

*Educational leadership in Latin Europe:
autonomy, identities, responsibilities*

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Session 1 *panel*

Autonomies and responsibilities: changes in the State and new ways of managing education

School autonomy and leadership issues in Italy

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A preliminary note

- **Some peculiarities of the entering of NPM in the Italian education field**

Italy has been **among the slowest** European countries to introduce reform in the NPM era. This was also because welfarism and bureau-professionalism have strongly opposed and/or mediated the entering of NPM, creating **stop-go dynamics** of change and contested processes of policy enactment.

Uncertainty seems to be the main trait characterizing the processes through which NPM is embedding in the Italian Education System.

Changes described below encounters significant **resistance** and **political instability** also make difficult for governments to launch system reform projects and to give continuity to initiative in order to institutionalize new practices and devices.

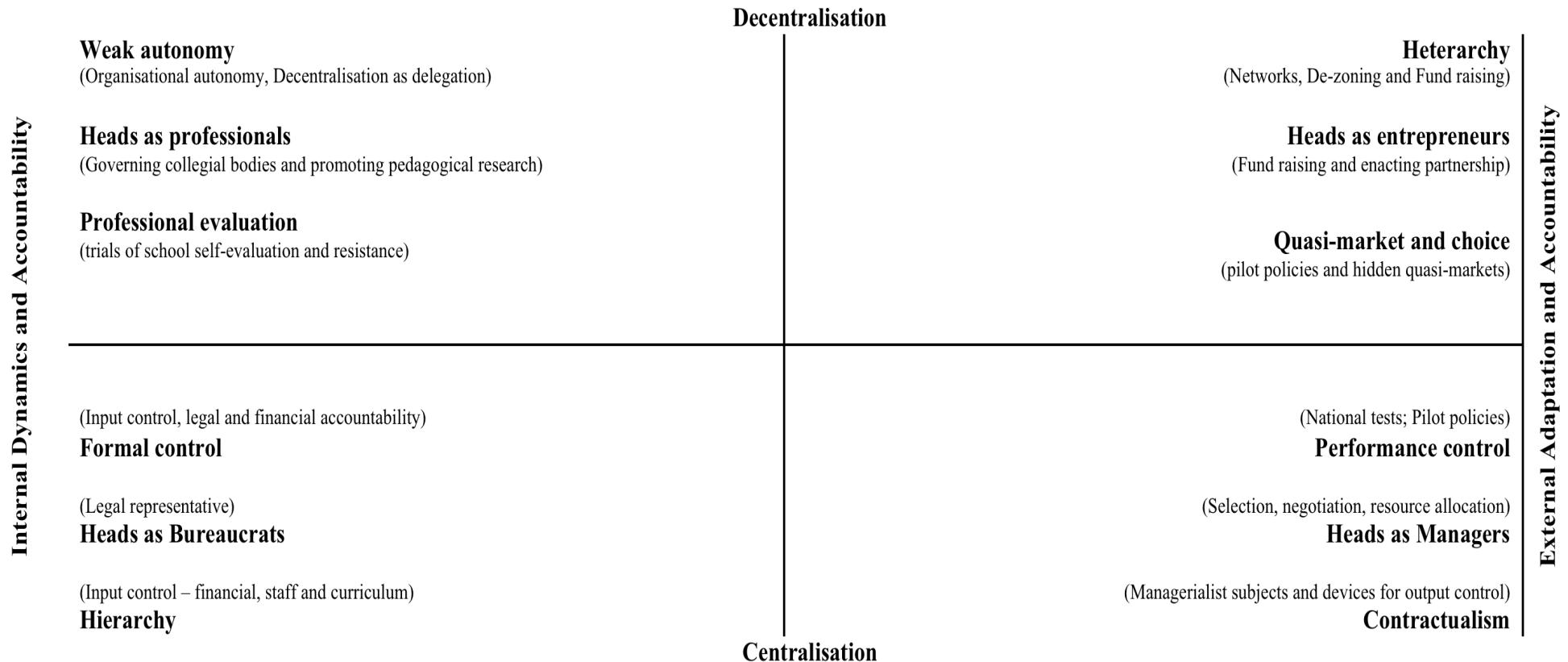
The **increasing centrality of the NPM** discourse main tenets is **likely to have some implications** for the transformation of expertise and the regulation of the activities of professionals (head teachers and teachers) in the field of education. **However**, the resistance exerted by bureau-professionalism and its supporters seems to be still effective, succeeding in creating what appears as a **continuous impasse**.

