

# *Embracing Disciplinary Diversity: Public Administration Education in Italy*

*Denita Cepiku\**

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The paper presents a statistical analysis exploring public administration education at Italian universities. It aims at verifying whether the administrative law approach to university-based public administration teaching is still prevalent in Italy. The research also highlights the main specificities of public administration education in Italy with reference to the disciplinary character, the geographical distribution, the type and level of PA programmes, etc. Information from 204 faculties of 72 universities has been gathered and 2,198 education programmes at different levels have been registered and classified. Overall evidence suggests that the legal cluster, including but not limited to administrative law, is not the prevalent approach in teaching public administration in Italy. The public cluster – mainly political sciences and public economy approach – is widespread at Italian universities. Furthermore, there is

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\* Denita Cepiku, PhD, Aggregate Professor of Public Management at the University of Rome *Tor Vergata*, Italy (profesorica javnog menadžmenta na Sveučilištu *Tor Vergata* u Rimu, Italija, e-mail: cepiku@economia.uniroma2.it)

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*Keywords:* public administration, education, training, disciplinary approaches, administrative culture

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The paper presents a statistical analysis exploring public administration (PA) education in Italian universities. It contributes to the literature on PA education and training, developed in specific countries (Lewanski, 2000; Molina, Cêsar, 2000; Pollitt, 1996; Randma, 2001; Rhodes, 1996; Araújo, Alvarez, 2006; etc.) as well as in a comparative perspective (see for example Verheijen, Connaughton, 1999; Toonen, Verheijen, 1999 for Europe and Kettl, 1998; 2001 for the USA).

The literature has classified European countries according to the nature of PA education in three clusters: legal, where a strong emphasis is put on administrative law; public, in which PA is recognized to have a unique public and political character; and corporate or managerial, focused on business management techniques (Hajnal, 2003). In most researches, Italy belongs to the legal group (Lewanski, 1999; Kickert, 2005).

The paper aims at verifying if the administrative law approach to university-based PA teaching is still prevalent in Italy, as well as the extent of development of other disciplinary orientations. The research also highlights the main specificities of PA education in Italy with reference to the disciplinary character, the geographical distribution, the type and level of PA programmes, etc. It aims at describing how universities are adjusting curricula in relation to public sector modernization, by comparing the main faculties (economics and management, law, political science, sociology, engineering, sciences of communication, social sciences) of all Italian universities.

A distinguishing element of the research is the simultaneous consideration and comparison of different disciplines: economics, management, law, political science, sociology, sciences of communication and engineer-

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the XXII World Congress of Political Science, Madrid, July 8–12, 2012. I am grateful to the participants and to the journal reviewers for their comments.

ing, while existing literature often focuses only on individual disciplinary areas (Wise, 1999).

The paper relies on original and exhaustive data, covering the whole population of Italian universities and collected between June and July 2007. The main source of information are the didactic programmes (Manifesto degli studi) approved by the faculties for the most recent academic year (2007/08 or 2006/07). Information from 204 faculties at 72 universities was gathered and 2,198 education programmes at different levels were registered and classified.

Overall evidence suggests that the legal cluster, including but not limited to administrative law, is not the prevalent approach in teaching PA in Italy. The public cluster – mainly political science and public economy approach – is widespread in Italian universities instead. Furthermore, there is a strong, yet more recent, development of the managerial approach. We have found substantial variation within and between the north, central and south Italy. In general, an insufficient supply of PA programmes has been registered in southern regions, which also put a greater emphasis on doctoral education.

Two specificities of PA education in Italy include the prevalence of the juridical approach in public accounting programmes and major political science disciplinary orientation of the programmes in administrative science.

The next chapter deals with the research methods and main steps. A short description of the university education in Italy is given in the third chapter. The results of the literature review, including the main historical specificities of PA education in Italy, are presented in chapter four. The fifth chapter presents the main results of the statistical quantitative analysis. These are commented in the last paragraph, which also highlights some areas for further research.

## 2. Research Objectives, Method and Limitations

The aim of the research is to explore the situation of university-based PA education in Italy at several faculties.

The research questions include:

- Is the administrative law approach still prevalent in Italy?
- What is the extent of the development of other disciplinary orientations?
- What are the main specificities of PA education in Italy?

To this end, the statistical analysis aims at answering the following questions:

- What levels and types of PA programmes do the different faculties offer?
- How are these programmes distributed according to their disciplinary character?
- How are these programmes distributed according to the different regions and administrative cultures they embody?
- How are these programmes distributed according to the three clusters identified by the literature (public, legal and corporate)?
- How are these programmes distributed, according to the specific topic dealt with (analysis limited to the corporate cluster)?

The first stage of research has been based on a literature review, which helped to identify and explore PA as an academic and scholarly discipline in a comparative perspective. Furthermore, the main characteristics of PA and management education in different political and social contexts, as well as some historical drivers that have influenced the selection and training of the administrative élite in Italy have been explored.

The second stage of the research – descriptive statistics – consisted in the collection and analysis of PA programmes taught at Italian universities. The whole population of PA programmes has been analysed. The data were collected between June and July 2007 and draw on the information available in the official didactic programmes of the selected faculties of 72 Italian universities, both public and private. The six telematic universities have not been included for homogeneity reasons.

The construction of a »PA program database« specifically designed for the purpose of the study included the following variables:

- *Name of the education programme*. Programme level: Undergraduate programmes (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle, respectively Bachelor's degree and Master's degree)<sup>2</sup> and courses or *Insegnamenti*; Professional graduate courses (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level Master's, 60 credits); Research-based courses (doctorates or PhDs).

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<sup>2</sup> According to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), a standard for comparing the study attainment and performance of students of higher education across the European Union. One academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS-credits that are equivalent to 1,500–1,800 hours of study in all countries irrespective of the standard or qualification type, in order to facilitate transfer and progression throughout the Union. Cf. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/index_en.html).

- *Region*
- *Name of the university*. Type of the faculty:<sup>3</sup> Economics and/or Management; Law; Political science; Sciences of communication; Sociology; Engineering; Social sciences (and humanities).
- Disciplinary orientation or character: Law; Economics; Management; Engineering; Political science; Sociology; Communication; Administration and governance of specific policy fields (local government, healthcare, cultural heritage, welfare, universities, security, etc.);<sup>4</sup> Interdisciplinary; other.
- *Education cluster*. Public (includes programmes whose disciplinary orientation is Political science, as well as Sociology or Economics), Legal (covers programmes whose disciplinary orientation is Law), Corporate (programmes whose disciplinary orientation is Management as well as Communication or Engineering).
- *Thematic focus or subject area (only for the corporate cluster)*. General public management; Planning, budgeting and control; Organization and human resources management; Accounting and finance; Accountability and social reporting; e-Government; Marketing and communication; Market-type mechanisms (outsourcing, PPPs, privatization, regulation, government-business relationships); other issues.
- *Number of ECTS-credits*.

Only the programmes entirely dedicated to PA have been taken into consideration. These have been found in 186 out of 204 faculties. We have not considered generic programmes where some courses (or courses where some lectures), are dedicated to PA, although we acknowledge their relevance.

Programmes dealing with political aspects alone – such as the financing, marketing and communication of political parties, etc. have also been left out of the study. On the contrary, programmes dealing with the political-administrative boundary have been taken into account.

We have not included more specialized programmes such as development studies (but we have included local or regional government development

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<sup>3</sup> Only universities having at least one of these faculties have been considered.

<sup>4</sup> The courses belonging to this category are centred on a specific sector or type of organization instead of a disciplinary approach.

policies), environment protection (either regulations or management), etc.

