, and a vibrant civil society and important components of good governance. They balance the power of governments, and they hold them accountable for delivering better services, creating jobs, and improving living standards*” (Wolfowitz, 2006)¹⁰

¹⁰ As in Paul Wolfowitz's speech in 2006, as quoted in: Baland, J-M., Moene, K. O., Robinson, J. A. (2010) “Handbook of Development Economics.” Chapter 69: Governance and Development. Pag. 4597-4598

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Riassunto della tesi in lingua italiana:

Il Mezzogiorno italiano si presenta come un interessante caso di studio per chi vuole considerare una prospettiva che colleghi temi come l'educazione, lo sviluppo e la democrazia. Nell'analisi, è particolarmente visibile infatti il fallimento dell'amministrazione incaricata di gestire il catch-up tali territori, che diventano, piuttosto, emblema di un mancato sviluppo socio-economico. Nel corso dello scorso secolo, l'inesattezza nel programmare le politiche pubbliche di lungo periodo volte a recuperare il divario col resto della penisola si sono rivelati fatali anche per le nuove generazioni di politica e di politici, non capaci -a volte non direttamente per loro demeriti- di affrontare in modo propositivo la situazione "di fatto" nella quale devono svolgere il loro mestiere. Uno dei problemi principali deriva da politiche di lungo periodo riguardanti il sistema scolastico, non rivelatesi in grado di alleviare il ritardo educativo e, di conseguenza, il grave sul già presente malfunzionamento delle istituzioni e l'arretratezza economica.

Ecco perché il Mezzogiorno è senza dubbio un caso interessante per chi studia le "economie dello sviluppo", concentrandosi sulla relazione tra educazione, accumulazione del capitale umano, istituzioni e performance socio-economica. Il caso del "Mezzogiorno" non è solo una storia di crescita mancata, ma tocca anche temi quali l'esclusione sociale ed economica che ha ridotto l'Italia a un frammento di particolarismi e regionalismi, incapace di sfruttare in modo unitario ed efficace la totalità delle risorse presenti sul territorio. Difatti, se si guarda ai dati, si noterà che il divario in termini di PIL era meno accentuato nel periodo Unitario e che, piuttosto, si è sostanzialmente allargato in tutto il periodo successivo. Il Mezzogiorno si dimostra allora controtendenza rispetto al fenomeno di *conditional convergence* a cui dovrebbero tendere le economie che condividono uno stesso assetto istituzionale, una stessa cultura, una stessa geografia ed uno stesso 'destino.'

Il caso del sud-Italia dev'essere quindi un caso studio non solo per ambienti universitari, ma anche, e soprattutto, per le classi politiche che si occuperanno di amministrare tali regioni, con la speranza che non ricadano negli errori del passato, e che mantengano un impegno nel recuperare i danni secolari che ancora oggi danneggiano il sistema socio-economico.

Nel lavoro presente, iniziando dalla presentazione di alcuni dati che mostrano il ritardo educativo degli Italiani (anzi, proprio di quelli nel Mezzogiorno) si prende nota di una situazione di sviluppo che penalizza il funzionamento delle istituzioni. Il ritardo educativo attuale può essere visto attraverso i test PISA e PIAAC, due prove standardizzate a livello internazionale per valutare la qualità dell'istruzione degli studenti e degli adulti. Si nota anche che il l'Italia, similmente alle economie con un alto indice di sviluppo umano, ha una media molto alta di anni scolastici frequentati. Si deduce dunque che ci sia una discrepanza tra la qualità e la qualità d'istruzione. Con occhio più attento, si noteranno anche, nei territori del Mezzogiorno, degli alti tassi di assenteismo a scuola. Fenomeno che, come è ovvio, danneggia la formazione sia dal punto qualitativo che da quello quantitativo.