The emerging project to ‘modernize’ Italian education

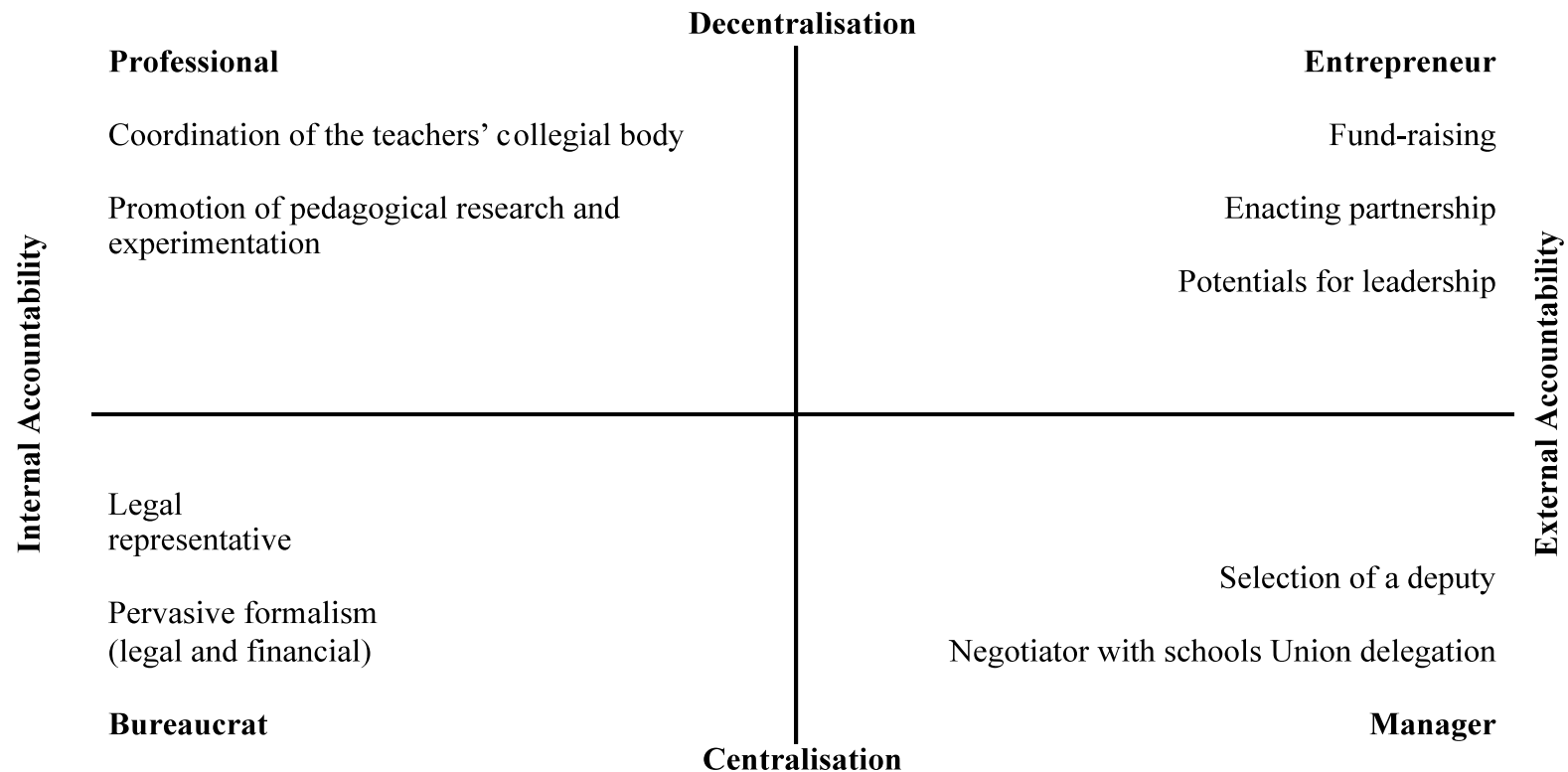
- **The emerging project to reform education (as a patchwork of policy initiatives):**
 - a) modernising educational governance through the creation of devolved environments and self-regulating actors,
 - b) re-designing professional subjectivities with a specific focus on headship
 - c) building up an evaluation machinery to measure and spectacularize systems’ effectiveness.
- **NPM becomes a bipartisan discourse, showing also a surprising capacity ‘to reinvent itself as part of a centre–Left third way’ (Hood and Peters, 2004: 271).**