Certain terminological choices are worth explicating. Some studies have reported a shift away from the term »public administration« apparent in several countries (Kettl, 1999; Wise, Pitts, 2003), also supported by empirical data (Wise, 1999).<sup>5</sup> »Public administration« is here used in a very wide sense, comprehending more limited definitions, such as those found in political science, public management, administrative law, etc.

For the sake of further analysis, the programmes have been grouped into undergraduate, professional and mid-career training, and research programmes (Wise, Pitts, 2003). The seven types of faculties selected cover almost all the didactic supply on PA. Only in a few cases, this classification leaves out new faculties. It is the case with the recently established cultural heritage faculties (two examples are the Universities of Macerata and Lecce), which are of interdisciplinary nature.

It was decided to analyse the programmes according to a detailed classification of their disciplinary character, which was identified independently of the faculty in which they are taught. Three technical criteria were adopted: we tried to have a moderate number of categories, a clear-cut distinction between categories, and we tried to use as much as possible the same categorization used in previous research (mainly Hajnal, 2002; 2003).

At the second stage, the programmes were grouped into the three well-known clusters. In general, the legal cluster included the administrative, public, regional and local law, etc. programmes. The public cluster included the programmes having a political science disciplinary orientation. The corporate cluster included management programmes.

The classification of the other programmes was done on a case-by-case basis. Very often, programmes in sociology and economics were put in the public cluster, while communication and engineering programmes went within the corporate one. Finally, the counting of programmes and courses was done according to their weight in ECTS-credits.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> PA as an academic modern discipline or field of study is described in chapter four.

<sup>6</sup> Few programmes could not be included in the database: 15 single courses (3 at the Faculty of Engineering of Modena University and 12 at the Faculty of Economics of Parma University) for which it was not possible to determine the amount of credits; two doctoral programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Lecce University, as it was impossible to identify their disciplinary orientation. Finally, doctoral programmes organized jointly by two or more universities were counted only once.

The research has generated new empirical insights that revise the theory on PA education in legalistic countries. The main limitations have to do with its descriptive nature – at the second stage of the research, the data will be commented by key informants with the aim of understanding the reasons for any potential variations in patterns of change.

### 3. A Brief Outline of University Education in Italy

Italian universities have a long history, beginning in mediaeval times with the establishment of the University of Salerno in the IX century, and the University of Bologna in 1088. The University of Padua was founded in 1222, and two years later, the University of Naples was founded by Frederick II. The University of Florence was founded in 1308, followed by the Universities of Pisa, Pavia and Turin.

Higher education is provided by universities, technical universities, university institutes, as well as by a wide range of academies, higher institutes/schools and by a number of professional training institutions. Most of the existing university institutions were established directly by the State, while a limited number, originally set up by private entities, were later recognized by the relevant Ministry.

At the time of writing (2007), the university system had 87 university institutions of different type.<sup>7</sup> In 1999, Italy adopted the so-called 3+2 system, although the adjusting process was still going on in 2007 (Figure 1). The first degree is the *Corso di Laurea triennale* that can be achieved after 3 years of studies. Students can then complete two more years of specialization or the *Corso di Laurea specialistica* (now called Magistrale). The five (3 + 2) years correspond to a Master's degree<sup>8</sup> and give access to third cycle programmes (second level master's and doctorates). The *dotto-rato di ricerca* (doctorate) requires 3 or 4 years of work.<sup>9</sup>

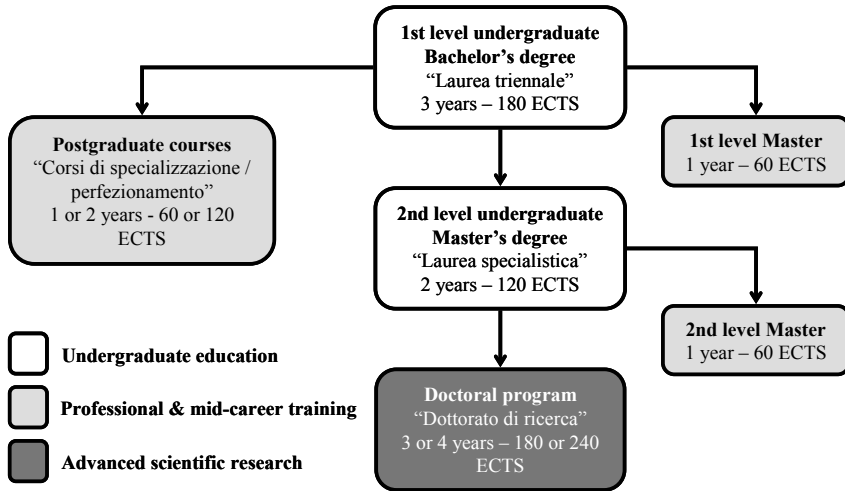
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<sup>7</sup> Cfr. UNESCO, International Association of Universities, World Higher Education Database (WHED), Italy – Education system: <http://www.unesco.org>.

<sup>8</sup> It should not be confused with Italian »masters«, less popular second cycle degrees that do not give access to doctorates. First Level Master's can be pursued by those who hold at least a *Laurea triennale* or Bachelor's degree, while second Level Master's (*Magister Philosophiae*) require also the two-year specialization degree before entry.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. [http://www.unesco.org/iau/onlinedatabases/systems\\_data/it.rtf](http://www.unesco.org/iau/onlinedatabases/systems_data/it.rtf). Cfr. also Wikipedia.

Figure 1: University education in Italy



#### 4. PA Education: Historical Factors and International Comparison

CROATIAN AND COMPARATIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The literature acknowledges a strong relationship between the processes of PA reform and the features of the PA education and training system in a country and PA education and PA as a field of practice definitively correlate (Hajnal, 2002: 15; Mosher, 1982; Connaughton, Randma, 2002: 2).

There is a rich literature on the intellectual foundations of PA (Dahl, 1947; Mosher, 1956; Charlesworth, 1968; Heady, 1979; Guerreiro Ramos, 1981; Daneke, 1990; Riggs, 1991; Bailey, Mayer, 1992; Bogason, Brans, 2005). The discipline continues to be characterized by »the ahistorical, instrumental, voluntaristic, parochial, and state-centered nature of its approaches and explanations« (Baltodano, 1997).

Three fundamental elements influence, either directly or indirectly, the curricula of PA in different countries (Connaughton, Randma, 2002):

- The concept of the state and state tradition, which is far stronger in Europe than in the US. Furthermore, there is a wide diversity of state tradition within Europe, which has a direct impact on the development of PA education.



- The identity (crisis) of PA as a discipline, which is academic and professional at the same time and requires a variety of approaches to understand it (Raadschelders, 1999). This diversity is its greatest strength and its most serious limitation (Denhardt, 1990). It also implies that the survival of PA as a distinct field of study will depend on the ability to develop techniques, concepts, rhetoric and vision that are of perceived use to governments and public servants (Pollitt, 1996; Kettl, 1998).
- The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary character<sup>10</sup> that, together with the continuous evolving nature of government and government-society relations, disallow the development of a unified body of theory. This lack of unity, especially evident in Europe compared to the US, is primarily due to historical and cultural paths of different countries. A clear indicator is the predominance of public law in European continental countries and its absence in the UK.

An overview of the literature on PA as a scholarly field has highlighted many researches developed on a national basis, and very few of these have been truly comparative. Even fewer have provided empirical quantitative evidence on PA education. Exceptions include the two inventories of PA education in the EU states and Norway, carried out by the Thematic Network in Public Administration and transformed into a quantitative analysis by Hajnal (2002) and several other studies (Wise, 1999; Wise, Pitts, 2003; Connaughton, Randma, 2002).