^[1]_{SEP}Di seguito e ampiamente, si va poi a ricercare la matrice di questo fenomeno. Si noterà dunque, il sostanziale ritardo nei termini di alfabetismo al momento dell'Unità. Nel 1861 l'Italia era un paese sottosviluppato da manuale. Al momento dell'Unificazione, 4 su 5 italiani

erano analfabeti. Inoltre, l'aspettativa di vita alla nascita era di 30 anni, il coefficiente GINI era di 0,5, il 30% della popolazione era malnutrita, il 40% di essi viveva in povertà estrema, il 63,2% di essi erano impiegati nell'agricoltura e il lavoro minorile era superiore all'80%. In oltre un secolo e mezzo da questo scenario, l'Italia non ha mai unificato i suoi indicatori socio-economici. Difatti, Alcuni dati Istat (2013) mostrano che 1) c'è ancora una percentuale significativa di persone che non hanno raggiunto il diploma secondario superiore e 2) che esiste ancora un significativo divario tra le regioni. Ciò spiega che il ritardo educativo nelle regioni meridionali all'Unificazione non è stato recuperato.

Questo è in parte causa del mancato catch-up educativo. Durante il primo periodo post-Unitario, prima che il regionalismo italiano prendesse forma, le politiche d'istruzione aderivano diversamente sul suolo italiano, creando così, o anzi accentuando, un ritardo di sviluppo diversificato chiaro già nelle statistiche di analfabetismo al tempo dell'Unità. Le istituzioni, uno dei quattro fattori fondamentali dello sviluppo, erano, al tempo dell'unità, un retaggio degli assetti pre-Unitari e vennero, in realtà, poco omogeneizzati. Le istituzioni politico-economiche prevedono una relazione bilaterale con l'accumulazione di capitale umano (di cui è lo scopo l'investimento in educazione). Il malfunzionamento delle istituzioni formali è influenzato, tra le altre cose, da una scarsità in capitale umano, e ha un impatto disastroso sugli incentivi a investire, per esempio, nell'educazione.

Un'istruzione povera manca nel fornire ai cittadini le adeguate competenze per comprendere il funzionamento delle istituzioni e, dunque, anche nel migliorarlo, cosa che contribuirebbe, tra le altre cose, al loro sviluppo delle loro *capabilities*, l'essenza dello sviluppo, secondo Sen. Le competenze di cittadinanza, prevedono che i cittadini siano, in maniera omogenea capaci di rispondere nel sistema con cui interagiscono. Un deficit di competenze, come è stato il caso del Mezzogiorno, penalizza il funzionamento delle istituzioni democratiche e rallenta l'efficienza di mercato. Il risultato è una prestazione socio-economico deludente.

Nell'intervenire su questa prestazione, il funzionamento delle istituzioni è il primo passo. Difatti, senza un buon funzionamento delle istituzioni politiche-economiche, lo scopo delle politiche pubbliche si disperde facilmente. Nel caso lampante del Mezzogiorno, i fondi devoluti a recuperare il divario economico, tramite la Cassa del Mezzogiorno, così come altri considerevoli interventi, vengono dispersi o assorbiti da una classe politica e amministrativa corrotta, inefficiente e disinteressata. Nel processo d'elezione di una classe politica corrotta, i cittadini dimostrano una dissonanza con le modalità e gli scopi di una democrazia. Questo, è sicuramente causato da un'ignoranza ed un disinteresse di fondo, causati, a loro volta e principalmente, da una mancata implementazione delle competenze chiave di cittadinanza.

Il caso del Mezzogiorno dunque, si pone come un interessante caso studio nell'affrontare le tematiche di democrazia, sviluppo ed educazione. Particolarmente, l'analisi è applicabile a quei paesi che condividono caratteristiche fondanti con il Mezzogiorno, come la presenza di valori tradizionali/patriarcali molto rigidi/persistenti, con bassa mobilità sociale ed alta esclusione sociale e, infine, con una debole *enforcement*. Il caso del Mezzogiorno insegna anche l'importanza di guardare alla storia nel fare le politiche pubbliche. Dall'altro lato, le teorie di economia dello sviluppo ci ricordano il ruolo dell'uguaglianza per lo sviluppo economico, dell'istruzione per la democrazia e spianano così la strada verso uno sviluppo più concreto, più giusto e prospero.

