

# The big acceleration in digital education in Italy: The COVID-19 pandemic and the blended-school form

*European Educational Research Journal*

2021, Vol. 20(4) 423–441

© The Author(s) 2021

Article reuse guidelines:

[sagepub.com/journals-permissions](https://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)

DOI: 10.1177/14749041211021246

[journals.sagepub.com/home/eer](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/eer)**Danilo Taglietti** 

University of Naples Federico II, Italy

**Paolo Landri**

Institute of Research on Population and Social Policies-National Research Council (IRPPS-CNR), Italy

**Emiliano Grimaldi**

University of Naples Federico II, Italy

**Abstract**

This article deals with the COVID-19 pandemic as a point of acceleration for the emergence of a distinctive and yet unstable problematization of the 20th-century school form. Focusing on the Italian public and policy debate on education and adopting an archaeological analytics, it explores what ‘other’ coordinates for the forms of schooling are emerging through the encounters, clashes and co-options between different epistemological standpoints. Mapping the knowledge production about the space(s), time(s) and subjectivity(/ies) of schooling, we discuss the emergence of a problematization of the school form articulated around the concept of ‘blending’ and unfolding around a distinctive set of organizing dualisms: developmentalizing/securing, normalization/pluralization and individual/population. We offer a preliminary sketch of the contours and tensions that constitute the epistemic space where this problematization unfolded. First, we show how medical, economic, digital and educational knowledges converge around the imperative to blend the school form and make it secure and productive through the ‘digital’. Second, we describe the paradoxical traits of the emerging figure of the blended-school form at the intersection between different possible configurations of the space(s) and time(s) of schooling and isolate four strategies for the (self-)governing of its subjectivities: therapy, prudentialism, discipline and enhancement.

**Corresponding author:**

Danilo Taglietti, University of Naples Federico II, vico Monte di Pietà I, Napoli, 80138, Italy.

Email: [danilo.taglietti@unina.it](mailto:danilo.taglietti@unina.it)

## Keywords

Digitalization, education, blended schooling, school form, COVID-19, archaeology of knowledge

## Introduction

What a school is always open to debate and in the last decades a significant literature has dealt with the question of the school form, studying it empirically and underlining the historical conditions of school configurations in different education systems (Maulini and Perrenoud, 2005; Meyer and Rowan, 2006; Tyack and Tobin, 1994). Recently, the global and globalizing transformations that can be related to the ‘digital age’ (Lupton, 2014) and the platformization of education (Van Dijck et al., 2018) have put many traits of the institutionalized school form in tension, opening multiple pathways of transnational and vernacular policy change and reform. As Van Dijck et al. (2018: 131) have recently argued, in many education systems, digitalization, platformization and the three related mechanisms of datafication, personalization and commodification are affecting the very notion of education, its organizational forms and its values, opening the space for a clash between conflicting views on the values of education as a private and/or public investment.

Of course, spaces of negotiation have opened up over what education should look like in the contemporary digitalized and platformized societies. A significant example, in this respect, is the process of the Europeanization of education and the space of negotiation unfolding around the European Union (EU) open education framework: an umbrella that organizes a wider strategy of education reform which attributes to digitalization the role of innovating the school form, intervening on educational resources and contents, teaching methods and knowledge production, learning and its recognition, strategic decisions, forms of collaboration, access, participation and customization (Inamorato dos Santos et al., 2016). In transnational spaces, like the European one, lines of epistemic and technical mutation of education, its epistemologies, organizational forms and ethics are unfolding. In those spaces, among the other things, a re-imagining of the spatializations, temporalities and subjectivities of education is carried on through the intersection of different kinds of initiatives, policies, voices and expertise (Williamson and Hogan, 2020).

In this article, we intend to contribute to the debate on these lines of epistemic and technical mutation, looking at the COVID-19 pandemic as a point of acceleration in (and intersection between) the epistemic rethinking of the 20th-century school form and the digitalization of education. In fact, during the pandemic, we have witnessed an acceleration in the digitalization of the ecology of educational practices and policy in the EU and all over the world. Digital technologies and platforms have provided and are still providing an emergency solution for making possible a form of schooling or education at a distance, in a situation where social distancing has become the basic norm.

With this work, we explore the intersection between the pandemic digital acceleration and the epistemic rethinking of the 20th-century school form, focusing our attention on the case of Italy, one of the first European countries to be hit by the pandemic and to decide on the closure of schools. Three aspects that relate to our focus make the Italian a case of interest.

First, as happens in other European education systems, in Italy the discourse on schooling has been firmly articulated around the bricks-and-mortar classroom, which is the main spatial, temporal and ethical unit of education. Here the combination between a strictly ruled environment and the bodily presence allowed a particular kind of compromise between discipline and self-regulation and assigned to the teacher the role of the ‘governor’ of such a space. Moreover, school temporality has been articulated around the unit of the lesson: teachers have a standard time unit at their disposal to teach their lessons to students; the school bell marks the unformed flow of the time with discrete unities which beat and give rhythm to the school life, signal the change of teachers or

students in a classroom and regularize the different individual routines in the collective life. Finally, the school form was clearly oriented to produce a certain kind of pupil and teacher: an educational orthopaedics was being prepared to make bodies docile and composed in linear organizational series, while the teacher was shaped as the one who possesses the disciplinary knowledge, with a specialization that had to be combined with other specializations by mean of a national standardized curriculum. It is the disciplinary school form that is inhabited by disciplined subjectivities (Foucault, 1995).

Second, the force of such a discourse on education and the centrality of the classroom unit partially explain Italy's character of 'late-comer' in the process of digitalization and its lagging behind most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries when it comes to equipment and usage of digital technologies in schools (Avvisati et al., 2011).

Third, the combination between the two reasons above and the significance of the pandemic as a point of intersection and acceleration in the field of education. In this institutional scenario, as happened in other countries – but probably in a more institutionally violent form – the pandemic made suddenly dangerous or impossible the usual way of schooling, opening up a discursive field where different modes for thinking the reconfiguration of the school form had the possibility to emerge.

In this article, we will address the epistemic dimension of these transformations, looking at the debate that unfolded in the Italian national space since the beginning of the pandemic. The adoption of an archaeological analytics (Foucault, 2002) will allow us to explore what 'other' coordinates for the forms of schooling are emerging through the encounters, clashes and co-options between different epistemological standpoints; that is, how new understandings of 'how the school form should and could be' are emerging. Using 'Didattica a Distanza' (DaD)<sup>1</sup> as an entry point, we conducted a 6-month research project that started at the beginning of schools' closure in Italy and led us to collect more than 100 documents. Looking at this documentary basis, we will try to sketch out the knowledge space in which the form of contemporary schooling is being re-imagined as a 'blended' form. In this attempt to disentangle the emergent asymmetries in the assemblages of people, technologies and policies, the main coordinates that inform the new school form seem to turn around this set of dualisms: the developmentalizing and the securing of the school space(s); the normalization and the pluralization of the school time(s); the individuality and aggregation of the school subjectivity(/ies).

After a brief introduction of the main theoretical concepts that have inspired our analysis, of the methodological approach, and the contextualization of what happened to the Italian school system during the pandemic, we will structure the article into three main sections, presenting our 'knowledge mapping', organized along three main axes: the space(s), the time(s) and the subjectivity(/ies) of schooling. In our conclusions, we will argue that the COVID-19 pandemic has acted, in the Italian context, as an accelerator for the emergence of a distinctive problematization of the school form, articulated around the concept of 'blending'. We will visualize this through an epistemic space figure, whose quadrants are delimited by the intersections between the different possible configurations assumed by space(s) and time(s) of schooling and whose productions are the different governing strategies of the subjectivities that inhabit these quadrants. Across these intersections, the 'blended-school' form assumes multiple nuances and shades. Nevertheless, the problematization of the so-called 'traditional school form' has become an unavoidable node in any discourse on education.

## **The COVID-19 pandemic as an epistemic singularity: the emergence of the blended-school form**

In contemporary education research, many scholars are involved in the endeavour of writing a critical history of our educational present; that is, 'a reflection upon the contingency, singularity,

interconnections, and potentialities of the diverse trajectories of those elements which compose present educational arrangements and experience' (Grimaldi and Barzanò, 2014: 28).

It was once assumed that contingencies and heterogeneous assemblages are the working mechanisms that produce our educational present, but a great opportunity to interrogate it can be seen in the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, following Deleuze and Guattari (2004: 22), we can say that it functions as an epistemic singularity:

[one of] those rare and singular points in which a transformation happens. [. . .] Singularities, therefore, signal and constitute a change of phase and place themselves in those points where a shift in intensity happens, where assemblages and machines exceed thresholds of consistency. They are not points of arrival, but of crucial transition, places of bifurcation, thresholds of transformation.

