

The Pizzigoni
Experimental Method
in Sara Bertuzzi's
Diaries

The Pizzigoni Experimental Method in Sara Bertuzzi's Diaries:

*Fundamentals of Childhood
Education*

By

Sandra Chistolini

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On the cover: Autograph diaries of Sara Bertuzzi donated to Sandra Chistolini and stored in the Pizzigoni Fund

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INTRODUCTION

This second volume, dedicated to the Nursery School of Giuseppina Pizzigoni (1870-1947), is enriched by the documentation of Sara Bertuzzi (1922-2016), a disciple of Pizzigoni, and shows the ongoing relevance of the original educational choice.

Sara Bertuzzi is recognised by *Opera Pizzigoni* and by leaders and experts of the experimental method of the Pizzigoni Scuola Rinnovata in Milan, as the sole expert in the application of the method in nursery school, known today as pre-school. Piera Parmigiani, a direct co-worker of Giuseppina Pizzigoni, and Sara Bertuzzi, coming a decade later, were colleagues at the Pizzigoni Scuola Rinnovata and were among the best followers of the method in pre-school, meaning both their own training and the preparation of new teachers in the specific courses intended for the purpose. The beginning of the third millennium saw the start-up of the activity of research, collection, cataloguing, study and training concerning this important pedagogical reality that has been moving through Italian schools for over a century and is now recognised internationally.

Starting from the pedagogy of Giuseppina Pizzigoni and what was achieved by Sara Bertuzzi, during the Spring 2020 in this time of epidemiological emergency of COVID-19, remote learning was implemented in some pre-schools of the 13th Municipal District of Rome, a leader of the Outdoor School Project. This fact, experienced together, was the true centre of interest for ethically educating to live well. The Coronavirus has become a further experimental test of how fact becomes an occasion and each occasion presents a valid educational process.

The research on pre-schools, supported by a largely experimental method, suffers an absence of written evidence and concrete proof of the results reached in the teaching process. The Pizzigoni Fund is trying to offer concrete replies to the lack of knowledge about the scientific set-up of the method.

This contribution recognises the fundamental value of the education of children aged 3 to 5 years, opening thoughts about the vastness of the documentation made by the educator, teacher and headmistress, who was passionate about a method, in which art and science are perfectly combined.

The pedagogical documents were sent from Milan to Rome in order to train teachers and are catalogued on numerous descriptive sheets, often accompanied by pictures; they can be found in the University Library of Roma Tre University, by typing in the name “Fondo Pizzigoni”, created especially for defining the entire collection in Rome.

In particular, the reports and diaries allow one to understand the ideas and principles supporting the reasoning, in retrospect, about the method.

The Pizzigoni Fund concerns itself with pedagogical and scientific research on pre-schools and, in this respect, is the only institutional structure dealing with this period of life of children. Attention to what educators and teachers produce, for the purpose of making education as respectful of the child as possible, reveals a deep-seated competence and preparation, of which teachers avail themselves to support the delicate process of humanisation that renders children free and responsible.

The day of 15 October 2020 saw the setting up of the *Associazione per la diffusione del Fondo Pizzigoni ETS*, with Sandra Chistolini as founder and president, and Matteo Villanova and Rosa Maria Lacerenza as founding members.

PART ONE

A PROJECT CONSOLIDATED OVER TIME

1. THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH OF GIUSEPPINA PIZZIGONI

1. The Pizzigoni Fund

The research on the school of Giuseppina Pizzigoni falls within a vast scientific survey on method schools that began in 1987 at the Chair of Prof. Mauro Laeng and specifically refers to Indian educators, Tagore and Gandhi, and the Waldorf School. The study of the latter continued for over thirty years, resulting in innumerable publications (Chistolini, 2018b). Method schools allow for understanding the depth of the founders, leading figures of great pedagogical insight, who continue to teach us all.

On the other hand, the idea of the Fund had already been launched during my academic life, with the setting up, in 1992, of the Birmingham Fund (Pierangeli, 2014) at the University of Macerata, where I received the nomination of associate professor. The University Library of Macerata performs excellent work of updating the heritage received.

The origins of the Pizzigoni Fund date back to 2007, after years of research and study flowing into the documental heritage stored by Sara Bertuzzi, as well as original documents and the pedagogical and teaching materials of Giuseppina Pizzigoni, like the didactic pearls and cutting out exercises.

The Pizzigoni Scuola Rinnovata in Milan received notification of the Pizzigoni Fund at the moment the idea was conceived. Friendly relations and reciprocal amiability with the Chairperson of *Opera Pizzigoni*, Flavia Maddalena, with the headmistress, Sara Bertuzzi, and with other teachers and educators close to Sara, such as Marina Salvadori, Graziella Vignati, Chiara Oliani, Enrica Gibellini, Paola Tansini and Graziella Drudi, were fundamental in taking the decision that it would be appropriate to store the material and make it available to young teachers.

Joining in our talks, at various times, were: a colleague, Olga Cassottana Rossi (1988; 2004), full professor of general pedagogy at Genoa University and author of two volumes on the Pizzigoni Scuola Rinnovata Elementare; and educators and the head teacher, who, in Milan, had applied the Pizzigoni experimental method for decades in pre-schools in various

structures, including special schools. The results of the research were periodically published in articles and then in books (Chistolini, 2009; 2010). In particular, the priority reference is the essay, *L'asilo infantile di Giuseppina Pizzigoni. Bambino e scuola in una pedagogia femminile del Novecento*, of 2009.

Relations between the Scuola Rinnovata and *Opera Pizzigoni*, from 2004, were of unsparing collaboration and great respect. Moreover, one must remember that Sara Bertuzzi was an active component of Opera Pizzigoni. In particular, for over a decade, and jointly with Sara and Marina, the scientific research was guided in such a way as to give substance to the Pizzigoni Fund.

