

# Italian university: (unfortunately) a closed system

Daniele Checchi

economist of education

↕ (internal contradiction)

(temporarily) dean of Faculty of Political Science

State University of Milan

<http://checchi.economia.unimi.it>

## The Italian University system

- \* centrally regulated
- \* centrally financed
- \* student tuitions account to less than 10% of total costs
- \* public employment (no local or individual bargaining of salaries – impossibility of firing)
- \* very few private universities, mainly in economics (Bocconi, Luiss, Bozen) that have more flexibility and partially hire under temporary contracts.

\* recent move to fight the brain drain of academics: Italian universities are allowed to hire directly from foreign departments in an equivalent position (up to 10% of their staff), and the cost is born by the Central government.

### Three permanent positions:

- ✓ assistant professor (*ricercatore*)  $\approx$  1500€ net per 13 months
- ✓ associate professor (*professore associato di 2° fascia*)  $\approx$  2000€ net per 13 months
- ✓ full professor (*professore ordinario di 1° fascia*)  $\approx$  2500€ net per 13 months

### One temporary position:

- ✓ post-doc (*assegnista di ricerca*) – ordinarily extends 2+2 –  $\approx$  1300€ net per 12 months

# The recruitment system

⇒ given public employment nature, hiring is through public competition (*concorso*). A *concorso* requires

- ✓ public announcement (permanent positions are to be published in *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, temporary positions should be posted in *Albi rettorali* and often in universities websites)
- ✓ an official application form and other procedural rules (application to be received by, xerox of an id card, publications enclosed, reference letters are to be ignored)
- ✓ an examining committee (elected in the case of permanent positions, appointed by Rectors in the case of temporary positions)

- ✓ a personal interview (temporary position), a written examination (two tests for assistant professorship), an interview and a lesson to the committee (for associate professorship)
- ✓ public minutes of the committee meetings (typically published in university websites), which can be opposed in court in case of irregularity

⇒ once appointed, the winner is (almost) tenured for the rest of her life (a unique assessment after 3 years)

⇒ after initial assessment, salaries start growing automatically 5% every two years until retirement.

## Working loads:

- \* Assistant professor: 350 hours per year, possibly including some teaching (left unspecified in the law, to be determined by bilateral bargaining)
- \* Associate or full professor: 350 hours per year, including at least one course, possibly two, lasting 100 hours.

No official assessment of research activity.

However:

- ⇒ promotions are related to publications
- ⇒ research funds are correlated to publications
- ⇒ academic reputation depends on publications

## Current prospects

- ✓ openings for professorships have been blocked two years ago, due to excessive expansion of professors in local competitions (sand-glass). Waiting for new selection rules.
- ✓ new openings for assistant professorships announced by Ministry for Education (1000 in 2008, 2000 in 2009 and 4000 in 2010)
- ✓ yet unclear the selection mechanism (whether national or local, possible presence of foreign committee members, whether permanent or temporary but renewable only once)
- ✓ post-doc positions offered to foreigners have expanded, thanks to EC rule. No official site for vacancies, depending on each discipline.

- ✓ some private institutions (often bank sponsored – examples: Ente Einaudi – Rome, Collegio Carlo Alberto – Turin, IGIER – Milan, IMTQ - Lucca) offer visiting positions. But they are typically disconnected from universities.

## Open to external competition ?

It depends on the degree of international competition (the value of the outside option), which in turns is associated to

⇒ measurement of output (impact factor, official ranking of journals)

⇒ publishing in English (or in other foreign languages)

⇒ whether the selecting committees are made of people who studied abroad.

My personal perception of the degree of internationalisation is  
Economics > Sociology > Political Science > History > Law