Future perspectives of PA as a field of study in Europe are bounded by uncertainty, while »membership« of the European countries in the three clusters established by the literature is becoming increasingly questionable.

Figure 2 gives an overview of the developments since World War II, which appear as a shift of several countries from the predominantly legal area towards the political science or management areas (Hajnal, 2003).

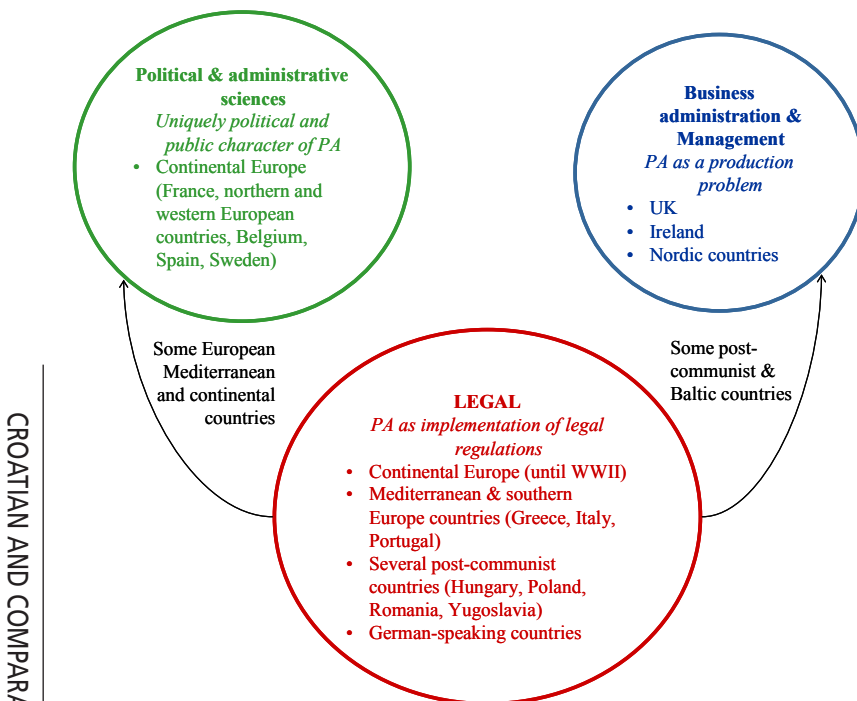
A relevant area of future research could be the development of PA teaching in countries still considered to belong to the legal cluster: mainly Italy,

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<sup>10</sup> In interdisciplinary academic programmes PA is studied from the integrated viewpoints of different disciplines, generally those of political science, law, economics and sociology, with PA being the core subject of the programme. Since the 1970s, the ideas of New Public Management have become established, and many countries have included management and business administration perspectives to PA education (Toonen, Verheijen, 1999).

Austria, Germany and Switzerland on the one hand, and some post-communist countries on the other. Will these countries remain in the legal area or they will change the patterns of their education systems? If so, which influence will be the strongest: the Anglo-Saxon (and in part Nordic) or the continental European? Furthermore, will the growing weight of the European Union's administrative structures impose a certain degree of convergence?

Figure 2: PA curricula in Europe: a move away from legalism



Source: Information from: Hajnal, 2002; Seibel, 1999; Toonen, Verheijen, 1999; Ballart, 1999.

#### 4.1. PA Education in Italy: Historical Overview

Any analysis of the PA field of study in Italy requires a description of the historical context in which it has developed. The distinctive national characteristics of the study of PA and public management in Italy are ex-

plained by the historical evolution of PA in Italy; the coexistence of competing disciplines in the study of PA and the traditional domination of the administrative law approach; the recent influence of the Anglo-American managerial approach, NPM ideas, and the Italian managerial theory *economia aziendale* (Meneguzzo, 2007).

Italian PA is the result of cross-fertilization of different administrative cultures including the *Rechtsstaat* tradition (Austro-Hungarian derived from Lombardy and Veneto), bureaucratic Napoleonic traditions (Piemonte and Sardinia), and weak-state models more similar to the Vatican State and the Realm of Two-Sicilies (South Italy).

These administrative cultures embody vastly different visions of institutional and organizational models, and a diversity of relationships between PA, citizens/civil society and other social and economical actors. These cultures further influence minor themes such as public accounting and the management of public assets. This can be seen in northern regions where attention was given to openness and clarity of bureaucratic processes and to the delivery of basic public services such as waste collection, road maintenance, and public lighting. Here the philanthropy of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie played a strong role in the provision of social services and healthcare.

In contrast, the southern civil servants were known for their arbitrariness and free-riding behaviours that determined the low quality of public services and a greater distance between the government and the citizens (Meneguzzo, 2007).

While Piedmont in north-western Italy played a leading role in shaping the unified administration, institutional modernization efforts took place earlier and more obviously in other pre-unified states. East of Piedmont, in the Lombardo-Veneto Region, a social class of bureaucrats was developed following a formalized conditions fostered by the Austro-Hungarian Empire featuring educational requirements for entry, career mobility, and ethical principles.

In the Naples Realm and the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, the main Bourbonic laws (1816 and 1817) were in line with the previous French tradition. There were differences between formal rules, based on professional bureaucracy and territorial mobility, and their real application (prevalence of personnel with aristocratic origins). In other states – such as the Vatican – there was a general lack of formal norms regulating the organization and functioning of public offices.

The Italian bureaucracy from the unification to 1900 had been characterized by the small size and high uniformity, including most of the employees coming from the Piedmont administration. Career paths were mainly hierarchical with high integration between bureaucrats and politicians. It was only in 1908 that a Civil Servants Statute was adopted, as a consequence of a major conflict due to increasing size and function of the government, as well as to the increasingly socially and culturally diverse public employees with the rising number of civil servants from the former Kingdom of Two Sicilies and the former Vatican State.

Public employment increased due to the expansion of the state's role in the economy. The increase of employees from the South was simultaneous to this expansion.

Selection and training were carried out by the administration itself, which brought about the isolation of bureaucracy. Administrative elites, such as those developed in France and the UK (Cassese, 1983), were all but nonexistent, and the closeness of career paths did not allow to develop an education system similar to ENA in France. Italy has not established PA education traditions such as the French *grands corps* or the English Oxbridge.

Italian PA has traditionally been dominated by administrative and public law while hesitant initiatives aimed at introducing scientific management principles encountered obstacles related to a formalistic and juridical culture.

Studies in the field of PA in Italy have been influenced by the juridical culture, both for historical reasons and because administrative law was (and is) required for recruitment at the higher levels of the public sector.<sup>11</sup> Only in the past three decades has PA begun to be analysed by social sciences (political science, sociology as well as economics and management) (Lewanski, 1999; Meneguzzo, 2007). The administrative sciences approach has developed inside the administrative law and public accounting areas, along with the development of organizational sociology, political sciences, public policy analysis, and finally the *economia aziendale* approach.

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<sup>11</sup> One of the most important public competitions for the access to management positions in the public sector (*corso-concorso*) organized by the National School for Public Administration is based on an exam including queries on administrative law; constitutional law; EU legislation; private law; labor legislation; political economy; public economics; national accounting; statistics; contemporary history; public management and foreign languages. Cfr. <http://www.sspa.it/index.php?a=12>.