Remember that Opera Pizzigoni is an Association for the diffusion of the Pizzigoni method, with its office in Milan, set up as a charitable trust through Royal Decree no. 2116 of 23 October 1927; it took the name Opera Pizzigoni through Royal Decree no. 1460 of 28 September 1933. The new by-laws of Opera Pizzigoni of 30 March 2015 cite the Historic Archives containing documents, photographs, papers and correspondence, stored there and also intended to promote the study of the Pizzigoni Method (Opera Pizzigoni Association, 2020).

Having considered the long silence about the experimental method employed in pre-schools, I seriously set to work and continue to work, so that the pedagogical ideas of Giuseppina Pizzigoni become known. From the beginning, she also examined childhood in her project, from infancy to occupational training after elementary school (Tongiorgi, 1937, p. 17).

Specifically, the constant commitment to the recovery, collection, care, orderly layout, cataloguing, protection, national and international (Chistolini, 2015a; 2017; 2019b), teachers' training and study of childhood, in the productions of those who made the method relevant in over half a century of the Italian school, made indispensable the setting up of a space dedicated to pedagogical and cultural undertaking, deserving of specific academic attention.

2. Cognitive heritage

The Pizzigoni Fund is a *Pedagogical heritage of documents on the Pizzigoni experimental method in pre-school education*, and is a tangible sign of my in-progress research in the scientific field of General and Social Pedagogy, at the Department of Education at Roma Tre University.

The publications produced constantly cite the Pizzigoni Fund, known by its original name, 'Il Fondo Pizzigoni', in Italy and abroad (2015a;

2015b).

The Pizzigoni Fund appears in many dissertations in Primary Sciences of Education and Sciences of Education. For years, University colleagues on several continents have cited it as such, having visited the Fund and appreciated its unique, rare value. No place in the world has a Fund like this one, dedicated to the productions of children and their teachers, with most of the materials digitized and available online at the University Library. Everyone can learn about it through the detailed description on each catalogue sheet. The sheets have been meticulously written through the sharing of teachers in Milan, our travels and various forms of contact. I tried to enhance the pedagogical work of teachers and children, prevented the destruction of the culture of childhood and received permission for the entrance of this Heritage into the University, where I work, so that everyone can familiarise themselves, see and touch the experimental method of Giuseppina Pizzigoni, the rediscovery of the pedagogical value, which has meant so much in schools throughout the world.

I modestly consider myself the caretaker of the Heritage from various points of view: for the attention to its organisation, for its protection, for its disclosure, for the development and growth of the method. The Department of Education approved the setting up of the Fund at the Board Meeting of 17/7/2012. It is my moral obligation to consider myself responsible for the Pizzigoni Fund, because educators, teachers and headmistress have entrusted it to me and handed over the evidence to continue to present it to new generations of teachers, immediately, without interruption, and having removed all obstacles to its well-deserved visibility. For these reasons, provision has been made for the Heritage to be online, with access from the University Library of Roma Tre University.

3. Cataloguing and storing of the material

Between 2011 and 2018, two deposits were made into the University Library by ‘Società Memoria Servizi Archivistici Srl’, with the cataloguing that had begun to systematically put it in order since 2007. The ‘Società Cienne Snc’ of Barbara Ciangola and ‘C. Laboratorio di Legatoria e Restauro’ provided for a small restoration and construction of gilded containers for better storage of objects, books and documents about pedagogy and teaching up to 2020.

The Pizzigoni Fund is situated at the Department of Education, at Via del Castro Pretorio, 20, 00185 Rome, Italy. It is accessible for consultation by teachers and researchers and supports the knowledge of pedagogy of new schools and progressive education (Pizzigoni, 1911; Montessori, 1913;

Friso, 1917; 1930; Decroly, Boon, 1921; Baker, 1927; Casotti, 1931, Porter, 1931; Kilpatrick, Boyd, Dewey, 1933?!, Washburne, 1952; Mencarelli, 1954; Andreolo, 1967). As the educator and psychologist Pier Francesco Nicoli (1947, P.141) reminds us, it is Adolphe Ferrière himself (1930) who links the Scuola Rinnovata to the movement of new schools, as a valid example of schools active in Europe. In American pedagogic literature, Pizzigoni is cited within the context of curricular innovation, understood as the creation of a study programme adapted to the construction of a democratic society (Tienken, 2017, pp. 124-125).

The Pizzigoni Fund contributes to the knowledge of new education in Italy, above all for the part of the research pertaining to the Pizzigoni experimental method that is not always cited in thematic bibliographies. This occurs, for example, in the selection of the bibliography about new education drawn up by the National Library of France (Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2018), in which the Scuola Rinnovata of Pizzigoni does not appear.

Giuseppe Lombardo Radice and Luigi Credaro (Nicoli, 1947, pp. 17 and 113-114) saw the Scuola Rinnovata as an important teaching reform of the early 20th century, for the concept of the child and profile of the teacher (Agazzi, 1987?, p. 17). The associations with R.M. Binder (1903) of Columbia University, A. Ferrière (1909) from Switzerland, O. Karstädt from Prussia (1920) and M.A. Carroi (1936) from France place Pizzigoni in the European and international context. The unique, futuristic model of the outdoor school places Pizzigoni in the European tradition of New Schools and Independent Schools, like the English school, *Abbotsholme*, of Cecile Reddie (1858-1932), the French school, *l'École des Roches* of Edmond Demolins (1852-1907), and the movement of the *Reformpädagogik*, with houses or hearths of education in the country, known as *Landerziehungsheime*, conceived by the German pedagogist, Hermann Lietz (1868-1919), and also diffused in Switzerland (Reale, Antiseri, Laeng, 1986, pp. 659-706).