The usefulness of exploring our educational present through the pandemic singularity resides in the fact that it can be considered a point of metastable equilibrium, during which different configurations of knowledge clash with each other and departing from which many futures become possible. During historical events like this, the significant changes in the epistemic configurations of what 'a school' is or should be are made clearer and more recognizable.

Coming to the kind of questioning through which the educational present could be interrogated, different perspectives are mobilized to suggest a shift towards a major concern with the forms, rather than with the essence of the phenomena under scrutiny (Ball, 2016; Fenwick and Edwards, 2019; Fenwick and Landri, 2012; Thompson, 2019; Wilkins and Olmedo, 2018). Locating ourselves within such a variegated field of inquiry, our interrogation questions the changing and mutating historically determined configurations of 'how it is considered a school should be', instead of 'what the school is'.

To perform this kind of interrogation, in this article, we employ an 'archaeological' analytics (Foucault, 1989a, 1989b, 2002), as reworked by Deleuze (2006, 2014; Peters and Taglietti, 2019). Thanks to its invitation to de-naturalize and de-essentialize what we see and what we say, such a perspective permits us to investigate schooling as a form that is continually reshaped by the production of knowledges about it. In archaeological terms, the reality is not objective nor subjective, but an effect of production of power-enmeshed and historically situated *dispositifs* of power-knowledge. This production is power-dependent: knowledge springs out from 'enunciative hotbeds' (Deleuze, 2018), sites of power not to be intended as organizations nor as individuals, but as a-personal individuations that promote relevant ideas about an issue.

Through a triple move of detachment from things, authors and truths, knowledge is approached as something that does not refer to a real-world out there, but as what materially produces the shapes that we see and speak when we live in the world. Ontology becomes an epistemology (Deleuze, 2006): the archaeological analytics looks at knowledge production as a relational space of distribution governed by inner rules. This gaze opens up the way to treat knowledge as a surface: we can reconstruct the movements that concepts autonomously make on the skin of a given society, looking for the main coordinates that border the discursive field and shape the reality.

Conceptualizing the knowledge production as a relational space of distribution of the statements is a crucial point for our analysis. It implies that the process of reshaping of the school form could be considered as revolving around a 'discursive regularity' (Foucault, 2002): something which has become discursively inescapable and around which all the possible variations and recombinations of elements are reshuffled. In particular, the Italian school form – as the pandemic singularity, through the acceleration and intersections it implied, has made clearer – is enmeshed in a process of re-articulation around the notion of the 'blended' form as a discursive regularity. It means that the nexus between the blended school and the imperative 'to blend' the school form is unavoidable

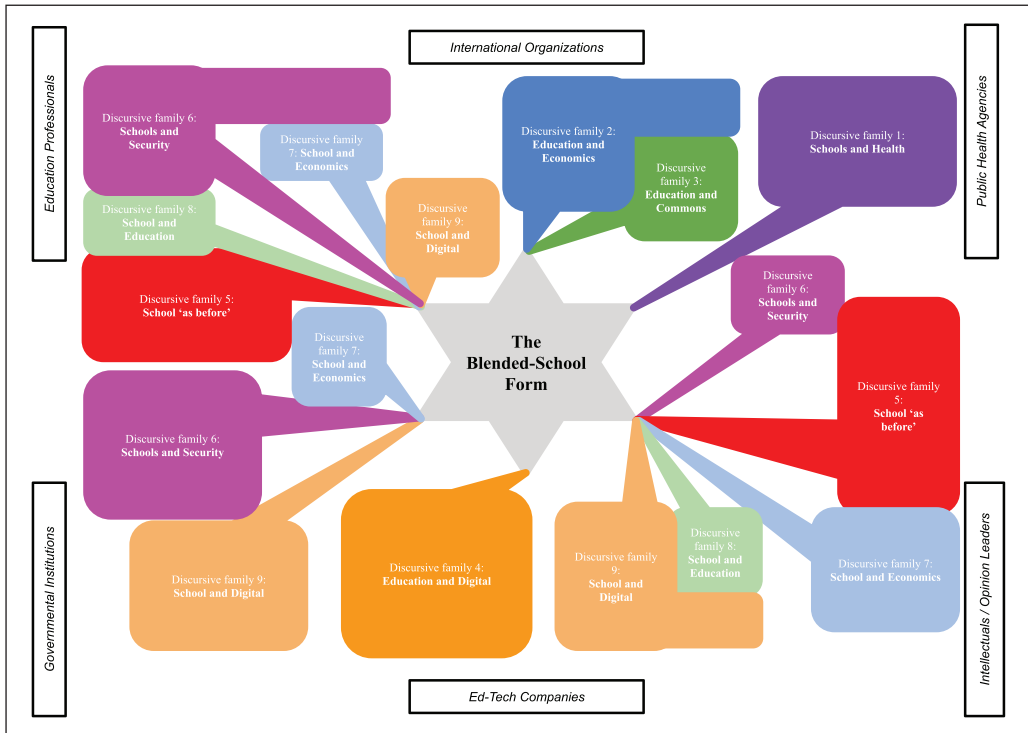
and it is now simply no longer possible to talk about schools without a reference to hybrid forms of schooling, mediated by digital devices and/or platforms, even for those who reject this approach.

Moreover, statements about the form of schooling could be intended as a multiplicity themselves, characterized by a dynamic of dispersion: starting from a ‘molar agency’ (Deleuze, 2006: 76), knowledges disperse around the production of conceptual couples or dualisms, which include the molar agency itself and its opposite. In this movement of dispersion, a form of organization takes place through the formation of ‘discursive families’ (Deleuze, 2014), which group statements that, through a rule of passage, make a linkage between different aspects of life. This dynamic makes the discursive field always open towards the production of the ‘new’, along the three dimensions of space, time and subjectivity, which are the Foucauldian re-interpretation of the Kantian a-priori condition of any possible knowledge (Deleuze, 2014). If a society always says everything that can be said at a given moment (Deleuze, 2014), then the ‘new’ is never hidden or to be discovered. It is always already there, in any statement already said, which is waiting only for entering into a new relationship with the others. Changes and re-novations – more than innovations – of what exists are a matter of shapes and reshaping. In this way, our analysis gains the opportunity to go beyond the usual opposition between digital enthusiasts and traditions defenders, ‘apocalyptic and integrated’ (Eco, 2001), opening towards a more nuanced mapping of the different variations and declinations that arise from the multiple recombinations of the starting discursive elements: a figure of the epistemic space of the blended-school form inspired by the Foucauldian tetrahedron of the modern sciences (Foucault, 1989b).

### *Mobilizing the archaeological analytics*

We applied the archaeological analytics to examine 102 documents that we collected starting from the beginning of March 2020, when the Italian Government stated that schools would close and the pandemic was faced with DaD, and until the end of August 2020, when the Italian Government was preparing schools’ re-opening for the new school year. The discursive corpus was constituted by the daily following of the public and policy debate on education in Italy, drawing on our long-lasting expertise in researching national education policymaking (Grimaldi, 2019; Grimaldi and Serpieri, 2013; Landri, 2018). Applying a snowballing strategy, we collected documents from: ordinary and popular sources, such as the most important Italian, European and global news websites; specialistic and thematic sources, such as the most important websites and blogs about Italian schooling; and scientific, political and policy sources, such as institutional websites of governmental bodies and academic institutions. DaD was our entry point theme and, starting from it, we went on iteratively remodelling sources and themes of interest, focusing little by little on the widest theme of the Italian form of schooling and its relation to the use of digital technologies.

Once constituted, the corpus was analytically treated using an online visual board and following a three-step procedure. First of all, through a process of mapping and labelling, we identified the six ‘enunciative hotbeds’, the a-personal individuations from which the statements about the Italian school form emerged: International Organizations, Public Health Agencies, Intellectuals/Opinion Leaders, Ed-Tech Industries, Governmental Institutions and Education Professionals. Then we looked at the corpus inner forms of organization, identifying the nine ‘discursive families’ that group those statements that regularize the linkages between different aspects of life: violet (whose statements regularize the linkages between schools and health); blue (whose statements regularize the linkages between education and economics); green (whose statements regularize the linkages between education and commons); orange (whose statements regularize the linkages between education and the digital); red (whose statements regularize the linkages between schools and the rejection of any change in the school form); pink (whose statements regularize the linkages between



**Figure 1.** The 'blended-school' form: knowledge mapping.

schools and security); light blue (whose statements the regularize linkages between schools and economics); light green (whose statements the regularize linkages between schools and education as a common); and yellow (whose statements regularize the linkages between schools and the digital). These first two steps produced a visual presentation of our knowledge mapping, which is reported in a simplified version in Figure 1<sup>2</sup> and which show that the 'blended-school' form, which is at the centre of the debate, is something neither homogeneous nor defined, but a multiplicity that is assembled and framed from heterogeneous and often conflicting discourses.