In literature, administrative law is still widely considered the most or even the only relevant study of administration. Administrative science based on political science, like in the US and north-western Europe is said to be rare in Italy, while the study of public management has only emerged in the last two decades (Kickert, 2005).

Cotta (1996) offers an interesting historical analysis on the Italian faculties of political sciences. They are depicted as multifaceted units covering a variety of disciplinary areas: the main ones are sociology, contemporary history, constitutional and international law, economics, political philosophy and history of political ideas, statistics and political science *stricto sensu*. Faculties of political science began to spread in other universities particularly after World War II, but quite often, the first step was to create a programme of political science under the umbrella of a more well-established law faculty. In time, such programmes have generally managed to become institutions autonomous from the faculties of law.

Political science as a specific and autonomous discipline began to gain a role in the university curricula in the 1960s, although in the Italian academic tradition the disciplines of political philosophy, history of political ideas and state theory (the German *Staatslehre*) had existed long before the appearance of political science (Cotta, 1996).

Regarding the faculties of economics, it is worth mentioning the *Corso di Laurea in PA* and economics of international institutions first introduced at the Faculties of Economics of Bocconi and Tor Vergata Universities.<sup>12</sup> Although featuring a more management-oriented approach, the programme represented an optimal allocation of courses in terms of legal, economic, managerial and statistical areas. Furthermore, there were specific courses in PA and the history of administration, as well as in international institutions.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Economia delle amministrazioni pubbliche e delle istituzioni internazionali*, also known as CLAPI.

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, this four-year programme disappeared from most Italian universities after the Bologna process had been launched. At the University of Rome Tor Vergata it has been substituted by the three-year »Economics of Public Administration and Regulation« (*Economia dei servizi, amministrazioni pubbliche, e regolamentazione*) and the two-year »Social and Economic Sciences with an Orientation in Public Economics and Regulation« (*Scienze economiche e sociali – economia pubblica e regolamentazione*).

## 5. PA Education at Italian Universities: The Results of the Quantitative Analysis

The research has explored university-based PA education in Italy. Information from 204 faculties of all 72 Italian universities has been gathered and 2,198 education programmes of different levels have been analysed and classified.

Universities and faculties are distributed geographically as shown in Table 1. Although universities are distributed evenly in the north, centre and south, universities in central Italy have fewer faculties. Nonetheless, the distribution of programmes (in terms of credits) follows a different pattern as shown in Figure 3.

Table 1: Geographical distribution of universities

Geographical area	Number of Universities	Number of Faculties
North	28	79
Centre	19	54
South & Islands	25	71
Total	72	204

The supply of programmes teaching PA is greater in northern Italy, especially if compared with the south<sup>14</sup> (Figure 3). Most of the programmes are distributed between Lombardia (20%) and Lazio (15.9%) regions, followed by Toscana (10.7%) and Marche (7.5%).

This can be compared with the number of civil servants (Figure 4). According to the annual report on PA of the National Statistics Institute, during 2002, 36% of them worked in northern regions, 22% in the centre, 41% in the south (Istat, 2005: 41).<sup>15</sup> Although with a high level of approx-

<sup>14</sup> If not specified, »south« is intended to include the islands of Sardinia and Sicily.

<sup>15</sup> Elaborations on the number of civil servants per 1,000 inhabitants. Another dimension which can be considered, though less precise than the number of civil servants, is the number of public organizations. According to the same source, 67.7% of all the central administrations are concentrated in Lazio and 9.1% in Lombardia. Local governments are more numerous in Lombardia (18%) and Piemonte (14%), followed by Veneto and Campania (both with 7%) (Istat, 2005: 35).

imation,<sup>16</sup> an appropriate supply of PA programmes in the north, a weak development in the central regions and an underdevelopment in the south can be observed.

Figure 3: Geographical distribution of PA programs

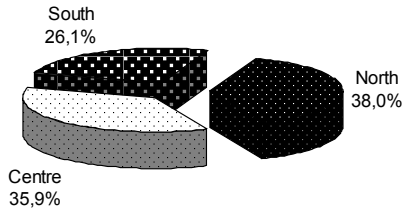
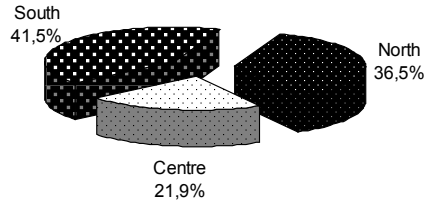


Figure 4: Geographical distribution of civil servants (% on data per 1,000 inhabitants, Istat, 2005)



There are 186 faculties out of 204 – distributed among economics, law, political science, sciences of communication, sociology, engineering and social sciences – that have programmes in PA (Figure 5).

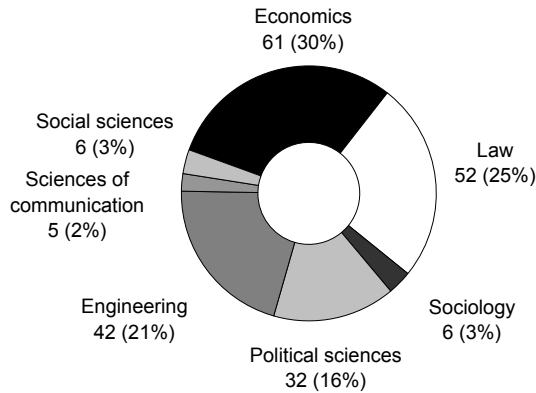
The programme levels (Bologna system) include undergraduate programs (Bachelor's and Master's degree) and courses; first and second level Masters; and PhD programmes (Table 2).

All the programmes have been classified into several categories regarding the level, the type (undergraduate; professional training; and research programmes); the disciplinary nature (law, economics, management, engineering, political science, sociology, communication, interdisciplinary and governance of specific policy fields) and the education cluster: public, legal or corporate.

A further categorization for the corporate cluster distinguished the programmes in terms of subject area: general public management; planning, budgeting and control; organization and human resources management; accounting and finance; accountability and social reporting; e-Government; marketing and communication; market-type mechanisms.

<sup>16</sup> It should be considered that PA programmes, especially master's programmes that offer professional and mid-career training, are attended not only by civil servants but also by consultants or the unemployed. Only 20% of all professional programmes are taught in the south.

Figure 5: Distribution of faculties by type (number &amp; per cent)



For the sake of exhaustiveness, all types of programmes have been considered. It should be noticed, however, that these are of a different nature and weight. For instance, a single course of 5 credits in public management has a different relevance than a PhD programme of 180 credits in the same field. Therefore, the calculations have been performed by considering the credits, instead of the number of programmes.

Undergraduate programmes – Bachelor's and Master's degrees – have been considered (and counted) separately from single courses. In several elaborations, we have chosen the more detailed information on courses.

### 5.1. The Levels and Types of PA Programmes

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of the 2,198 PA programmes by level. Pre-graduate courses have more credits (45.1%) compared to professional training (28.6%) and research-based education (26.2%).

There are 1,846 undergraduate courses in PA in Italy, taught within bachelor or master's programmes (Bologna system): we have counted 191 of these.

There is a prevalence of 2<sup>nd</sup>-level master's programmes (Master Philosophie) over 1<sup>st</sup>-level master's, which, together with the high number of enrolled students in the master's degree, represent an indicator of the failure of the so-called Bologna system in Italy.

There are 38 doctoral programmes in Italy. Of these, 22 are developed around political science and public economics; 10 are concentrated on administrative and public law; and 6 deal with managerial issues.