Modernising Education in Italy

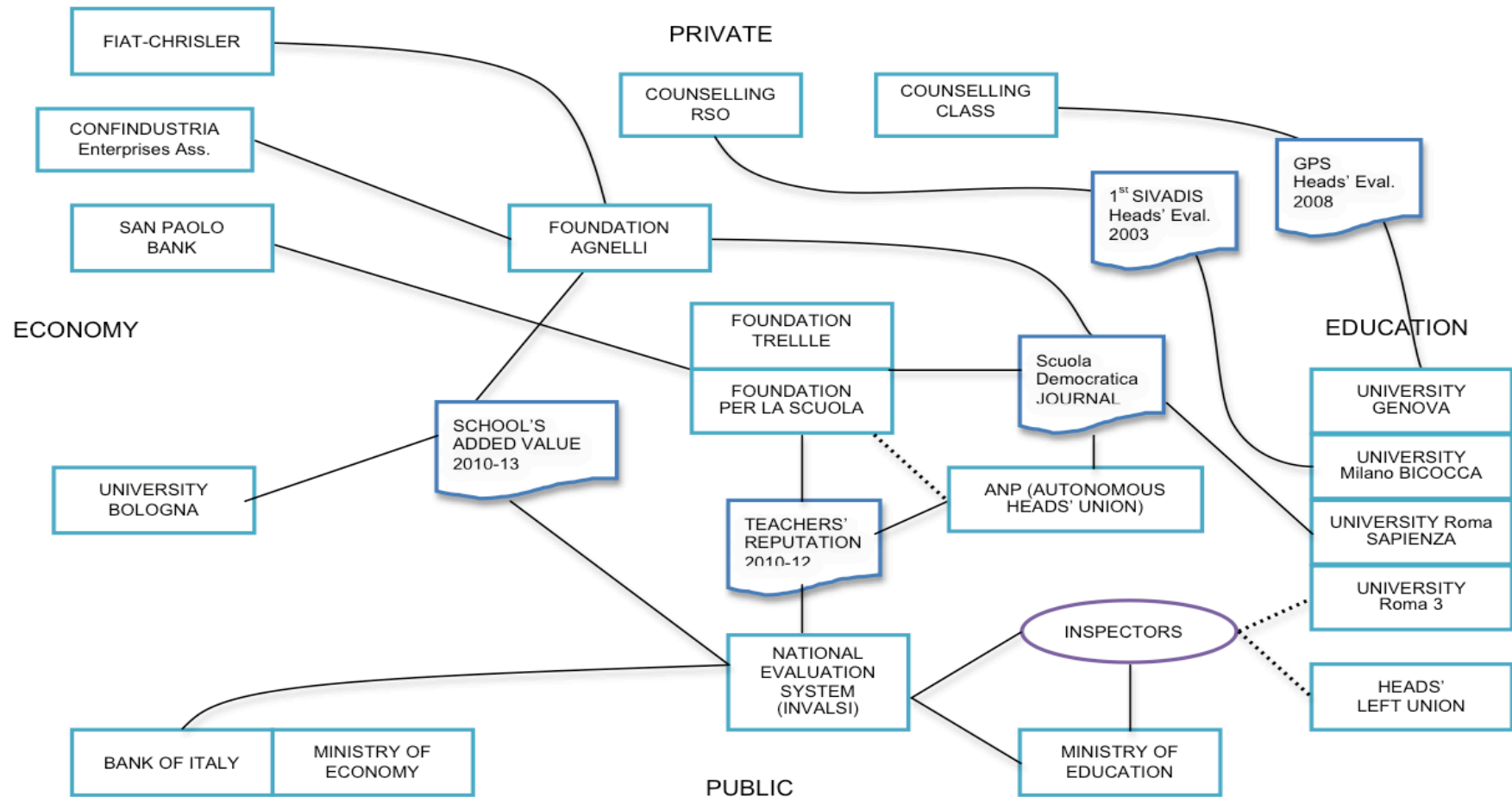
- *Policy tensions and developments in the recent change of the Italian education system*