Finally, we ran through all the statements grouped in each 'discursive family' to highlight the dynamics of reciprocal interaction, combination and hybridization among statements that produce the knowledge space of blended schooling as an unstable space of multiplicity. After a brief contextualization of what happened to the Italian school system during the first months of the pandemic, we will now present these mechanics, focusing on: (a) the different spatialization(s) for developmentalizing and for securing the blended-school form; (b) the different normalized and pluralized temporality(/ies) of the blended-school form; (c) the different individualities and aggregations in the subjectivity(/ies) of the blended-school form.

## **Sudden school closures and emergency distance learning: Italy and the pandemic**

When the pandemic was officially declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020, Italy was already facing its first COVID-19 wave and the government was supported in its decision-making by two collegial bodies with relevant expertise in public health: the pre-existing



Italian College of Health (ISS) and the ad hoc set-up the Technical-Scientific Committee (CTS). School buildings were closed on 5 March. Even if initially planned until 14 March, the school closures were time after time prolonged until the end of the school year in June 2020, while Italy was experiencing one of the most rigorous general lockdowns in the western world. DaD, in this period, was presented as the only possible way to keep schools 'open', while the buildings were closed: this produced an increasing demand from the schools for digital devices, apps, platforms and infrastructures. A partnership of the Ministry of Education with leading national and international ed-tech companies, like Microsoft, Google and TIM, was arranged to offer ready-made digital solutions to schools, often with the 'freemium' formula. In sum, a digital acceleration took place: educational apps usage doubled during the lockdown, with some platforms more downloaded than others (Palmer, 2020). It was the beginning of a still ongoing tough discussion aimed at understanding whether it was just an emergency solution or a chance (often strongly contested) for an enduring transformation of the school form. At last, with the end of the lockdown, during summer 2020, in a context of seemingly general acceptance of social distancing norms in public life, the debate on the schools' reopening in September raised a chronic issue for the Italian school infrastructures: the poor physical conditions of the existing school buildings and their often too small spaces, not compatible with the new rules on social distancing. As new school buildings could not be built in time, school spaces were expanded through local agreements with other local institutions and, at the same time, several documents were prepared for the setting-up of school spaces before the re-opening.

## **Re-spatializing Italian schooling: for developmentalizing and for securing the social body**

The re-spatialization of the school form goes through many documents and the totality of the hotbeds of our corpus. While the whole public and policy debate had been focused on the dichotomy between the closure and the opening of schools, epistemically, a space is always a form of enclosure that arranges spatial configurations, opening to the possibility of some functions and closing to others, according to a rationality (Foucault, 2009).

So, the knowledge about the blended-school spatialization is produced through the tension between different forms of rationality that arrange the school space for acting on the social body: the one inherited by the consolidated school form and that functions as a molar agency, 'The Developmentalizing', and its related dualism 'The Securing'. The first one spatializes schools as places functional for intervening on the social body aiming for its growth and improvement, be it civic, economic or social; the second one frames schools' spaces as functional for making the social body secured and protected from menaces to its integrity, be it physical, psychological or economical: a dynamic of immunization and discretization is at work in this enunciative field.

The statements that regularize the linkages between schools and health are exemplary in producing a spatialization for securing. School becomes a 'medicalized' space that needs to be immunized from an external threat: the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS) and the CTS, whose statements are aligned with the medical knowledge globally promoted by the WHO and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), ground their decisions on a principle of maximum precaution: 'since solid data are missing, it is difficult to say when this measure should end to have an impact in terms of containment [of infections]' (QuotidianoSanità.it, 2020). In any case, a limited time was meant to be unhelpful (D'Amato, 2020). Even when, in the late spring, a proposal was advanced for a symbolic reopening of school buildings only for the last day of school, the CTS expressed a negative opinion, because 'it would be difficult to manage the distancing between young [. . .] people in a period in which the contagion still exists' (*La Repubblica*, 2020).

On the other side, a spatialization for developmentalizing is effected by the statements that regularize linkages between education and the digital. Innovation is the keyword that relates digital means and the educational endeavour to make the social body improved, more productive and more updated: they allow ‘to make evident work and design flows’ in education (Gervasutti, 2020), shifting towards a perspective of ‘life-long learning’ (Gervasutti, 2020) which extend schooling beyond schools (Gervasutti, 2020). It is in respect of this that the statements that regularize linkages between schools and the digital can frame DaD as a space that is contiguous and not so different from ordinary schooling. It is what is witnessed by initiatives such as ‘#theschooldoesnotstop’ of the Ministry of Education, published online in the lockdown period ‘to show that the school world, even in such a difficult and unpredictable moment, goes on’ (Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), 2020a). And it is what supports the belief that is possible to plan a school reopening in September 2020 where ‘lessons will be attended half of the time in the classroom and half online: [. . .] the pupils who stay at home will follow the lessons with their classmates but connected to the computer’ (Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata, 2020). No different is the rationality which frames the spatialization sustained by statements that regularize the linkages between schools and the rejection of any change in the school form. Even the public call, signed by well-known scholars, such as the notorious philosophers Massimo Cacciari and Roberto Esposito, and that has become a sort of manifesto for the schools’ reopening, sustains that school ‘means [. . .] dynamics of omnilateral training, intellectual and moral growth, maturation of a civil and political consciousness’ (Cacciari, 2020).

In any case, the field is not entirely occupied by these polarized positions. Many statements operate discursive recombinations and make multiplicities emerge. For example, the statements that regularize the linkages between schools and security outline a school spatialization which hybridizes the securing and the developmentalizing rationalities, with the former having the effect of regimenting the latter. In the models and norms that planned the September 2020 reopening, schools become ‘spaces of retention’ (Politecnico di Torino, 2020), where standard distances of one metre between the lips of students and of two metres between the teacher’s and the students’ desks must be respected (MIUR, 2020c). But when even these measures will not be enough, the continuity of schooling as a space devoted to developmentalizing the social body would be easily ensured by the transfer of the classroom to the digital space, thanks to the guidelines for Digital Integrated Teaching (MIUR, 2020b).

Finally, a different kind of discursive hybridization is effected by the statements that regularize the linkages between education and commons and between schools and education as a common. Reversing the previous one, the interferences between the securing and the developmentalizing rationalities produce here an effect of nuancing, moving the immunization towards the protection and the growth towards the enhancement. The transfer of schooling to the digital space is a timely chance to protect our society from a dangerous virus, but is also the opportunity to rethink some basic notions of schooling, such as the pedagogies (Benussi, 2020), the teacher’s competencies (Selwyn, 2020) and the inequalities in accessing education (Alfieri, 2020; Mantellini, 2020). It is ‘the creation of new educational environments [that] increase the porosity of educational life in its connection with public spaces’ (Nóvoa and Alvim, 2020: 38), but always aiming at ameliorating the social body.

## **Reorganizing the temporality of Italian schooling: time, times and pluralization**

Rethinking the spatial dimension of the school form also involved a discursive remaking of its temporality. Interestingly, despite – or, maybe, due to – the strong heritage described in the introduction, only a few statements in the enunciative field of the blended-school form are related to the temporal dimension. Furthermore, not all enunciative hotbeds produce statements about



temporality: the Public Health and the Ed-Tech Industry hotbeds do not present any statement concerning this dimension.

The molar agency around which the knowledge about the blended-school temporality is produced is 'The Time', with its related dualism 'Time/Times': a dynamic of pluralization and fragmentation is at work in this enunciative field, in opposition to the inherited disciplinary dynamic of unification and normalization.