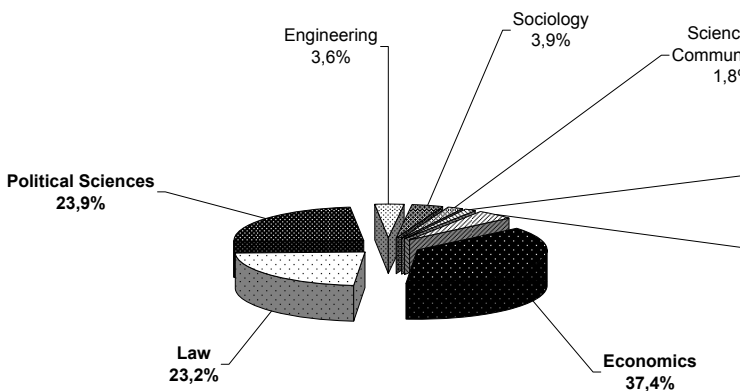
Table 2: PA teaching programmes by level

Programme level	Number of programmes	Credits (ECTS)
Bachelor's degree	121	21,780
Master's degree	70	8,400
Single course	1,846	11,763
Masters I level	70	4,200
Masters II level	53	3,320
PhDs	38	6,840
Total	2,198	56,303

The number of PA programmes taught at the faculties of economics is higher than that taught at the faculties of law and political science (Figure 6). This result is quite interesting but it does not take into account the disciplinary character of the programmes, which is considered in the next paragraph. In other words, over 37% of PA programmes taught at the faculties of economics also include courses and programmes in administrative or public law.

Nearly 5% of the programmes are organized jointly by different faculties. Again, this is something different from the interdisciplinary character of the programmes. Only 21.7% of the interfaculty programs have interdisciplinary character.

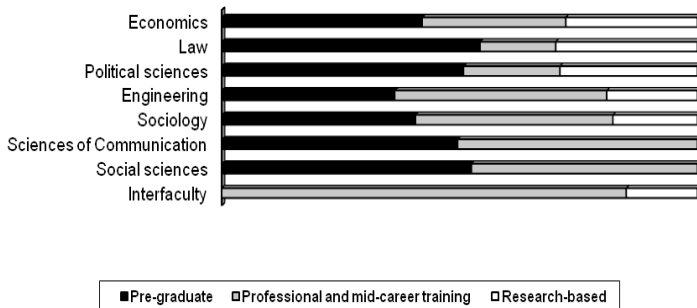
Figure 6: Distribution of PA programmes by type of faculty



The programmes can be pre-graduate, professional and mid-career training, and research-oriented. An overview of their distribution across the faculties is given in Figure 7. Professional training is very often organized

jointly by two or more faculties and it is prevalent in communication faculties, where we have not found research-based programmes in PA. On the contrary, research or doctoral programmes have a significant weight at the faculties of law, political science and economics.

Figure 7: The distribution (%) of programme types across faculties



In the framework of undergraduate education, it is worth distinguishing between single courses and degrees (either Bachelor's or Master's programmes). The existence of specific degrees in PA could exemplify a more sustainable or »institutionalized« interest in the topic. It is the case with political science faculties (39.3%), as well as economics (33.1%) and law (16%) (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Undergraduate programmes by faculty

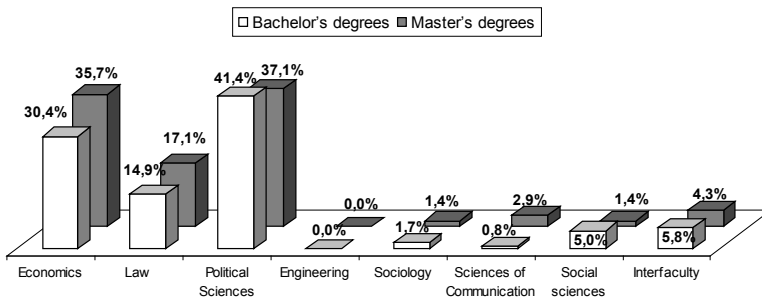
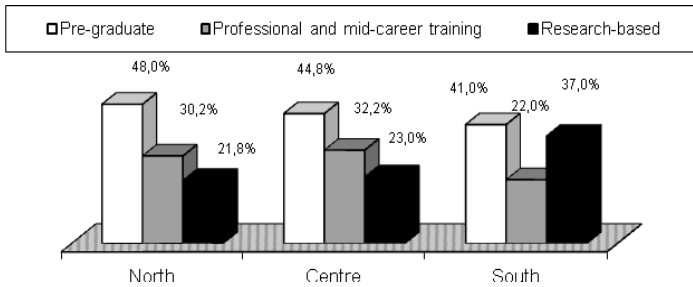


Figure 9 shows the distribution of programmes in north, central and south Italy. Southern universities are distinguished by a greater emphasis on research-based programmes compared to professional training.

Figure 9: Geographical distribution (%) of program types

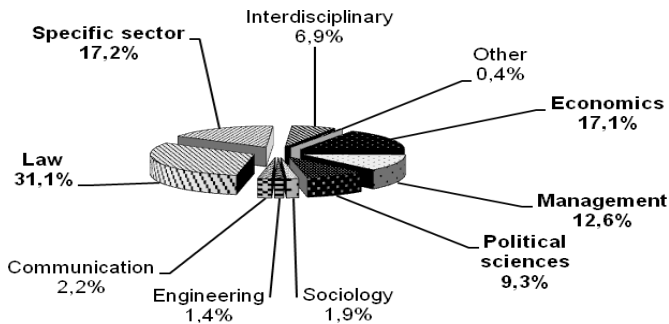


## 5.2. The Disciplinary Character of PA Education Programmes

While information on faculties presented in the previous paragraph is interesting, it is even more so to describe PA programmes in terms of their disciplinary character.

What we find is a more balanced picture, with law-oriented programmes counting for 31%, economics and management counting together for 29.7% and political science and sociology for 11.2% (Figure 10).

Figure 10: The disciplinary character of PA programmes



The distribution of PA programs inside the disciplinary areas is not homogeneous. Figure 11 provides more detail. It is easy to detect that law-oriented programmes concentrate on pre-graduate studies, while professional and mid-career training is quite underdeveloped in this disciplinary

area. This may be explained by the fact that Italian civil servants mostly graduated in law and want to develop other kind of competences.<sup>17</sup>

There is the high rate of first- and second-level master’s programmes focused on the administration and governance of specific policy sectors and characterized by a special kind of interdisciplinarity developed around policy problems.

Finally, if we consider the weight of PhD programmes as an indicator predicting the development of the disciplinary area, we can notice that economics and law are placed well ahead, followed by political science and management.

Figure 11: The disciplinary character of PA programmes by type

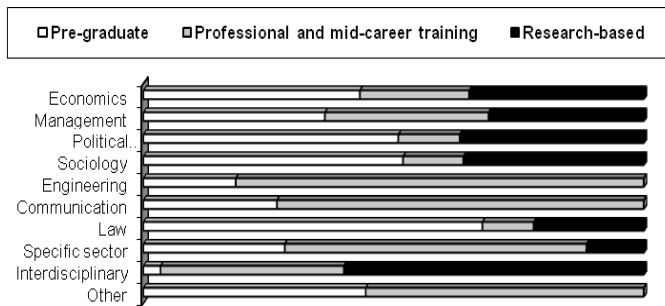
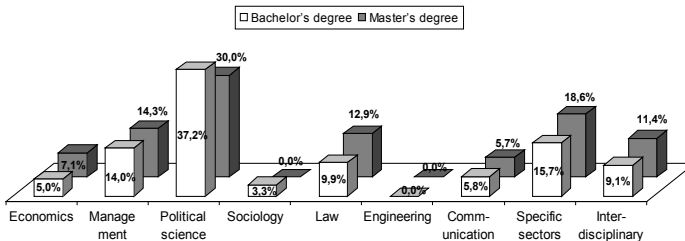


Figure 12 analyses Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees according to their disciplinary orientation. While the political science approach prevails like in the previous figure, other disciplinary areas such as sociology or even law and economics, seldom recognize PA as a specific degree topic.