The Fund comprises 389 books and 471 objects located in room 0.14 and displayed in 7 crystal showcases and large-size cabinets. It can be consulted online, thanks to 456 descriptive sheets in the University Library, most of which are provided with digital images of the individual objects (Chistolini, 2018a).

The originals can be viewed by appointment agreed to with Prof. Sandra Chistolini at sandra.chistolini@uniroma3.it. The documents originate from the Nursery School Programme of the Pizzigoni Scuola Rinnovata and extends to the production of material created to fully achieve the pedagogical ideal realised by the Italian pedagogist. The proposed project is meant to promote the scientific knowledge of the

method through special *post lauream* courses, also in English, and endeavours to theoretically and practically link the modern paradigms *outdoor education* to the matrix and spirit of renewal of the school (Chistolini, 2019a; 2020a; 2020b; 2020c). There are plans for translations of some of the papers into foreign languages.

4. Insight into the experimental method

Research on the experimental method, as the only possible one for a school being renewed, originated in about 1883, at time when part of the intellectuals, careful about teachers' training, perceived a clear contradiction between preparation *a priori* of teachers educated in a normal school and the need to restore the school environment, in which activity and doing prevail. A school that educated about feelings and volition, in addition to intelligence, could be proposed by outlining a "new plan of social education", perceived by school leadership as a significant turning point already present in the Programmes of Aristide Gabelli of 1888. Neither should the fact be neglected that the famous text on *The teaching method in elementary schools in Italy*, already appeared 1880 under the original title, *About the intellectual habits derived from the intuitive method and the opportunity to employ it to a larger extent in Italian schools, where it has not yet been done, hereby mentioning the easiest and less costly means of achieving this aim* dealt with the report presented by Gabelli in Rome, in the 9th Italian Pedagogical Congress, and precisely in the section of Nursery Schools and Kindergartens, as well as elementary schools, as Enza Carrara mentions in the Forward to the method that appeared in 'La Nuova Italia Editrice' in the first edition of 1932 (Gabelli, 197116, p. IX). Critical thinker and seeker of the truth of the real, Gabelli speaks of a close tie between the school and life:

The entire secret of the success of a school is knowing how to draw profit from the instruction that each child has received prior to entering it, that is, a continuation of the instruction in the school instead of breaking the thread of ideas the child gathered outside of it. The less the separation is between school and the life the child led until the day it set foot in the school, the more the instruction of the teacher will be similar to the instruction they received from nature, the more they will enjoy it, and therefore will profit from it. In fact, we are not, nor could we be curious about the unknown. It is necessary that one thing be known by half, so that the desire arises to know about the whole. In other words, we learn voluntarily only when we are left believing that we almost already knew what is being taught us. So, the pleasure that instantly springs from self-love revives and holds our attention. With this sole flattering stratagem,

half the path has already been traversed.

But what was the life the child led before entering school? That of the senses that, one might say, were only their teachers (Gabelli, 1972, p. 281).

In 1899, Ugo Pizzoli (1863-1934) founded the Laboratory of scientific pedagogy. In 1907, the laboratory was annexed to the Scientific-Literary Academy of Milan (Passione, 2012) under the direction of Zaccaria Treves, who also appeared among the supporters and founding members of the Scuola Rinnovata (Scuola Rinnovata, 1920, p. 3). The activity of the laboratory in Milan was made known by Wilhelm August Lay (1906, p. 113), as wrote Gilbert de Landsheere (1988, p. 85), and was considered one of the most flourishing in Europe, with an intensity of work above that recordable in Germany at the time, according to the survey of Caroline Hopf (2004) on the rise of experimental pedagogy in Germany.

It is interesting to note the synchronicity of the initiatives in Milan compared to the perceived necessity of rendering teaching closer to the needs of childhood and consequent urgency of effectively training teachers.

Giuseppina Pizzigoni cites passages exemplifying the method to be introduced into the school, recapturing the concept of the preparation of man "to a complete existence" of Herbert Spencer, and the idea of training "minds and men" of Aristide Gabelli (Pizzigoni, s.d., p. 7).

According to Gabelli, the lack of the right method in teaching shifts schools away from the interests of the pupils, produces pedantry and does not stimulate them to develop a passion for research. The school that attracts is the one that educates to observe, talk, write, count, measure and draw, by learning lessons from experience and one's own thought processes, a school that resembles a workshop, where pupils work together and individually with a teacher who follows, advises and guides them (Gabelli, 1948, p. 143).

Spencer, in particular, outlines a path of education that moves from the concrete to the abstract, finding motives in observing the development of humanity. Man moves forward independently, urged by the desire for knowledge and to perfect himself. This is why the process of independent study is encouraged in children, to do it themselves, thus enabling them to draw their own conclusions about what they observe and experience. There is no need to talk a lot, the importance lies in stimulating them to do things themselves and discover as much as possible by continuously seeking replies to the questions that are always posed, even by themselves, for a spontaneous activity innate to the desire to know.

What probably fascinated Pizzigoni, while studying Spencer's work, was the reference to going beyond mnemonic learning, a position supported by ascertaining how the practice of memorising had, at that

point, fallen slowly into disrepute, being useless and far from the experience of the child, who learns much better through experimentation, whether it be languages or maths, sciences or the art of drawing. Of course, it was convincing to teach by using objects to educate the child toward acquiring research as a habit of mind, behaving like a true scientist and showing how the child passes from enjoying the search for plants, during a trip to the woods, to examining the details of flowers and leaves, up to formulating innumerable questions (Spencer, 1919, pp. 63-119).