This dualism is very clear in the statements' dispersion produced starting from the International Organizations hotbed. In the statements that regularize the linkages between education and economics, 'The Time' assumes the form of 'the future': 'what lessons can we take from the pandemic for the future?' (Forum for World Education, 2020). COVID-19 is framed as a 'temporary cessation' (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC), 2020: 6) of the normal time of face-to-face teaching, and we have now to take lessons in order to better 'plan our way out of the crisis' (UNESCO/IESALC, 2020: 37) and 'prepare in time' (UNESCO/IESALC, 2020: 7) for the resumption of normality. Even when time pluralities are considered, they are reconducted to models: 'students can learn [. . .] at different times' (OECD, 2020: 3) with 'digital learning solutions' (3), but what we need to do is to 'explore different time and school models' (3) which can 'prepare [. . .] longer-term disruption of school' (OECD, 2020: 1). The rule of passage of this family is the normalization and discretization of temporality: one present, one future, and one line to be traced between them, with differences that can be considered quantitative variations of the same temporal substance. On the other hand, the statements that regularize the linkages between education and commons frame temporality in the form of 'futures': COVID-19, more than an interruption, becomes what starts a new era, the 'post-COVID world', in which ideas 'for the futures of education' are proposed (UNESCO, 2020). In this family, not only there is not the best solution, but many possible ideas for the blended-school form: even the thinking process is different. Solutions are not to be prepared in time, but are 'timely' (Nóvoa and Alvim, 2020: 39) ensured by well-prepared teachers. School hours become 'volatile' (Nóvoa and Alvim, 2020: 36) and education 'cannot revolve around [a one-hour] "lesson" but, rather, "study" ' (Nóvoa and Alvim, 2020: 39), as well as competing with digital means for students' 'attention' (Harris, 2020). The rule of passage of this family is the multiplication, pluralization and differentiation of educational temporalities: the recognition of an irreducible multiplicity that cannot be governed in other ways than through local and just-in-time practices.

Starting from this rift, many kinds of articulation are possible, in the space of dispersion of our discursive field: for example, the statements produced by the hotbeds 'Governmental Institutions' and 'Education Professionals', that regularize the linkages between schools and security. Their temporality is partially conformed with the one of those statements that regularize the linkages between education and economics, but with the peculiar irruption of a pluralization: the addition of the (normalized) time of distance teaching to the (normalized) time of schooling. It is a flourishing of measures and a distillation of minutes that try to align school reopening, prevention from contagion, and distance teaching: 'In September we will come back to school and lessons will be for half-time in the classroom and half-time online' (Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata, 2020), taking care to avoid gatherings, through the shifting of entry and exit times with 15-minute-differences (MIUR, 2020c). When in DaD mode, then, 'students [must be offered] an adequate combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities [. . .] ensuring at least 15 hours/week of synchronous teaching in comprehensive schools [. . .] and at least 20 hours/week in high schools' (MIUR, 2020b: 4–5). The same temporality goes through the statements from teachers' unions, which strongly criticize these governmental acts: 'we had 5 months to plan [. . .] the return to normality' (Cusmai, 2020); 'the blended-school [must contemplate] wide bands of hours-flexibility

for teachers' (School Principals' National Association, 2020). Even when statements try to align school and digital technologies, promoting the 'future of teaching' (Benussi, 2020) through the digital revolution, the temporality does not change. Digital teaching requires an *ex-ante* design, an *in-time* performance and an *ex-post* evaluation (Benussi, 2020). Furthermore, digital contents must be planned in order to face the different temporalities in which distance-students can live: 'often our guys are connected with disabled-cam, while being in pyjamas. Well did that head-teacher who asked his physical education teachers to plan a gentle "muscle awakening" for their students at 8.30' (LeggiOggi.it, 2020). As declared by a social entrepreneur, World Economic Forum Young Global Leader and member of the Advisory Board of the Ministry of Education: 'the future asks [of] us more digitalization. So, what we have tried to do is to think about different age groups' (Pozzi, 2020). The molar 'Time' faces a sort of partial pluralization: when secured, when digitalized and even when contested, the blended-school form is shaped by the multiplication of normalized, linear and quantified temporality, attempting to plan lives and to discipline students, by creating their 'new [multiple and blended] routines' (LeggiOggi.it, 2020).

Multiple temporalities, at last, find their own space in the statements that regularize the linkages between schools and education as a common. In the middle of the pandemic, a head-teacher states, 'in my school, distance teaching conked out [. . .]. It wasn't a technical or cultural problem. It was the virus, that here mowed down mothers, fathers, and grandparents' (Corriere Cesenate, 2020). The time of the virus and the time of schooling, the time of students and the time of the community: an irreducible multiplicity that slits and melts the educational practice. Looking at the schools reopening, a famous Italian theatre actress proposes: 'we can open theatres in the morning, and have teachers flanked by actors' (Leggo.it, 2020). Education is beyond schools, but schools can embed other educational spatialities through the incorporation of other fragmented temporalities.

### **Reshuffling the (de)composition of subjectivities in the Italian schooling: dividuals, individuals and populations through usual clashes and unedited alliances**

The third axis of discursive change concerned the subjectivities inhabiting the school form. It goes through many documents and the totality of the hotbeds of our corpus. In the discursive field we mapped, it is possible to describe a significant dispersion of statements that shape educational subjectivities and the related ethics, conceived as 'the arena of the government of the self' (Dean, 2010: 20). 'Who is the subject target of educational activities?' and 'Who has the mastery of education and can teach to others?' seem to be the key (not neutral) questions. The reshaping of school subjectivities towards a blended form faces the well-established arrangement described in the introduction and is articulated through statements that swivel on a different way of thinking about the subject and its (self-)government.

Preserving the same approach of the previous two dimensions, we can say that the knowledge about the blended-school subjectivity is produced through the tension between the molar agency inherited by the disciplinary school, which is 'The Individual', and its related dualism 'The Population': the first one looks at subjects as single persons to be governed, organized, moved, taught, composed and even boosted up from the outside; while the second one speaks of subjects as groups, categories, 'populations' of humans, non-humans or less-than-human dividuals (Deleuze, 1992) that have to be made (self-)circulating and expressing (positive and negative) potentialities which are inside them.

The statements that regularize the linkages between schools and health and between education and the digital are exemplary in producing blended educational subjectivities as populations. Following the imperative of 'reducing the likelihood of the virus circulation' (Rovelli, 2020) as

stated by ISS, statements from the Public Health hotbed look at the ‘pediatric population [which] could play an active role in the transmission of the virus’ (*Giornale di Sicilia*, 2020), underlining that ‘the viral load in children differs little from those in adults’ (Connolly and Willsher, 2020). Students are considered as a relatively homogeneous group of beings, characterized by their inner predisposition to be carriers of infections comparable with adult beings. Even the virus is intended as a population: an undifferentiated mass of RNA chains that circulate following the rules of the biological world inscribed in it. On a completely different scale, statements from the Ed-Tech hotbed shape educational subjectivities as statistical aggregates of some attributes: if, in the statements that regularize the linkages between schools and health, individuality disappeared in groups of beings, here it disappears in favour of flows of micro-characteristics in which the flux of the digital experience can be fragmented and registered. Microsoft, for instance, focuses on feelings and emotions, which come to constitute a specific population to be enhanced in blended schooling, as they have ‘a big impact on engagement, learning, and wellbeing’ (Microsoft Education Center, 2020). ‘Emotions can surface in ways that aren’t easy to understand’ (Microsoft Education Center, 2020), so a system to help digital teachers in making digital students ‘feel heard, valued, and connected during distance learning’ has been prepared and offered. Pupils and teachers are here read as populations: sources of positive and negative feelings on the one side, and dams for checking and deviating on the other, both granting a circulation of affects that impacts digital education. It is the same for data: each student using digital software is decomposed into flows of data, which become the effective educational subject. It is in relation to this that the chief executive officer (CEO) of an Estonian ed-tech company can say that

when people are learning online, all their answers and mistakes are data that maps how the memory works. Using these data the computer chooses the next most efficient exercise for the student’ making teaching ‘an order of magnitude more efficient than normal [one]. (Palmer, 2020)

And it is in relation to this that privacy could become an issue for Zoom and other platforms: ‘users should be aware that [. . .] Zoom’s standard privacy policy allows data sharing for targeted marketing’ (Mischitelli, 2020).

A similar educational subjectivity, but whose enhancement is self-driven, is produced by the discursive alliances between the statements that regularize the linkages between education and commons and between schools and education as a common. Teachers’ and pupils’ subjectivities are considered as a unique community, a school population, whose inner potentialities are seen as completely realized in the pandemic crisis:

in a few days, hundreds of thousands of subjects have learned to make function, in a way or another, a knowledge that could never have passed through the classic mechanisms of formal learning. It has been and will continue to be a great experience of collective initiation. (Maragliano, 2020)

Even when distinguished from students, teachers are said to be a population full of capacities: ‘teachers need to [. . .] feel confident in their capacity’ (Selwyn, 2020). ‘The individual’, instead, become a tendency that needs to be countered: either it would be the individualization of educational work which comes together with the digitalization of school (Gotor, 2020), or it would be ‘the call for a “personalization” of learning in “domestic” spaces, through the use of a panoply of digital means’ (Nóvoa and Alvim, 2020).