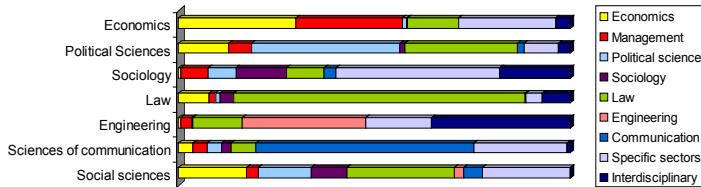
Figure 12: Disciplinary orientation of undergraduate degrees



<sup>17</sup> A survey of the Italian Department of Public Administration could be usefully recalled. As many as 99% of the 1,588 senior civil servants interviewed in 2003 felt to lack managerial competences.

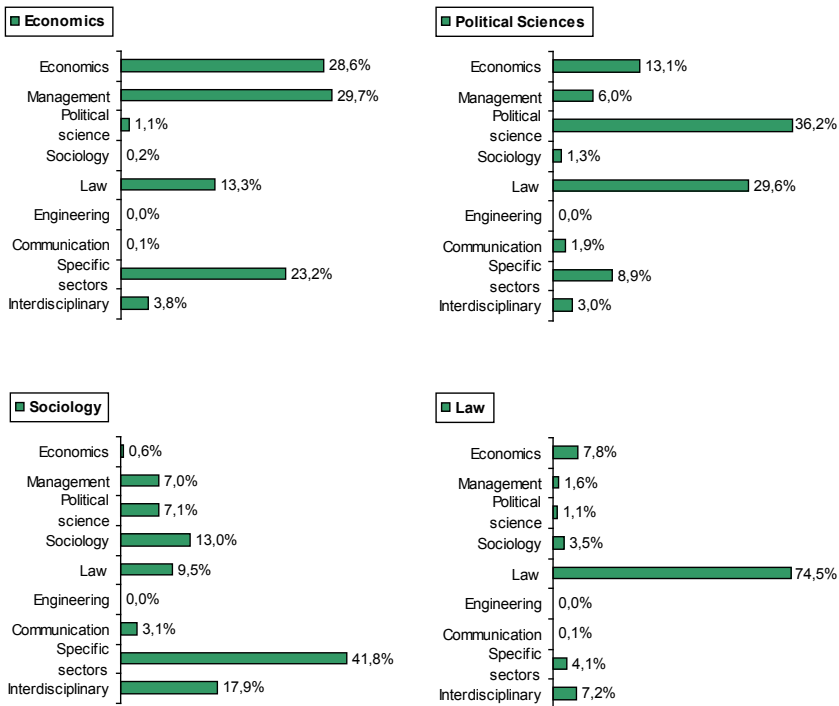
Another area of analysis is the relationship between the type of faculty and the disciplinary area. A general overview is given in Figure 13 and Figure 14 provides a detailed picture.

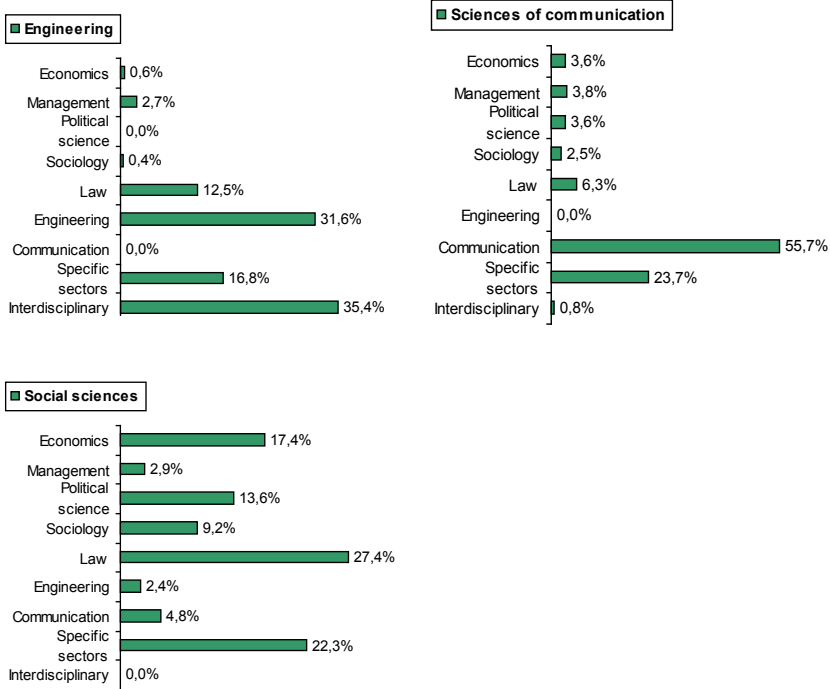
Figure 13: The disciplinary character of PA programmes by faculty



The faculties of law and sciences of communication are the most homogeneous. Law-oriented programmes in PA are the most present at different faculties and play a central role at the faculties of political and social sciences.

Figure 14: The disciplinary character of PA programmes by type of faculty





The analysis of the disciplinary character of PA programmes by geographical area (Table 3) highlights the major weight of law-oriented programmes in almost all regions, with the exception of Lombardia, Campania and Sicilia, which have a strong presence of economic programmes; Toscana and Calabria with an emphasis on managerial programmes; and Abruzzo where the relevance of the political science approach is registered.

Table 3: The disciplinary character of PA programmes by geographical area (%)

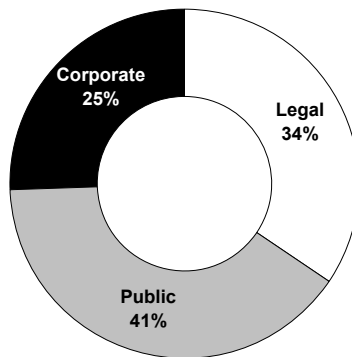
	Econ.	Mngt	Pol. science	Sociology	Law	Engineering	Communication	Specific sectors	Interdisciplinary
Lombardia	20.6	9.7	10.1	0.7	28.3	1.2	2.6	17.1	9.8
Lazio	13.4	15.2	9.8	1.3	34.4	1.5	1.5	11.0	11.7
Toscana	6.8	21.3	9.4	0.3	33.4	2.4	4.6	21.5	0.3
Campania	40.3	8.2	10.0	0.9	28.3	2.9	0.0	9.4	0.0
Marche	5.3	9.1	6.3	14.0	31.6	0.0	3.8	0.0	29.9
Sicilia	39.4	16.1	5.9	0.0	33.5	4.7	0.0	0.4	0.0