On the other hand, Gabelli remarks about training the mind through observation and experimentation were well-connected to the line of thought that the young teacher had, by then, decided to adhere to. Within this context, love of truth means an education corresponding to the degree of development of modern civilisation, abandonment of superstitions and prejudices, in order to open the mind to the adoption of behaviours that have been encountered in reality. To reply correctly to a query, it is necessary to be led by experimental testing and not by a detrimental belief that is often derived from unproven and unprovable assumption (Gabelli, 1971, p. 281).

The inversion of the terms of the education issue, which must shift from the consideration of the social value of education and abandon empty verbalism, is probably the reasoning that constantly guides the pedagogy of Pizzigoni. It must also be taken into account that, although Gabelli is considered the positivist, who had best experienced the educational issue, one can certainly not say that he dealt with it by eliminating the value aspect of education. On this point, Giuseppe Flores d'Arcais (1995, pp. 4-5) notes how, in Gabelli, it is as much the ideal of the political and civic depth represented by the fight against illiteracy, as the educational value of religion that meets human needs. Religious instruction is to be understood as flexible teaching, on which social education is built, thus forming citizens prepared to be dutiful and honest, dedicated to work and committed to their own betterment and that of others. A religion that helps to live together well (Gabelli, 1948, pp. 50-59).

At the Paris Congress of 1931, which probably dealt with the Congress on new education, Pizzigoni defended the education of religious sentiment and upheld the perfection of Christian morals constituted by the doctrine of customs and practices. Doctrine and practice are deduced from the life of Christ and the Gospel and are thus based on absolute truth. To educate morally means to learn how to live in truth and beauty; to learn work habits; to reflect on one's own inner spiritual life. For this, it is necessary to have a simple way of life, like the one we receive from nature (Nicoli, 1947, p.143).

Although drawing much from Gabelli, Pizzigoni did not concern herself with cultivating her own possible affiliation with Positivism, but had at heart the fulfilment of her own pedagogic insights, to be translated into the foundation of a school and method. When talking about habits, she had in mind an education that leads to learning ways of being and living with moral and social foundations. Education as a service to society and a society that is found again in school are processes that pursue each other to link the experience of the child, guided by the teacher, to living in continuity midst the world of family, the world of things and the world of school.

Another aspect emphasised by Pizzigoni, in clear contradiction, between the aim of rendering school truly significant for the child and, thus, active, and the prevalent educational model, far from the existential universe of childhood, is that of comparing the European school with the American school. According to the picture given by Omer Buyse (1909), schools in Europe are buildings of instruction, where children learn “something”, while schools in America are educational centres that lead to a complete physical, intellectual and moral formation. Pizzigoni believes that the judgment of Europe is harsh, although it proves to be useful, in the end, for becoming aware of the change necessary, considering that, in actual fact, the trend of European schools is to limit learning to closed classes in closed buildings. On the contrary, the experimental method calls for continuous activity and cannot be achieved through passive learning. To sit still and listen is not compatible with the movement of doing research and discovery.

2. THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE RENEWAL

1. Fundamental reasons for the reform

Starting from its early years of life, from 1911 to 1916, the Scuola Rinnovata presented its scientific results and showed, in detail, the results reached with respect to the learning method as an experimental method. Giuseppina Pizzigoni recalls the five fundamental reasons that motivated that process of pedagogical reform, supported by institutions, such as the Municipality of Milan, the Savings and Loan Bank and the Ministry of Public Education. The summary of the reasons took place in October 1916 at the Conference for educating the people organised by the Humanitarian Society (Nicoli, 1947, pp. 92-93). The *first reason* lies in the ascertainment and, thus, the critique, of the prevalence of “verbal realism” as the teaching method in schools of her time. Verbalism leaves the power of observation inert, meaning, it deprives the child of “effective activity”. One observes without actively doing anything and the procedure does not lead to any true lasting knowledge or learning by the pupil.

So, objective teaching is necessary to know about the world and how to orient oneself in it. It is necessary to guide the mind of the child to consider the things, not by overloading them with ideas, but rather contacts to the world outside that the teacher organises for educational purposes (Pizzigoni, 1929b, p. 8).

It may also be that the teacher encourages observation, but often this encouragement is without action, leaving a purely conceptual abstraction, without demonstration, without the senses reaching a complete grasp of the object of study. One talks about mountains without ever having actually seen them. It is useless to talk to children about an Alpine mountain chain if they have never seen a mountain, or about rivers to those who have never even seen a stream (Pizzigoni, 1913?!, p. 38). On the other hand, both observation and activity are to be well addressed, since they contain a kind of secret to be discovered to support learning. The secret is in the interest to be reawakened in boys and girls. It is also true that arousing interest means reaching unfailing results, because the goals are in the expectations of the school and because successes are

consequent to the application of the method itself; they are a logical consequence of it and do not require mnemonic abstracts.

The *second reason* is derived from ascertaining that the necessities of the physical and mental life of childhood are not in harmony with the necessities that scholastic life requires being followed. What happens is that the intellectual overload during the first school years initially leads to an accumulation of information and a concentration of efforts, until a sudden stop in the progress of mental forces is witnessed. The lack of a suitable balance between how much is in the organism and how much the school demands hinders following the right pace of development and, in the long run, is detrimental to childhood. The first resistance to fatigue shown in the firm will of the children to meet the requirements of the school is followed by tiredness and inattention, boredom and exhaustion. Thereafter, one can actually see how the negative affect moves forward into secondary school, in the choice of a profession, in the entire planning of one's existence and in satisfying one's expectations of happiness as a human being. The natural tendency of children is another. Their spirit is naturally "curious, restless and unthinking" and, thus, ready for action. It is better to guide teaching toward the direct participation of the pupil and to the work (Pizzigoni, 1930, pp. 3-5).