On the opposite side, the statements that regularize the linkages between schools and the rejection of any change in the school form are informed to ‘The Individual’. They frame school and subjectivities as bodies in a relation – ‘school means sociability, both horizontally (between students) and vertically (with teachers)’ (Cacciari, 2020) – or as legal entities in a contract – education

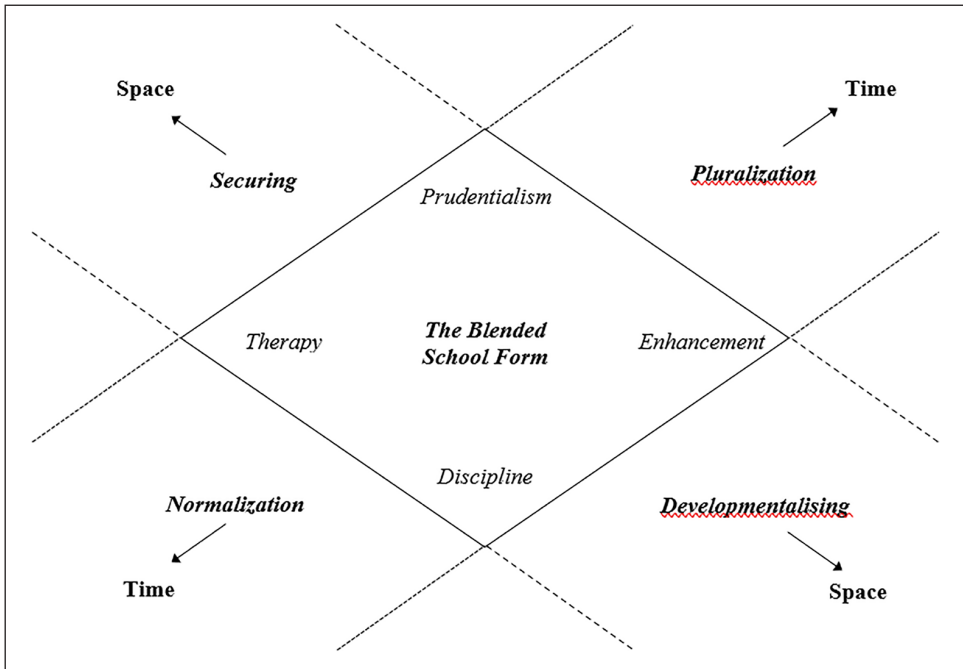
being conceived as ‘a fundamental right of free and equals citizens’ (Baccini and Latempa, 2020). In any case, individualities to be disciplined, discrete entities at the human scale, who are acted and taught only when physically co-present, so that their most radical critique points towards the neo-liberalization of teachers and students that the distance learning produces: ‘the new professional identity of the teacher coincides with the individual identity tout court’ (Viero, 2020).

But all this does not imply a polarization of the discursive field. Rather, we can see how a proliferation of combinations is possible starting from this dualism. For instance, ‘The Individual’ is combined with ‘The Population’ in a very distinctive set of statements that regularize the linkages between education and economics and between schools and economics. The crucial concern of these statements is the loss of human capital in terms of learning objectives caused by the interruption of schooling during the pandemic. Firstly, educational subjectivities affected by distance learning difficulties are framed in terms of populations: ‘poorer children suffer most’ (*Economist*, 2020), ‘boys and girls in vulnerable situations’ (Fondazione Agnelli, 2020), ‘students who come from families with less economic and cultural resources’ (Gavosto, 2020). Then, the proposed remedies focus on individualities: ‘teachers at school to learn self-evaluation’ (*Corriere della Sera*, 2020), summer schools to promote the recovery of girls and boys (Fondazione Agnelli, 2020), teachers and students who have to be encouraged (OECD, 2020) and to learn technologies ‘for a real distance learning’ (Gavosto, 2020), because they ‘have a delay not to be underestimated in the use of the digital mean’ (OpenOnline, 2020). On the one hand, populations, intrinsically defined by socio-economic indicators, shape the effects of distance learning; on the other, therapeutics to correct negative effects must be applied to individuals, considered as lacking something that could be put into them from the outside.

Finally, a quite paradoxical and prudentialist (Dean, 2010) kind of discursive reconfiguration is operated by those statements that regularize the linkages between schools and security. ‘Each one protects everyone’ is the rule stated in the report ‘Schools opened, society protected’ by the Polytechnic University of Turin (2020), and highly considered in the policymaking debate. This report, together with other statements from the Education Professional and the Governmental Institutions hotbeds, designed the blended-form subjectivity of the Italian school reopening policy. It is a subject firstly considered as a hazardous composition of different subsets of population: the school staff Federation of Knowledge Workers - Italian General Chamber of Work (FLC-CGIL, 2020), the ordinary students of the first cycle, the ordinary students of the second cycle (Fioramonti, 2020), the special needs students (MIUR, 2020b), and so on. Then, these hazardous sub-populations, whose circulation will imply a natural contagion rate, should be regulated through a real individualized orthopaedics of behaviours: differentiated paths for entrance and exit, new individual desks with wheels to be provided to all schools (Zunino, 2020), distance learning as an integration to be offered to students when ordinary learning could be interrupted (MIUR, 2020b).

## Conclusions

In this paper, we have argued that in the Italian public and policy debate on education, the COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a point of acceleration for the emergence of a distinctive and yet unstable problematization of the school form. The need to rethink school and schooling during the pandemic created a space of intersection and reciprocal co-option between statements on school reform, digitalization of education, economic welfare and public health. Addressing spatialization, temporalization and the making of subjectivities as the three key dimensions of this epistemic reconfiguration of the school form, we have discussed a proliferation of combinations about the desirable form for the ‘school of the future’ that unfolded around a distinctive set of organizing and distributing dualisms: developmentalizing/securing, normalization/pluralization and individual/



**Figure 2.** The epistemic space of the ‘blended-school’ form and its figure.

population. Within this space of dispersions and combinations, medical, economic, digital and rejection knowledges, rather than polarizing, have co-opted one another, converging around the imperative to blend the school form and make it secure and productive through the ‘digital’. With our research, we attempted a preliminary sketch of the contours and tensions that constitute the epistemic space where this problematization unfolded. At the intersection between the different possible configurations of the space(s) and time(s) of schooling, the paradoxical traits of the emerging figure of the blended-school form (see Figure 2) are highlighted by the four strategies for (self-) governing the subjectivities that inhabit such a space: therapy, prudentialism, discipline and enhancement.

First, we have shown how the interruption provoked by the pandemic created the conditions for an epistemic struggle on the re-spatialization of the school as a blended space. Such a struggle unfolded around the developmentalizing/securing dualism, with the concatenation between a medicalization of the school as a place to be secured and its digitalization, intended as a strategy to guarantee its continuity as a process of production of human capital, competencies, wellbeing and/or inclusion. It was a radical reshaping of the ‘dangerous and impossible’ traditional school form through its blending with the digital spaces. A set of discursive equivalences made ‘digital’ and ‘blended’ synonymous with safe, inclusive, productive and effective. Rhetorics of equity, pedagogy and inclusion also re-articulated themselves around the discursive regularity of the blended-school form. Around this regularity emerged the problem of a renewal of the compromise between discipline and self-regulation that characterized the institutionalized school form and the rethinking of teachers and students’ roles as the ‘governors’ and the ‘governed’ of such a space.

Second, we have also mapped an epistemic struggle around the temporality of schooling, where the inherited disciplinary dynamic of unification and normalization entered into tension with the



possibilities of pluralization and the risks of fragmentation that the digital made actual. The key dualism of this problematization was the one between the linear, unique and developmental ‘Time’ of schooling and the multiple and uneven ‘Times’ of distance learning. Interestingly, despite the rhetoric on the personalization of learning and the flexibilization of education through the digital, the spatial blending of the school form according to the rationalities of security and developmentalism created the conditions for a value-laden framing of this dualism. If the molar Time was associated with a possibility of government, the Times in the plural were framed as the space of the ‘impossibility of government’. In the spaces of intersection between health, economic, digital and educational knowledges, the molar ‘Time’ was the temporality to be secured, even when digitalized or contested. The blended-school form is still articulated around a normalized, linear and quantified, but also multiplied, temporality that has to be planned and governed through standardization. Difference has to be reduced to a norm.