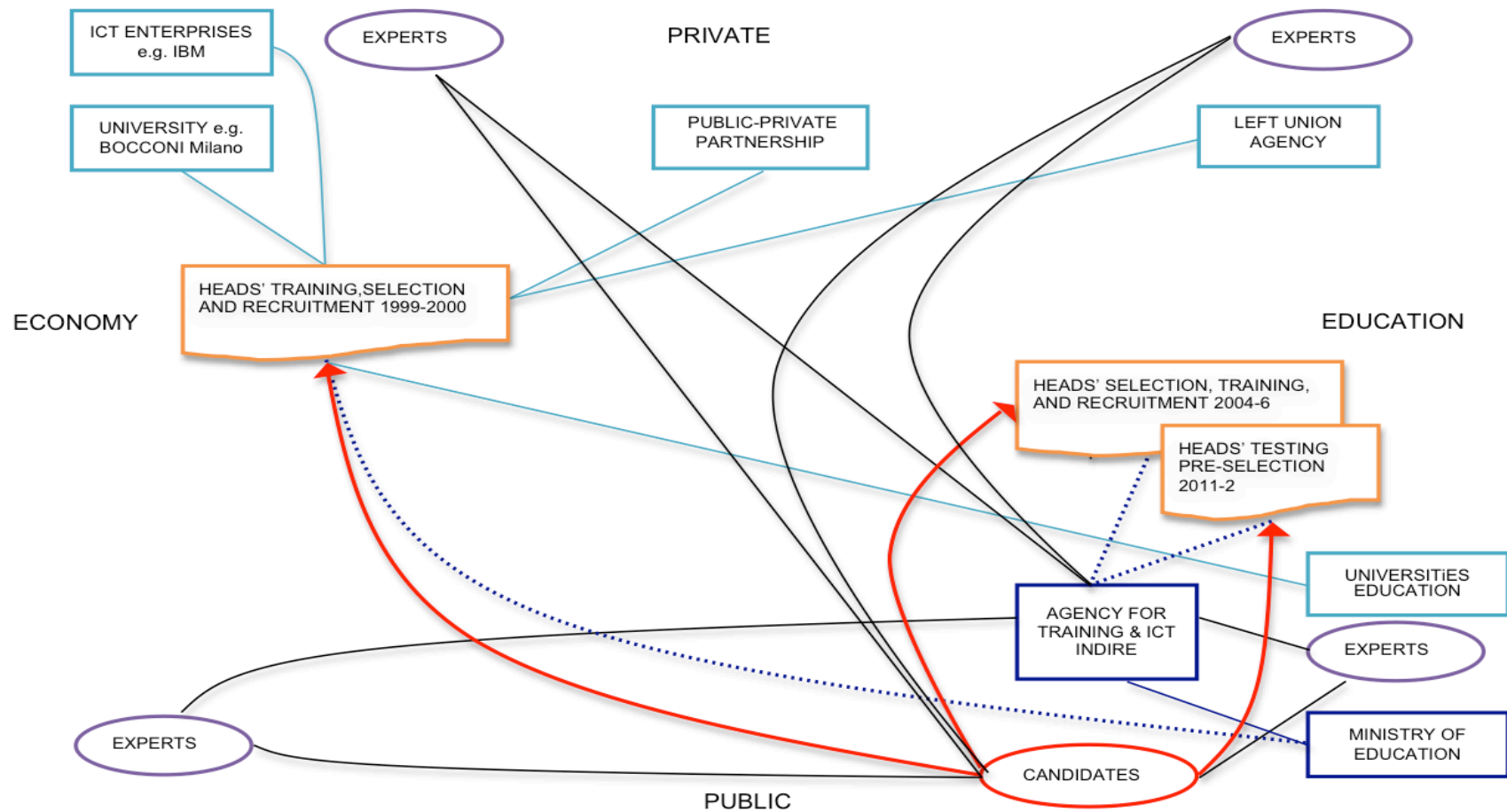
The 'new' head teacher



Public, private, economy and education: head teacher evaluation



Public, private, economy and education: head teacher selection



Conclusive thoughts

- **To conclude**

We propose a reading of NPM embedding in the Italian education system as the **'triumph of hope over experience'** - that is, as a case of repeated 'introductions of the same reform recipe in spite of recurrent disappointments' (Hood and Peters, 2004: 275). Disappointments come both from the repeated failings of the umpteenth pilot projects and the lessons policy actors could draw from other countries experiences. However, one of the main feature of the performative power of NPM discourse is exactly that of **silencing opposite and alternative voices, co-opting democratic and progressive discursive devices to its cause and masquering its biases under the neutrality of the technical voices**. This is what is happening in the Italian education field.

Uncertainty still dominates. However, despite the repeated failures of the coalitions supporting the NPM turn, **some of the NPM-inspired discursive problematizations underpinning the diverse pilot projects launched in the last decade have successfully entered the education field**, becoming taken for granted and indisputable cornerstones of the political, technical and even academic debates on educational governance, professionals management and evaluation.