The *third reason* takes into serious consideration the fact that elementary school does not prepare toward secondary studies and not even toward life. Hence, the proposal of a study programme of use to boys and girls, for which it is appropriate that they become familiar with work in the field and in workshops, with historic and artistic traditions, that open their minds to reasoning, looking toward wide horizons to make sense of their lives and responsibly choose what to do as adults. Above all, the fundamental ideas of various subjects must have a scientific perspective, paying attention to not fragmenting what comes from the real world. This way of learning interests the child and makes them understand that instruction comes from everything and everyone. This is the idea of a school that is the world and orients the programme "toward world expansion" (Pizzigoni, 1913?!, p. 41).

The *fourth reason* pushes beyond the critique of Pizzigoni that changes the time that the children spend in school. The new school extends the hours from 9:00 to 17:00 in winter and from 8:30 to 17:00 in summer. There are many hours, but well-distributed, with a 2-hour interval of rest and play at noon and afternoon activities of music, gymnastics, garden work and walks. The class teacher finishes work at 15:30 in winter and 15:00 in summer. In the afternoon, there are teachers for specific lessons, such as music, gardening and agriculture (Pizzigoni, 1956, pp. 38-39 e pp.

93-100). In the programme of objective teaching and, specifically, the experimental method, pupils have a way of living their own natural interests that are basically immediate interests. Every child wants to learn spontaneously and has the wish to do. Studying bees and preparing the apiary; studying wheat and sowing, cultivating and harvesting the plants up to making flour; studying textile plants and obtaining thread from them. The child learns from experience, studies nature and becomes aware of the value of life. The inflexibility of the lesson is surpassed and the idea of unity of learning is introduced (Pizzigoni, 1956, p. 120).

Observe, too, that the application of the experimental method is not limited to *one lesson*, but penetrates into and connects all of them through a boundless network of references, with which one fact is linked to many others, so that the real mental powers are simultaneously exercised in a kind of gymnastics, as enjoyable as they are fruitful (Pizzigoni, 1930, p. 8).

Given these premises, the school hours are fairly distributed to position each activity at a suitable time of the day. The experimental method requires that the pupils be outdoors to study subjects that only bring learning benefits, if studied outdoors; this is because outdoors there are occasions for teaching and the means necessary to do activities and, thus, gain direct experience.

The *fifth reason* deals with the large number of pupils in each section, which does not favour the individual activity indispensable to study the subject that prepares to a sense of responsibility and social life. In the architectural planning of the Scuola Rinnovata, there are to be 12 classrooms for 400 pupils (Pizzigoni, 1913?!, pp. 36-40), that is, approximately 33 pupils per classroom. In the specifications of the *Fundamental guidelines for the institution of a Scuola Rinnovata, according to the experimental method*, a class section is to have 30 pupils. Every classroom opens onto an internal corridor as well as into the garden, thanks to French windows that allow for easily going outside. The layout of the school represents the educational environment of the Scuola Rinnovata, with all spaces planned for applying the experimental method, for example: the gym and music room, rooms for work and drawing, showers, the garden, gazebos for outdoor lessons, playing fields and other subdivisions of space necessary to the pedagogical plan of the new school (Pizzigoni, 1956, p. 34).

[illegible]

1. Ripostiglio attrezzi; 2. Deposito prodotti agricoli; 3. Palestra e sala di musica; 4. Docce; 5. Deposito biancheria sporca; 6. Lavanderia; 7. Deposito carbone; 8. Essiccatoio; 9. Silos; 10. Quadra; 11. Pollaio; 12. Conigliera; 13. Corridoio; 14. Deposito macchinari; 14. Campi da gioco; 15. Passaggi coperti; 16. Giardino; 17. Chioschi per lezioni all'aperto; 18. Aule; 19. Spogliatoio; 20. Sala maestri; 21. Direzione; 22. Segreteria; 23. Ingresso; 24. Custodia; 25. Infermeria; 26. Frutteto; 27. Refettorio; 28. Cucina; 29. Lavabi; 30. Cortile; 31. Sala da lavoro; 32. Sala da disegno; 33. Museo; 34. Campi modello; 35. Campi sperimentali; 36. Apiario; 37. Servizi.

“The Elementary School plan for 400 pupils, according to the Experimental Method”, designed by Engineer Erminio Valverti, a member of the Committee for the “Scuola Rinnovata”, is reported by Pizzigoni in the publication on the method (Pizzigoni, 1913?!, p. 38) and in the paper concerning the fundamental guidelines and programmes (Pizzigoni, 1956, p. 34). Engineer Enrico Belloni, an active partner, collaborated in realizing the project supported by the Municipality of Milan (Tongiorgi, 1937, p. 16).

There are three designs available, reported in two papers by Pizzigoni: one design is in the book of 1913, of an uncertain date, and two are in the book of 1956. They differ, because, in the book of 1913, the caption is reported on the design itself, whereas, in the book of 1956, the caption is indicated by numbers and reported below, outside of the design. The third design is also in the book of 1956 and is graphically more extensive than the previous designs, but without detailed nomenclature (Pizzigoni, 1956, p. 101). It deals basically with the same architectural project announced in 1911 (Pizzigoni, 1913?!, p. 37) at the Conference entitled “La Scuola Rinnovata according to the experimental method”.

2. Prospects of a vast educational design

The pedagogy of Giuseppina Pizzigoni clearly expresses the concept of the unitary value of education, without separation of the various levels of instruction. The guidelines of the nursery school programme are in harmony with the elementary school and vice versa. The pedagogical principles supporting the experimental method are the same, whether dealing with the nursery school or elementary school.