Third, at the intersections between securing and developmentalizing, normalization and pluralization, the regularized rules of passage between health, economics, digital and education knowledges have opened a significant space of problematization concerning the kind of teachers and students that the school form can make possible. Again, we have been able to trace the emergence of a dualism between the molar instance inherited by the disciplinary school, ‘The Individual’ and ‘The Population’ as an aggregated body of (sub-)individual unities. Within the field of the epistemic struggle we have sketched, the blending of the school form has involved multiple junctions between the framing of educational subjects as groups of sub-populations characterized by economic, personal or psychological criteria (the disadvantaged, the special educational needs, the 3–6 years, the digitally unskilled teachers, etc.) and ways of intervening on them through individualized disciplinary, enhancing, therapeutic or prudential measures (meticulous distances, targeted training, tailored summer courses, etc.). At the cross-roads between the spatial rationality of securing and the imperative to guarantee the normalizing time of schooling, lacking subjectivities emerged to be cared for through therapeutic practices. When security encountered the pluralization and fragmentation of the educational time, then the problem became the responsabilization of prudential individuals for their own safety within risky and unpredictable environments. On the opposite side, when the spatial rationality of production met the imperative to guarantee the continuity and effectiveness of the uniform time of educational production, the disciplinary subjectivities of the 20th-century school form were restated, with the related need to manage and improve them through forms of direct intervention. At last, when developmentalism as a spatial logic intersected with the multiplicity of the blended school temporality, then the problem emerged to create the conditions for (attempting) a productive and effective (self-)regulation of teachers and learners, intervening on the space/time configurations within which their choice is exercised.

To conclude, what emerges from this article is thus a figure in tension between conflicting rationalities and epistemic knowledges that struggle to co-opt and stabilize the ‘substance’ of the blended school, in the attempt to open the way for a process of re-institutionalization of the school form. It seems that this epistemic struggle is not only an Italian story. It fosters and is at the same time fostered by the centrality of global and local ed-tech companies – such as Google and Microsoft, or TIM and WeSchool. It also seems that the epistemic struggle we have mapped has multiple points of contact with the discursive dynamics of the European and global debate on the rethinking of the school form, as witnessed by the active role played by the hotbed of the International Organizations, like the OECD, and the European Institutions and Agencies.

Of course, this is a work ‘in progress’, and any claim about the traits of the epistemic space we have analysed and the emergent school form could only be provisional. Rather than attempting to identify the emerging dominant blended-school form, our mapping permitted us to single out the many oscillations and variations between the poles that frame and shape the blended school as a



new regularity. As we highlighted, in fact: (a) all the discursive hotbeds talk about the blended school, which is something from which no one can escape; (b) there are many different ‘blended-school’ forms, which differently shape spaces, times and subjectivities of schooling; (c) these different shapes are not assembled on the basis of their homogeneity or coherency, but on variable and local contingencies that will produce a heterogeneous, multiple and nowadays still unstable ‘blended-school’ form.

### Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

### ORCID iD

Danilo Taglietti  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4344-5416>

### Notes

1. ‘Didattica a Distanza’ is the name of the solution to schools’ closure adopted in Italy, characterized by teaching and learning at a distance through digital platforms.
2. A fully surfable version of this figure is freely available at: [https://miro.com/app/board/o9J\\_ld9egII/](https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_ld9egII/).

### References

- Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata (2020) Azzolina: lezioni metà a scuola e metà a casa (Azzolina: lessons half at school and half at home). 3 May. Available at: [https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2020/05/02/scuola-azzolina-lezioni-meta-a-scuola-e-meta-a-casa\\_042831bc-6705-4751-9c2b-261d96addc7f.html](https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2020/05/02/scuola-azzolina-lezioni-meta-a-scuola-e-meta-a-casa_042831bc-6705-4751-9c2b-261d96addc7f.html) (accessed 3 September 2020).
- Alfieri MV (2020) Scuola a distanza, un’occasione unica per una didattica inclusiva per tutti (Distance learning, a unique opportunity for an inclusive teaching for all). *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 17 March. Available at: [https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/scuola-distanza-un-occasione-unica-una-didattica-inclusiva-tutti-ADVuMvD?fbclid=IwAR1niKoshN6PpjbqHHmKacke\\_YSHWw-d7xR\\_m\\_K8W\\_\\_i-K3p7iVgIhPhC\\_4](https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/scuola-distanza-un-occasione-unica-una-didattica-inclusiva-tutti-ADVuMvD?fbclid=IwAR1niKoshN6PpjbqHHmKacke_YSHWw-d7xR_m_K8W__i-K3p7iVgIhPhC_4) (accessed 24 October 2020).
- Avvisati F, Hennessy S, Kozma RB, et al. (2011) *OECD Review of the Italian Strategy for Digital Schools*. OECD Education.
- Baccini A and Latempa R (2020) L’essenziale e il superfluo nella scuola italiana (The essential and the superfluous in the Italian school). *La rivista Il Mulino*, April. Available at: [https://www.rivistailmulino.it/news/newsitem/index/Item/News:NEWS\\_ITEM:5155?fbclid=IwAR1gLY5SdnrAolbCftgXM4GHrAVu0EXHv-8VHbHpdFXBxypyFweIoPP1mc](https://www.rivistailmulino.it/news/newsitem/index/Item/News:NEWS_ITEM:5155?fbclid=IwAR1gLY5SdnrAolbCftgXM4GHrAVu0EXHv-8VHbHpdFXBxypyFweIoPP1mc) (accessed 29 September 2020).
- Ball SJ (2016) Following policy: Networks, network ethnography and education policy mobilities. *Journal of Education Policy* 31(5): 549–566.
- Benussi FO (2020) Prospettive per una didattica post covid (Perspectives for a post-covid teaching). Available at: <https://www.aidr.it/prospettive-per-una-didattica-post-covid/?fbclid=IwAR0Kc17C0IjQWdCGGD4HbPeJpJXyK6fjOeNuAFK7KNwDd9Bh7-5aSQtsSGo> (accessed 3 September 2020).
- Cacciari M (2020) La scuola è socialità. Non si rimpiazza con monitor e tablet (School is social. It cannot be replaced with monitors and tablets). *La Stampa*, 18 May. Available at: <https://www.lastampa.it/cultura/2020/05/18/news/la-scuola-e-socialita-non-si-rimpiazza-con-monitor-e-tablet-1.38857890> (accessed 29 September 2020).