Piemonte	11.4	4.5	14.5	1.1	21.4	0.0	0.7	37.7	8.6
Veneto	10.4	10.7	4.7	0.0	22.6	1.2	0.4	34.0	16.1
Emilia R.	10.3	32.1	7.9	0.0	34.2	0.0	0.0	15.0	0.5
Puglia	13.7	6.6	5.7	0.8	33.1	0.3	0.8	6.4	32.6
Abruzzo	7.6	6.7	43.3	2.0	18.3	0.0	7.1	15.0	0.0
Calabria	6.8	52.9	0.0	0.6	20.5	0.0	0.0	19.3	0.0
Molise	3.7	4.5	3.9	3.9	53.6	1.9	2.2	26.3	0.0
Umbria	6.2	14.0	13.2	0.0	43.5	0.0	14.4	8.8	0.0
Friuli V.G.	6.1	4.9	9.5	3.2	36.4	1.9	0.0	0.0	38.1
Liguria	16.6	6.5	19.1	2.7	52.0	0.0	0.0	3.1	0.0
Sardegna	7.9	6.0	12.0	0.0	71.8	0.0	0.0	2.3	0.0
Trentino AA	5.7	2.9	6.9	10.3	70.1	2.9	0.0	1.1	0.0
Valle D'Aosta	17.1	20.0	8.6	0.0	45.7	0.0	0.0	8.6	0.0
Basilicata	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.8	38.9	0.0	33.3	0.0

### 5.3. PA Education Clusters

This paragraph is focused on the distribution of PA programmes according to the three clusters identified by the literature: public, legal and corporate. As already mentioned, Italy is put in the legalistic group of countries. Our research shows that the public cluster is the prevalent one in Italy (Figure 15).

Figure 15: PA education clusters

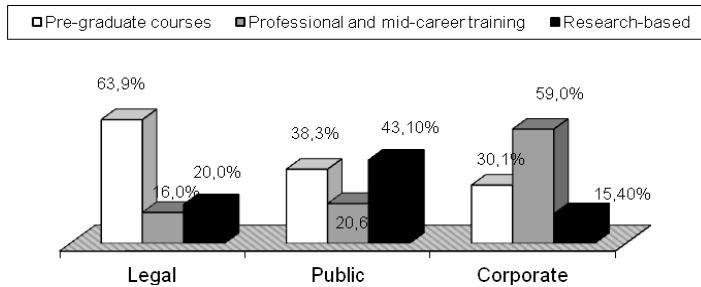


This data, however, should be put in opposition to the information regarding the disciplinary orientation (Figure 10). The result is that law is the predominant disciplinary area (31.1%), but not the main cluster, which is the public one with 41%.

This can be easily explained by considering the high homogeneity of the legal cluster (matching with law) and the high fragmentation of the other two clusters, especially the public one, split into several different disciplines.

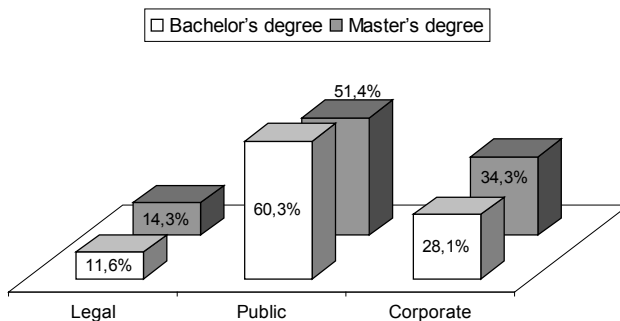
A closer look suggests some other differences in the composition of each cluster. While there is a prominence of pre-graduate programmes in the legal cluster, in the public cluster there is a strong relevance of PhD programmes, and in the corporate cluster, the emphasis is on professional training (Figure 16).

Figure 16: PA education clusters by programme type



However, pre-graduate education inside the legal cluster takes place through single courses, while it is more »structured« into BAs and MAs in the other two clusters, particularly in the public one (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Undergraduate degrees by disciplinary cluster

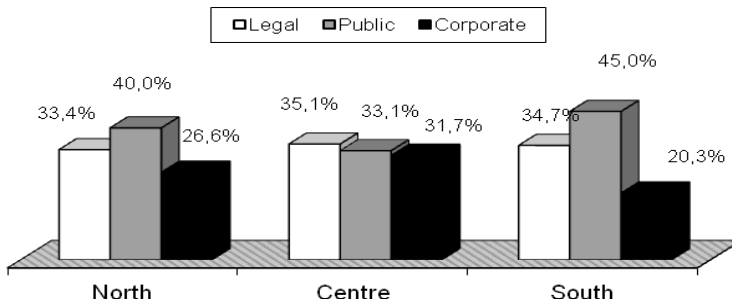


The clusters can also be analysed by considering their relative weight inside the three classical geographic areas. A north-centre-south compari-



son shows a greater weight of the public cluster in the south and in the north, and an equilibrated interest towards the three clusters in the centre. The corporate cluster is strong in central Italy and particularly weak in the south (Figure 18).

Figure 18: PA education clusters: internal distribution by geographic area



There is also a difference between the 20 Italian regions, as shown in the next map (Figure 19 and Table 4).

There does not seem to be an association between administrative cultures and traditions on the one hand, and educational clusters on the other. Lombardia and Veneto are often considered in the historical literature as regions that embody the Austro-Hungarian derived *Rechtsstaat* tradition. We should therefore expect to find the dominance of the legal cluster. Nevertheless, the public cluster includes over 44% of PA programmes in Lombardia, compared to the 34% of law; and 35% in Veneto (compared to 35.1% in law).

The Piemonte and Sardinia regions, both characterized by bureaucratic Napoleonic traditions, show differentiated situations. In Piemonte, we find a harmonized picture with the prevalence of the corporate cluster (42.9%). In Sardinia, the legal cluster is decisively predominant with 69.7%.

Finally, the weak-state model inherited by Lazio and Sicily and similar to the Vatican State and the Two Sicilies Realm is characterized by a greater weight of the public cluster.

Figure 19: PA education clusters: regional distribution



Table 4: PA education clusters: regional distribution (%)

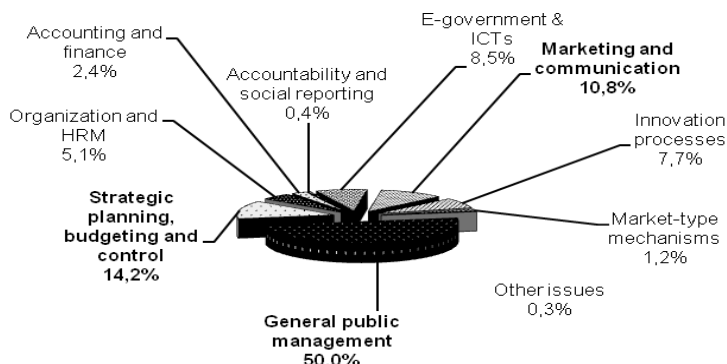
	Legal	Public	Corporate
Basilicata	27.8	00	72.2
Valle D'Aosta	45.7	25.7	28.6
Trentino Alto Adige	68.9	25.6	5.6
Sardegna	69.7	19.9	10.4
Liguria	53.5	40.0	6.5
Friuli Venezia Giulia	36.4	56.9	6.8
Calabria	30.2	28.0	41.8
Umbria	45.1	21.6	33.3
Molise	53.6	12.7	33.7
Abruzzo	25.1	59.7	15.3
Puglia	39.1	52.4	8.5
Emilia Romagna	35.1	19.7	45.2
Veneto	35.1	35.0	29.9
Piemonte	34.7	22.4	42.9
Sicilia	33.5	45.7	20.8
Campania	28.3	57.7	14.0
Marche	32.6	41.8	25.6
Toscana	35.9	18.3	45.8
Lazio	34.6	40.4	25.0
Lombardia	31.7	44.5	23.8

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A further analysis of the corporate cluster with reference to the programmes' specific subject areas highlighted the strong presence of pro-

grammes dealing with public management in general (over 50%), followed by programmes in strategic planning and control, and programmes in marketing and communication (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Subjects taught in corporate programmes



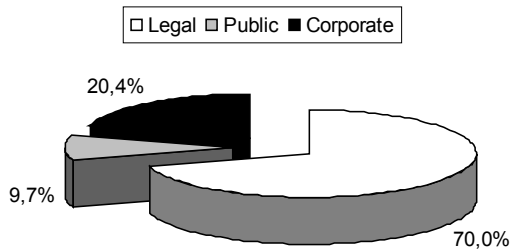
Perhaps the most noteworthy is the group of programmes in innovation processes, entirely based on professional training programmes or masters'. Professional training is also prevalent in the other main groups, with general public management programmes including 49.4% of masters and programs in strategic planning and in marketing and communication each including 63% of masters.