In Ghisolfi, a vast rural area north of the city of Milan, the new school was opened on 8 September 1911, with two mixed sections of the first elementary year, composed of 30 pupils, 15 boys and 15 girls; school hours were 9:00-17:00, including two hours for a school meal and rest (Nicoli, 1947, pp. 31- 32). The boys and girls were only together in the classroom during the first two classes, then they met again during the common times of the lunchroom, playtime and upon leaving (Levi, 1931, pp. 11-12).

In 1924, laboratories and workshops were organised in the Scuola Rinnovata, for professional courses for the boys. Work training for the girls consisted of workshops for sewing and embroidery, dressmaking and, for learning indispensable knowledge about raising children well, the “crèche for sucking babies and weaning babies was opened” (Pizzigoni, 1931, p. 211). The year 1927 was the time of the nursery school, left for

last because Pizzigoni believed it was a “social necessity, but not a pedagogical necessity” (Pizzigoni, 1931, p. 215). The nursery school completed the educational design that included ages 0 to 14 years.

Even though, chronologically, the nursery school appeared at a later time, one must keep in mind that the pedagogical plan, rearranged during the various phases of implementation, provided for education from infancy to nursery school, from elementary school up to the 6th year and continuing with professional school up to the 7th and 8th years through the “Programme of Male and Female Integration Courses”. Included in the special Programmes for the female section is the *Theoretical-practical Course on Puericulture* (Pizzigoni, 1927, pp. 27-31; Pizzigoni, 1956, pp. 247-250).

There is news about the occupational training school, which deals with the preparation of the “Governess”, at the Historic Archives of Opera Pizzigoni – ASOP in Milan, present on Facebook (ASOP, 2019). The photo of a governess with a baby, just a few months old, shows not only the attention Pizzigoni gave to the age that precedes nursery school, but also her commitment to the preparation of professional figures suited to care for new-borns.

The Governess may have the most interesting task of the entire education system, in any case, one of the most important ones. She is the first to have any influence on the young being from the moment they come into the world, that is, under the conditions nature prepared for them to begin life. A fragile little body is handed over to her, one that has no predisposition beyond those that are congenital and hereditary, and who has the chance to become big and strong under her care; the little being is still incapable of reasoning but has, in their power, a human soul, a heart and a mind, and the governess will be the one having the great, almost superhuman, task of watching over and influencing their first awakening and then carrying out these activities (G. Pizzigoni [1920], [1930]).

Through the Reform of 1923, the 6th, 7th and 8th years became the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years of the secondary training course aimed at employment (Pizzigoni, 1931, p. 211). In the Scuola Rinnovata, childhood education is conceived with a sense of proportion, to never anticipate activities that would require efforts exceeding the child's ability to focus. The megalomaniacs of adults, wishing to skip the gradual stages of psycho-physical development of the child, demeaning them with mnemonic knowledge, like the romantic images of the docile, obedient child, subjected to maternal care and agreeable to learning their first words of good behaviour at home, are considered extraneous to the living experience of the child. The one and the other, as much the megalomaniacs

as the romantic images, delay the entrance of education into the field of scientific thinking. In both cases we find examples of the extremes, from which Pizzigoni draws away.

3. Training continuity

The organisation and style of the Pizzigoni nursery school are in complete harmony with the method pursued in the elementary school and which the followers of the ideals and practices of the Milanese teacher, such as Sara Bertuzzi, amply demonstrate.

As Pizzigoni cited, in recapturing the judgment of Nicoli (Pizzigoni, 1931, pp. 31-32) the Rinnovata is a complete unit, of which only certain aspects can be transported into other schools. Of course, the “organic and unitary” character of the elementary school is the core of the Rinnovata. In any case, we are talking about one sole “pedagogical direction” originating from the insight of Pizzigoni and it was she, herself, who designed the previous levels as well as those ensuant to training. It follows that the organicity and unitary state are factors present from ages 0 to 14 years in the development of the entire project, originally achieved at the Rinnovata.

Another important point, usually mentioned as a characteristic of the new Pizzigoni nursery school, is linked to the concept of not anticipating what is to be proposed at an older age. This is what we intend with the notion of intuitive teaching, which does not require lessons and oral tuition.

Conferences are not made for children, not even about a ball or a stick figure, as written by Nicoli (1937, p. 7), a careful observer of the Scuola Rinnovata, starting from 1911, and author of the volume *Storia della Scuola Rinnovata*, edited by the *Ufficio di Propaganda* of the “Opera Pizzigoni”, 1946, and printed in Varese 1947. The review of the latter was published in English by the American Association of Teachers of Italian in the journal *Italica* (Gardiol, 1950, pp. 194-195). Yvonne A. Gardiol, a teacher at Babylon High School (Babylon, NY), emphasised in a paper:

The Scuola Rinnovata is a public school using the experimental method to prepare boys and girls, regardless of their financial, social or racial background to be happy while learning and to establish healthy habits which will make them better people in the community and the world. These are not new principles to most of us teachers, but it is interesting to see how they are practiced effectively (Gardiol, 1950, p. 194).

This text is particularly relevant as evidence of the resonance of the experimental method presented to American teachers for reflection.

Gardiol emphasises and appreciates the fact that the Rinnovata achieved educational principles, often only proclaimed in theory, but never experienced in real scholastic life. Another aspect not to be underestimated in this review is the observation of how the Scuola Rinnovata could represent a School model that could be implemented in all environments, where there are children: "The Scuola Rinnovata could be located anywhere in the world where children are" (Gardiol, 1950, p. 195).