- Connolly K and Willsher K (2020) European schools get ready to reopen despite concern about pupils spreading Covid-19. *Guardian*, 1 May. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/01/children-as-likely-to-spread-coronavirus-as-adults-says-scientist> (accessed 29 September 2020).
- Corriere Cesenate (2020) Una preside della provincia di Bergamo: “Scusate, ma qua si è inceppata la didattica a distanza. E’ un’ecatombe e il dolore rimane chiuso dentro le case” (A principal from the province of Bergamo: “Sorry, but here the teaching at a distance has jammed. It’s a massacre and the pain remains locked inside the houses). 18 March. Available at: <https://www.corrierecesenate.it/Dall-Italia/Una-preside-della-provincia-di-Bergamo-Scusate-ma-qua-si-e-inceppata-la-didattica-a-distanza.-E-un-ecatombe-e-il-dolore-rimane-chiuso-dentro-le-case?fbclid=IwAR2bws8me3YD7yWyotEdxWk2GLfP2odteCQyUN8P2wQC7kBlzK6W> (accessed 3 September 2020).
- Corriere della Sera* (2020) Emergenza Covid-19 e didattica a distanza. Gli insegnanti a lezione per imparare ad autovalutarsi (Covid-19 emergency and distance teaching. Teachers at lesson to learn self-evaluation). 22 June. Available at: [https://www.corriere.it/scuola/primaria/20\\_giugno\\_22/emergenza-covid-19-didattica-distanza-insegnanti-lezione-imparare-ad-autovalutarsi-7fc9cd3e-b4a5-11ea-b466-221e2b27ce86\\_amp.html](https://www.corriere.it/scuola/primaria/20_giugno_22/emergenza-covid-19-didattica-distanza-insegnanti-lezione-imparare-ad-autovalutarsi-7fc9cd3e-b4a5-11ea-b466-221e2b27ce86_amp.html) (accessed 29 September 2020).
- Cusmai E (2020) La scuola è finita. Ipotesi settembre: a turno in classe o lezioni on line (The school is finished. September: classroom rotation or distance teaching). *Il Giornale*, 9 April. Available at: <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/scuola-finita-ipotesi-settembre-turno-classe-o-lezioni-line-1851859.html?fbclid=IwAR2OursOzd8o6grZS4ixtEFe9zDShQBHZWty0hqJRRyPcEphf8XZB6IjSec> (accessed 3 September 2020).
- D’Amato A (2020) Perché il governo ha chiuso le scuole e cosa dicono davvero gli scienziati (Why the government closed the schools and what the scientists really say). *NextQuotidiano.it*, 5 March. Available at: <https://www.nextquotidiano.it/perche-il-governo-ha-chiuso-le-scuole-e-cosa-dicono-davvero-gli-scienziati/> (accessed 24 October 2020).
- Dean M (2010) *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*. 2nd edn. London: SAGE.
- Deleuze G (1992) Postscript on the societies of control. *October* 59: 3–7.
- Deleuze G (2006) *Foucault*. Hand S (ed. and trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze G (2014) *Il Sapere. Corso Su Michel Foucault (1985–1986)* (Knowledge. Lectures on Michel Foucault 1985–1986). Vol. 1. Verona: Ombre corte.
- Deleuze G (2018) *Il Potere. Corso Su Michel Foucault (1985–1986)* (Power. Lectures on Michel Foucault 1985–1986). Vol. 2. Verona: Ombre corte.
- Deleuze G and Guattari F (2004) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Continuum.
- Eco U (2001) *Apocalittici e Integrati* (Apocalyptic and Integrated). Milano: Bompiani.
- Economist (2020) When easing lockdowns, governments should open schools first. *Economist*, 30 April. Available at: [https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/04/30/when-easing-lockdowns-governments-should-open-schools-first?utm\\_medium=pr&utm\\_source=inf-a](https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/04/30/when-easing-lockdowns-governments-should-open-schools-first?utm_medium=pr&utm_source=inf-a) (accessed 29 September 2020).
- Fenwick T and Edwards R (eds) (2019) *Revisiting Actor-Network Theory in Education*. London: Routledge.
- Fenwick T and Landri P (2012) Materialities, textures and pedagogies: Socio-material assemblages in education. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 20(1): 1–7.
- Fioramonti L (2020) Rientro a scuola, Fioramonti: modalità mista, lezioni a distanza e in presenza con 6-9 alunni (School reopening, Fioramonti: mixed schooling, remote teaching and school presence with 6-9 pupils). *OrizzonteScuola.it*, 22 April. Available at: <https://www.orizzontescuola.it/rientro-a-scuola-fioramonti-modalita-mista-lezioni-a-distanza-e-in-presenza-con-6-9-alunni/?fbclid=IwAR2agBQ8ll1YB6mxkxAwSdfDEyNU263XBAnSJBfGrmqRBOwS9EUx9zOPTI> (accessed 30 September 2020).
- FLC-CGIL (2020) Scuola: le iniziative di carattere sanitario per la ripresa delle attività in sicurezza. Available at: <http://www.flcgil.it/scuola/scuola-iniziativa-carattere-sanitario-ripresa-attivita-sicurezza.flc?fbclid=IwAR3FV4OFVHJoPoy7l6oP4G2ycFC0RHT1KTWIG6U6V84ipm05-WHry7YpO1g> (accessed 30 September 2020).
- Fondazione Agnelli (2020) Un’estate di opportunità educative e di gioco per chi di rimanere indietro. Un progetto congiunto Fondazione Agnelli e Save the Children (A summer of educational opportunities for those who have been left behind. A joint project of Fondazione Agnelli and Save the Children). Available at: <https://www.fondazioneagnelli.it/2020/06/24/14391/> (accessed 29 September 2020).

- Forum for World Education (2020) Education disrupted – education rebuilt: How does the pandemic shape the future of education? Available at: <https://www.fweforum.org/event/where-do-we-go-from-here/> (accessed 3 September 2020).
- Foucault M (1989a) *The Birth of the Clinic. An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault M (1989b) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault M (1995) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault M (2002) *Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Routledge.
- Foucault M (2009) *Security, Territory, Population*. Senellarted M (ed). Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gavosto A (2020) La ferita aperta della scuola (The open wound of the school). *La Repubblica*, 27 June. Available at: [https://rep.repubblica.it/pwa/commento/2020/06/26/news/fase\\_2\\_coronavirus\\_la\\_ferita\\_aperta\\_della\\_scuola-260285073/](https://rep.repubblica.it/pwa/commento/2020/06/26/news/fase_2_coronavirus_la_ferita_aperta_della_scuola-260285073/).
- Gervasutti F (2020) L'EdTech in Italia tra pubblico e privato: parola a Damien Lanfrey e Donatella Solda (Italian EdTech between public and private: Damien Lanfrey and Donatella Solda). *iSchool StartUpItalia.eu*, 27 June. Available at: <https://ischool.startupitalia.eu/education-main/education/67059-20200626-ledtech-italia-pubblico-privato-parola-damien-lanfrey-donatella-solda> (accessed 23 November 2020).
- Giornale di Sicilia* (2020) Coronavirus, Istituto Superiore di Sanità: 'Possibile ruolo attivo dei bambini nei contagi' (Coronavirus, Istituto Superiore di Sanità: 'Possible active role of children in the contagion'). 15 July. Available at: <https://gds.it/articoli/cronaca/2020/07/15/coronavirus-istituto-superiore-di-sanita-possibile-ruolo-attivo-dei-bambini-nei-contagi-ea5458e2-443c-48f6-9328-669cb26ded98/> (accessed 29 September 2020).
- Gotor M (2020) La scuola dopo il virus: cosa ho detto in una riunione a palazzo Chigi (The post-virus school: what I said in a meeting at palazzo Chigi). *ArticoloUno*, 24 July. Available at: <https://articolo1mdp.it/la-scuola-dopo-il-virus-cosa-ho-detto-in-una-riunione-a-palazzo-chigi/> (accessed 30 September 2020).
- Grimaldi E (2019) *An Archaeology of Educational Evaluation. Epistemological Spaces and Political Paradoxes*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Grimaldi E and Barzanò G (2014) Making sense of the educational present: Problematising the 'merit turn' in the Italian eduscape. *European Educational Research Journal* 13(1): 26–46.
- Grimaldi E and Serpieri R (2013) Jigsawing education evaluation. Pieces from the Italian New Public Management puzzle. *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 45(4): 306–335.
- Harris T (2020) Video debating | UNESCO Futures of Education. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/debates?fbclid=IwAR2Qfqdhorl9Ir9nGDUjKDHUgg-Bu0RuA1eNRn3npkHJs-VUk0Y0xWAO0xU4> (accessed 3 September 2020).
- Inamorato dos Santos A, Punie Y and Castano Munoz J (2016) *Opening up education: A support framework for higher education institutions*. Science for Policy report. Seville: Joint Research Centre, European Commission.
- La Repubblica (2020) Speranza: 'A settembre scuole riapriranno per tutti'. Il Comitato degli esperti dice no all'ultimo giorno in classe (Speranza: 'On September schools will reopen for all'. The experts Committee says no to the last day of school). *La Repubblica*, 26 May. Available at: <https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/05/26/news/cts-257658870/?ref=RHPPTP-BL-I257519324-C12-P2-S1.8-T1> (accessed 14 April 2021).
- Landri P (2018) *Digital Governance of Education: Technology, Standards and Europeanization of Education*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- LeggiOggi.it (2020) Didattica a distanza, come si fa: le indicazioni Miur commentate da Giancarlo Cerini (Distance Teaching, how to do: MIUR guidelines commented by Giancarlo Cerini). 24 March. Available at: [https://www.leggioggi.it/2020/03/24/didattica-a-distanza-come-si-fa-indicazioni-miur-commentate/?fbclid=IwAR2IPHgKZDJ14AccMANRhg1puHfuE9M1nVEKpeI0sYka\\_04tGHGAN\\_dot0](https://www.leggioggi.it/2020/03/24/didattica-a-distanza-come-si-fa-indicazioni-miur-commentate/?fbclid=IwAR2IPHgKZDJ14AccMANRhg1puHfuE9M1nVEKpeI0sYka_04tGHGAN_dot0) (accessed 3 September 2020).
- Leggo.it (2020) Monica Guerritore: 'Voglio aprire al teatro le porte della tv' (Monica Guerritore: 'I want to open the doors of TV to the theater'). 13 June. Available at: [https://www.leggo.it/spettacoli/teatro/monica\\_guerritore-5280314.html](https://www.leggo.it/spettacoli/teatro/monica_guerritore-5280314.html) (accessed 3 September 2020).
- Lupton D (2014) *Digital Sociology*. London: Routledge.