## 5.4. Specificities of PA Education in Italy

The disciplinary approach adopted in teaching issues such as accounting and administrative science merits a further analysis.

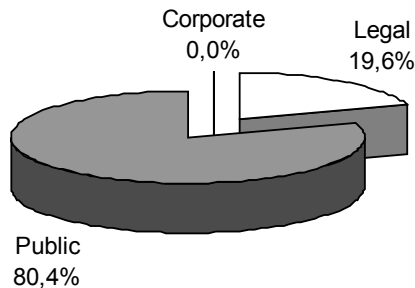
We would expect accounting (public, regional or national) to be taught mainly at the faculties of economics and to adopt a managerial approach. However, 70% of the programmes in accounting are characterized by a legal approach.

Figure 21: The disciplinary orientation of accounting



Programmes entitled *Scienza dell'amministrazione* include only undergraduate courses and one Bachelor's degree at the faculty of political sciences of the University of Palermo. Eighty per cent of the courses pertain to the political science disciplinary area (therefore to the public cluster) and are mainly taught at the faculties of political science. Nonetheless, there are nearly 20% of the courses taught according to the legalistic approach (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Disciplinary orientation of the courses titled *Administrative Sciences*



## 6. Key Findings and Areas for Further Research

PA as an academic field of study is going through a strong evolution in Italy. It can be affirmed that Italy is at the beginning of an important shift from the legalistic approach. However, it is not possible to identify the direction of this evolution, although the continental European approach, based on political and administrative sciences, seems to exert a

stronger influence in comparison to the Anglo-Saxon and partly Nordic managerial approach. On the one hand, there is empirical evidence that the public/political science cluster is the prevalent one, on the other the management/corporate cluster is undergoing an accelerated and sustainable development.

*The role of the main faculties.* Findings from the statistical analysis highlight a strong development of PA programmes at the faculties that are not law faculties. A larger number of PA programmes is registered at the faculties of economics (over 37%) and political science. There is a more frequent presence of BAs and MAs at such faculties, especially at political science faculties, while the faculties of law tend to focus on single pre-graduate courses.

A relevant difference between these three main faculties is the level of homogeneity: extremely high at law; and scant at economics and political science.

*The disciplinary orientation.* As far as the disciplinary orientation is concerned, legal programmes in PA are generally prevalent (31%) and widespread at the faculties of economics and political science, too.

Surprisingly enough, PA programmes that have a management perspective amount to nearly 13% and are placed between the economics (17%) and the political science approach (9%). The management approach seems to be particularly strong in central regions.

However, if we aggregate the disciplinary approaches in clusters, as suggested by the relevant literature (Hajnal, 2003), we find that the public cluster, mainly based on political science, is the main one (41%), both in terms of the quantity of programmes and in terms of emphasis on doctoral education.

*Geographical differences.* The geographical comparison of the 20 Italian regions has highlighted the underdevelopment of PA programmes in southern Italy, concerning mainly undergraduate and professional training.

*Other specificities.* Other specificities of PA education in Italy include two topics: public accounting on the one hand, and administrative sciences on the other. The former is commonly dealt with by adopting a legal approach (70%) and the weak position of the managerial approach is highlighted.

Administrative science is mainly approached from the angle of political science (80%), although law plays an important role (20%).

*Areas for further research.* Given the dynamics of the scenario, this statistical analysis represents a static, yet complete, photograph. Therefore, it

should be updated in the mid-term in order to monitor the development of the different disciplinary approaches and clusters.

Furthermore, the research could benefit from other information such as the number of enrolled students. Data regarding student placements and career success, and regarding the relative success of PA graduates in securing government employment would also be valuable.

The database could be usefully expanded so as to consider professional training institutes and academies operating at the national and regional levels. The main, at the national level, include the National School of Public Administration (SSPA), the High School of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (SSEF) and the High School of the Ministry of the Interior. Other important areas for further research include the comparison with other countries, especially with Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Greece, in which PA education is experiencing similar evolution.

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*Embracing Disciplinary Diversity:  
Public Administration Education in Italy*

*Summary*

*The paper presents a statistical analysis exploring public administration education at Italian universities. It aims at verifying whether the administrative law approach to university-based public administration teaching is still prevalent in Italy, as stated by the literature, as well as the extent of development of other disciplinary orientations. The research also highlights the main specificities of public administration education in Italy with reference to the disciplinary character, the geographical distribution, the type and level of PA programmes, etc. It aims at describing how universities are adjusting curricula in relation to public sector modernization by comparing the main faculties (economics and management, law, political science, sociology, engineering, sciences of communication, social sciences) of all Italian universities. Information from 204 faculties of 72 universities has been gathered and 2,198 education programmes at different levels have been registered and classified. Overall evidence suggests that the legal cluster, including but not limited to administrative law, is not the prevalent approach in teaching public administration in Italy. The public cluster – mainly political sciences and public economy approach – is widespread in Italian universities. Furthermore, there is a strong, yet more recent, development of the managerial approach.*

*Keywords: public administration, education, training, disciplinary approaches, administrative culture*

*Prihvatanje raznolikosti discipline:  
Obrazovanje za javnu upravu u Italiji*

*Sažetak*

*U radu se predstavlja statistička analiza obrazovanja za javnu upravu na talijanskim sveučilištima. Cilj rada jest potvrditi da u Italiji na sveučilišnim studijima javne uprave još uvijek prevladava upravno-pravni pristup, kao što navodi literatura. Nadalje, želi se utvrditi do koje su se mjere razvile ostale discipline s područja javne uprave. Istraživanje skreće pozornost na glavne posebnosti obrazovanja za javnu upravu u Italiji s obzirom na obilježja discipline, geografsku raspodijeljenost, tip i stupanj obrazovnih programa za javnu upravu, itd. Opisuje se način na koji sveučilišta prilagođavaju kurikulare okolnostima modernizacije javnog sektora tako da se uspoređuju glavni fakulteti na kojima se predaju programi vezani za javnu upravu (ekonomski fakulteti i fakulteti za menadžment, pravni fakulteti, političke znanosti, društvene znanosti, itd.) svih talijanskih sveučilišta. Prikupljeni su podaci s 204 fakulteta koji su dio 72 sveučilišta te se pronašlo i razvrstalo 2198 obrazovnih programa svih razina. Utvrđeno je da pravna skupina predmeta, uključujući i upravno pravo (ali ne samo njega), nije dominantna u pristupu nastavi javne uprave u Italiji. Naprotiv, na talijanskim sveučilištima prevladava pristup obilježen disciplina-  
ma poput političkih znanosti i ekonomije javnog sektora. Konačno, nedavno se počeo razvijati i menadžerski pristup obrazovanju za javnu upravu.*

*Ključne riječi: javna uprava, obrazovanje, pristupi, upravna kultura*