Wherever there are children, there could be a Scuola Rinnovata. It is like wishing for the emergence of a single universal heart of the pedagogical issue and also the substance of the methodological inspiration, as the object of educational research. Thus, the Rinnovata was recognised as a school for everyone, based on a testable method, besides being experimental, provided with indispensable documents on the progress of the pedagogical research. The targets reached could be studied by all the teachers and already formed a shareable heritage for the comparison with the experimental school in Europe and the United States. Pizzigoni, herself, had given space to comparison, hereby reading about the experiences of new schools in Italy and abroad, and then visiting the *Waldschule*, i.e. school in the woods, in Switzerland and the Alsace, together with her colleague, Maria Levi (Pizzigoni, 1913?!, pp. 17-19; Carmeli, 1923, p. 4; Nicoli, 1947, pp. 18-21). However, outdoor laboratory schools in Sweden were for children of affluent families, they were not public schools. The new Democratic schools of Holland and the Jasnaia-Poliana school of Tolstoi still represent interesting innovations, but are limited and not nationally widespread. These are significant facts that contribute to helping understand the difference of the Scuola Rinnovata that is aimed at everyone, that is, a public school (Stoccoro, 1936, p. 4) with a method that is applicable everywhere.

4. Outdoor school

The need to renew nursery schools was formalised in 1923 with the Gentile Reform, at a time of the general reform of schools. In fact, the Gentile Reform went beyond the vision of the nursery school, a work of charity or an educational institution separate from elementary school, and introduced the concept of the nursery school as an integral part of public school, defining it as a preparatory stage to the next educational level.

The school of the experimental method is certainly sensitive to the changing times, even preceding the national reform itself, having given rise to the reform in its own Rinnovata. Pizzigoni wrote that the Rinnovata is a school that is fully studied and even viewed with envy abroad; it is the

school that had triggered said Reform of 1923 (Pizzigoni, 1931, pp. 7-9).

Opinion studies of the method were remarkable from the very beginning of the experience (Lombardo Radice, 1925; Rompato, 1927; Tongiorgi, 1937; Boranga, Gasparo, 1952; Cafaro, 1952; Paiotti, 1952; De Bartolomeis, 1953; Rinaldi 1954; Romanini, 1958) and have been renewed over time (Franzé, 1985; Scurati, 1987; Rossi Cassottana, 1988; 2004; Chistolini, 2009).

The assertion of the mechanical industry, the domination of factory work, the multiplication of the urban subproletariat, the re-explosion of urbanism, the rise of domestic migratory shifting from Southern to Northern Italy and the abandoning of children to their own resources are social and cultural processes, with respect to which one invariably witnessed the backsliding of civil life. The responsibility of the school became that of offering a safe, serene, hygienically protected place, where air and light, cleanliness and well-being were assured for the entire day. Hence, the conception of the architecture function to the pedagogical needs that required outdoor spaces, alternating with inside areas, according to a preparation of the rooms, in which there was always air and light.

It was necessary to train teachers in the art of knowing how to interest the children. This meant being able to keep them occupied. To interest the children meant feeding their curiosity and replying satisfactorily to their extraordinary desire for movement. To act is to live and everything takes shape in their being and becomes a continuous welcoming in an environment that, since its architecture, has embraced the idea of education and of a school that has progressively made its way.

In a speech in 1910, Giuseppina Pizzigoni was able to affirm how the objectives of physical and moral education were particularly pursued at the Rinnovata. To support this set-up, she referred to the outdoor school of the early nineteen hundreds, followed by some specific scholastic realities, expressly listed, although not all directly visited. The citation concerns: Garden City of Letchworth, the first garden city of Europe near London (1903), linked to the utopianism of Robert Owen (1771-1858) and Charles Fourier (1772-1837) and then the English urbanist, Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928).

The list continues with: the country school of Charlottenburg in Berlin; the Waldschule in Mülhausen castle, East of France, near the borders of Switzerland and Germany; the method of the Waldschule of Mannheim, described by Maria Levi (Nicoli, 1947, p. 21); the rural school of the Mantessa of the Franchetti Barons, rising near the city of Castello in the province of Perugia and; the agricultural school of Crevenna, a small community of Erba. These are all experiences that, through tangible proof

and well-recorded statistics, show the benefits the children drew from living in contact with nature; this means that being outdoors, in the sun and air, produced experimentally verified positive effects on psycho-physical growth and scholastic learning. Although some schools arose to rectify the conditions of malaise of the frailest infants and those with health problems, and were prepared to be health sanatoriums, it was nonetheless clear that the need of small children to live outdoors brought about substantial changes in physical growth and educated both the intellect and the formation of moral sentiments towards their natural environment. Pizzigoni seized upon this general aspect that became specific in the experimental method. Not all outdoor schools avail themselves of a suitable method; unlike well-known outdoor schools that follow orthodox methods of a verbal nature, and through mnemonic learning, the Rinnovata uses the experimental method to expand the intellectual forces of the child through the sun, air and systematic movement (Pizzigoni, 1930, pp. 10-11).

3. THE RELEVANCE OF THE METHOD

1. Environment suitable for growth

The outdoor school is a chance for all children to live scholastic hours in an “environment suitable for the new school” (Pizzigoni, 1913?!, p. 36), not only as care for those bearing signs of lack of hygiene and an existence of living in unhealthy places, but rather to prevent the condition of the sudden appearance of illness, often tuberculosis (Pizzigoni, 1913?!, p. 19), and support children with delayed learning often caused by negligence of the living spaces (Nicoli, 1947, pp. 40-41). In 1916, the Rinnovata instituted differentiated classes, introduced as an experiment for children with special needs. Each child is observed by the teacher, who is in close contact with physicians, and intervenes constantly in formulating a programme, hereby adapting it to the specific needs (Opera Pizzigoni, 1938; Nicoli, 1947, pp. 95-97).