- Mantellini M (2020) Il divario digitale è una zavorra per l'Italia (The digital divide is a ballast for Italy). *Internazionale.it*, 23 March. Available at: <https://www.internazionale.it/opinione/massimo-mantellini/2020/03/23/coronavirus-divario-digitale-scuola?fbclid=IwAR2e7PkIjLz2Chg1VPMvn59ptheoCC0I8BjREKZLqtROWj3ipGyN9uJL5-mo> (accessed 24 October 2020).
- Maragliano R (2020) Un modo nuovo di intendere la scuola (A new way of understanding school). *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 3 June.
- Maulini O and Perrenoud P (2005) La Forme Scolaire de l'Éducation de Base: Tensions Internes et Évolutions (The school form of education: internal tensions and evolutions). In: Maulini O and Montandon C (eds) *Les Formes de l'éducation: Variété et Variations* (The Forms of Education: Varieties and Variations). Bruxelles: De Boeck Supérieur, pp. 147–167.
- Meyer H and Rowan B (eds) (2006) *The New Institutionalism in Education*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Microsoft Education Center (2020) Check-in with Students: Emotions, Wellbeing, and Remote Learning. Available at: <https://education.microsoft.com/en-us/resource/51059d22> (accessed 29 September 2020).
- Mischitelli L (2020) Zoom e Houseparty: tutti i problemi privacy e security delle app di videoconferenza più usate (Zoom and Houseparty: all privacy and security issues of the most used videoconferencing apps). *AgendaDigitale.it*, 9 April. Available at: <https://www.agendadigitale.eu/sicurezza/privacy/zoom-e-houseparty-tutti-i-problemi-privacy-e-security-delle-app-di-videoconferenza-piu-usate/> (accessed 29 September 2020).
- MIUR (2020a) #LaScuolaNonSiFerma - Didattica a distanza - Nuovo Coronavirus (#Schoolwontstop - Distance Teaching - New Coronavirus). Available at: [https://www.istruzione.it/coronavirus/didattica-a-distanza\\_lascuolansiferma.html](https://www.istruzione.it/coronavirus/didattica-a-distanza_lascuolansiferma.html) (accessed 14 April 2021).
- MIUR (2020b) Linee guida per la didattica digitale integrata (Integrated Digital Teaching Guidelines). Available at: [https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/ALL.+A+\\_+Linee\\_Guida\\_DDI\\_.pdf/f0ceb0b4-bb7e-1d8e-4809-a359a8a7512f](https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/ALL.+A+_+Linee_Guida_DDI_.pdf/f0ceb0b4-bb7e-1d8e-4809-a359a8a7512f) (accessed 30 September 2020).
- MIUR (2020c) Piano scuola 2020-2021 (School plan 2020-2021). Available at: <https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/2467413/Le+linee+guida.pdf/4e4bb411-1f90-9502-f01e-d8841a949429> (accessed 30 September 2020).
- Nóvoa A and Alvim Y (2020) Nothing is new, but everything has changed: A viewpoint on the future school. *Prospects* 49(1–2): 35–41.
- OpenOnline (2020) Altro che didattica a distanza, l'Ocse boccia i prof italiani sulla tecnologia: ne sanno più i loro studenti (Other than distance learning, the OECD rejects the Italian professors on technology: their students know more). 18 June. Available at: <https://www.open.online/2020/06/18/didattica-distanza-ocse-boccia-prof-italiani-tecnologia/> (accessed 30 September 2020).
- OECD (2020) Education responses to covid-19: Embracing digital learning and online collaboration. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/education-responses-to-covid-19-embracing-digital-learning-and-online-collaboration-d75eb0e8/> (accessed 24 March 2020).
- Palmer M (2020) What are we learning from the world's big edtech experiment? *Sifted*, 9 April. Available at: <https://sifted.eu/articles/big-edtech-experiment/> (accessed 29 September 2020).
- Peters MA and Taglietti D (2019) Deleuze's rhizomatic analysis of Foucault: Resources for a new sociology? *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 51(12): 1187–1199.
- Polytechnic University of Turin (2020) *Scuole aperte, società protetta* (Open Schools, Protected Society). Available at: [http://www.impreseaperte.polito.it/estensori\\_e\\_valutatori](http://www.impreseaperte.polito.it/estensori_e_valutatori) (accessed 30 September 2020).
- Pozzi C (2020) Cristina Pozzi (Impactscool): «Per la scuola del futuro la tecnologia non basta, serve una visione» (Cristina Pozzi (Impactscool): 'Technology is not enough for the school of the future, we need a vision'). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FW4O3qbggU> (accessed 3 September 2020).
- QuotidianoSanità.it (2020) Coronavirus. Iss e Csc spengono polemiche su chiusura scuole: "Misure Dpcm coerenti con obiettivo". Ma su blocco lezioni: "Incerti perché non esistono dati solidi su efficacia misura" (Coronavirus. Iss and Csc brush off controversy over school closures: "Objectively consistent Dpcm measures." But on block lessons: "Uncertain because there is no solid data on effectiveness measure"). 5 March. Available at: [https://www.quotidianosanita.it/scienza-e-farmaci/articolo.php?articolo\\_id=82113](https://www.quotidianosanita.it/scienza-e-farmaci/articolo.php?articolo_id=82113) (accessed 24 October 2020).

- Rovelli L (2020) Coronavirus e chiusura scuole, ISS annuncia: 'Potrebbe esserci una proroga' (Coronavirus and school closure, ISS announces: 'There may be an extension'). *Scuolainforma.it*, 5 March. Available at: <https://www.scuolainforma.it/2020/03/05/coronavirus-e-chiusura-scuole-iss-annuncia-potrebbe-esserci-una-proroga.html> (accessed 29 September 2020).
- School Principals' National Association (2020) Riapertura delle Scuole. La confusione regna sovrana (Schools' reopening. Confusion is the king). Available at: <https://www.andis.it/news/riapertura-delle-scuole-la-confusione-regna-sovrana4465.html#.Xwct5igzbiU> (accessed 9 July 2020).
- Selwyn N (2020) Online learning: Rethinking teachers' 'digital competence' in light of COVID-19. *Lens Monash*, April. Available at: <https://lens.monash.edu/2020/04/30/1380217/online-learning-rethinking-teachers-digital-competence-in-light-of-covid-19>.
- Thompson G (ed.) (2019) *The Education Assemblage*. London: Routledge.
- Tyack D and Tobin W (1994) The 'grammar' of schooling: Why has it been so hard to change? *American Educational Research Journal* 31(3): 453–479.
- UNESCO (2020) *Futures of Education - 9 ideas for public action*. Available at: <https://www.norrag.org/unesco-publishes-education-in-a-post-covid-world-nine-ideas-for-public-action/unesco-futures-of-education-9-ideas-for-public-action-poster-eng/> (accessed 3 September 2020).
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO/IESALC) (2020) COVID-19 and higher education: Today and tomorrow. *Impact analysis, policy responses and recommendations*. 9 April. Available at: <https://bit.ly/34TOSvu> (accessed 25 July 2020).
- Van Dijk J, Poell T and De Waal M (2018) *The Platform Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Viero D (2020) L'insegnamento: una missione? (Teaching: a mission?). *ROARS*, 9 July. Available at: <https://www.roars.it/online/linsegnamento-una-missione/> (accessed 29 September 2020).
- Wilkins A and Olmedo A (eds) (2018) *Education Governance and Social Theory: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Research*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Williamson B and Hogan A (2020) *Commercialisation and Privatisation in / of Education in the Context of Covid-19*. Bruxelles.
- Zunino C (2020) Scuola, i presidi alla ministra Azzolina: servono 2,5 milioni di banchi singoli (School, the principals to Minister Azzolina: 2.5 million individual desks are needed). *La Repubblica*, 23 July. Available at: [https://www.repubblica.it/scuola/2020/07/23/news/i\\_presidi\\_alla\\_azzolina\\_ci\\_servono\\_2\\_5\\_milioni\\_di\\_banchi\\_singoli-262692976/](https://www.repubblica.it/scuola/2020/07/23/news/i_presidi_alla_azzolina_ci_servono_2_5_milioni_di_banchi_singoli-262692976/) (accessed 30 September 2020).

## Author biographies

**Danilo Taglietti** is a Post-Doc Researcher at the Department of Social Sciences of the University of Naples "Federico II". In his works, he tries to explore the actual shapes of the constitution of educational subjectivities at the crossroads of the complex entanglement among the forces of the informational, the biological and the economical.

**Paolo Landri** is a Senior Researcher of the Institute of Research on Population and Social Policies at National Research Council in Italy (CNR-IRPPS). His main research interests concern educational organizations, digital governance and educational policies. His latest books are: *Digital Governance of Education: Technology, standards and Europeanization of Education*, London: Bloomsbury, 2018 and *Educational Leadership, Management, and Administration through Actor Network Theory*, London, Routledge, 2020.

**Emiliano Grimaldi** is Associate Professor of Sociology of Education at the Department of Social Sciences of the University of Naples Federico II. His research is in education policy sociology and has centred on educational governance and evaluation, NPM reforms in education, inclusive education and social justice.