The fundamental idea of the outdoor school is combined with a beautiful school, in which the thought was for a complete education of the child and the psycho-physical and spiritual growth of the pupil in preparation for life (Carmeli, 1923, p. 15); a school of minimum effort with maximum profit (Levi, 1931-32, p. 5); a school of physical, mental and spiritual health that is necessary because scientific research shows us how physical education influences both the intellectual process and thought coordination (Medea, 1939, p. 6).

On the other hand, schooling taking place in closed spaces, where the children have to sit in one position for hours, which is a constraint, considering their age, with no care given to physical education (because one cannot accept physical education as doing gymnastic exercises for two half-hours period per week, this done perhaps directly after the recreation period, and not even any preparation for a contest or a performance in public); a school like that prepares children who are then anaemic, nervous and physically insufficient (Pizzigoni, 1956, p. 7).

The report about Pizzigoni’s travels revealed an appreciation for outdoor life as well as a critique about a certain negligence the teacher noticed during some of those experiences, such as, for example, the use of

unsuitable clothing, the scant planning of the work by the teachers, the sequential order of the activities, the limited nature of the experience restricted to a period of illness and care. Pizzigoni definitely picked up some important ideas to be introduced into the Rinnovata with considerable improvements. She picked up the idea of distributing portions of land to the children, so as to educate them about responsibility, the idea of showers and the swimming pool, focussing on the changing rooms to educate to respect oneself and others, and the idea of outdoor lessons accompanied by the movement and observation of nature. These ideas were collected and reorganised with a clear intention of rendering them, in practice, more suitable to life of children and, above all, by inserting them into the experimental method. The Rinnovata progressively became an outdoor school, although Pizzigoni had matured the vision since its origin. Economic problems delayed the project without cancelling it.

Over the decades, the Scuola Rinnovata, today known as the *Istituto Comprensivo Rinnovata Pizzigoni*, has kept alive the drive given by its founder, by realising training projects and experiments on basic teaching in elementary school (Pizzigoni, 2015; Colombo, Manicone, Zuccoli, 2017) and in pre-school, in contexts that are also outside the Scuola Rinnovata itself. The Autograph Diaries of Sara Bertuzzi and other teachers, in particular, Graziella Brun and Giuseppina Cazzulani, trained in the experimental method in pre-school (Pizzigoni Fund, Diaries, 1954-1967), allow one to understand the inherent potentials in the initial pedagogical plan. Furthermore, recent surveys (Chistolini, 2019a; 2020a; 2020b; 2020c) are available on the use of the experimental method in a sample of pre-schools opened in the 13th Municipal District of Rome.

2. Sara Bertuzzi, scholar and expert in the Milan school

Sara Bertuzzi, who was born in Medicina (Bologna) on 9 November 1922 and died in Milan on 6 January 2016, was officially recognised, in 1993, by Antonio Cimmino, headmaster of the Scuola Rinnovata, as “the sole, true expert in the Pizzigoni method of pre-school” (1993, p. 30) and cited as a member of the board of Opera Pizzigoni.

Having trained in the method of the Rinnovata in 1954, she spent the first years of her career drawing all her pedagogical inspiration from Pizzigoni and always remained faithful to the original model.

When I attended the *Course of didactic differentiation according to the Pizzigoni Method*, it was truly “shocking”. I finally saw the child being respected and optimised and saw an orientation indicated, in which freedom, spontaneity, creativity and contact with the natural world were

the cornerstones of educational work. It was necessary to examine it, reflect on it and implement it; this was my task (Bertuzzi, 1961, p. 1).

My encounter with this worthy disciple of Giuseppina Pizzigoni dates back to the event of the *Conference for Eighty Years of the Rinnovata*, 5-6 October 2007, at Via Castellino da Castello 10 in Milan. Listening to the testimony of Sara, who was able to condense, in a few minutes, an entire scholastic life dedicated to “my beloved Giuseppina”, her usual way of naming the renowned Italian pedagogist, it was impossible to remain passive in the face of such a wealth of notes, contents and strategies, spoken with profound conviction and palpable professional competence.

In the afternoon of 6 October 2007, after an intense conversation, Sara invited me to see the material stored at her home. It was a collection of unique copies able to present the method and illustrate the educational paths considered, starting from the writings of Giuseppina Pizzigoni, then created and recreated in classrooms for renewed generations of boys and girls. It was an unexpected production that allowed for understanding some of Pizzigoni’s important insights, as illustrated in *Il mio asilo infantile* (1929a) and that Sara cited from memory, with constant reference to educate according to truth, nature and personal experience, as the aim, means and method of the relationship between teacher and child.

That was the first visit, followed by many others, intended to disclose the experimental method in pre-school, which not only Sara had elected as a guide for her teaching and educating, but that many other teachers, students of Sara, who had become headmistress in subsequent years, began to adopt. With perceptiveness, and also because the school asked it of her, Sara taught and wrote the school diary in lined and squared notebooks, in which she presented the monthly programme, children’s thoughts, critical comments and pedagogical and didactic activities from October to June. There are seven orderly Diaries that go from 1954 to 1967, catalogued under the title, *Diari e relazioni di Sara Bertuzzi, diario di Graziella Brun e relazione di Giuseppina Cazzulani* (*Diaries and reports of Sara Bertuzzi, diary of Graziella Brun and report of Giuseppina Cazzulani*) [Fondo Pizzigoni], FP00015_000; they are the ones presented in this volume, faithfully transcribed from the hand-written originals.

Each Diary, hand-written in a school notebook, either lined or squared, is concluded with the stamp of the headteacher. Headteachers, who evaluated Sara’s educational work, unanimously appreciated its high moral value and were probably able to enter into the heart of the experimental method itself, thanks to her detailed diaries.

Reported in this volume are three Reports. The first Report from 1953- 54 is a text typewritten by Sara Bertuzzi, probably using a portable