



**Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference
of the Journal Scuola Democratica**

REINVENTING EDUCATION

2-5 June 2021

VOLUME I

Citizenship, Work and The Global Age

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

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Citizenship, Work and The Global Age

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"
Via Francesco Satolli, 30 – 00165 - Rome, Italy

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***Title* Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the Journal “Scuola Democratica” – Reinventing Education VOLUME I Citizenship, Work and The Global Age**

This volume contains papers presented in the 2nd International Conference of the Journal “Scuola Democratica” which took place online on 2-5 June 2021. The Conference was devoted to the needs and prospects of Reinventing Education.

The challenges posed by the contemporary world have long required a rethinking of educational concepts, policies and practices. The question about education ‘for what’ as well as ‘how’ and ‘for whom’ has become unavoidable and yet it largely remained elusive due to a tenacious attachment to the ideas and routines of the past which are now far off the radical transformations required of educational systems. Scenarios, reflections and practices fostering the possibility of change towards the reinvention of the educational field as a driver of more general and global changes have been centerstage topics at the Conference. Multidisciplinary approach from experts from different disciplinary communities, including sociology, pedagogy, psychology, economics, architecture, political science has brought together researchers, decision makers and educators from all around the world to investigate constraints and opportunities for reinventing education.

The Conference has been an opportunity to present and discuss empirical and theoretical works from a variety of disciplines and fields covering education and thus promoting a trans- and inter-disciplinary discussion on urgent topics; to foster debates among experts and professionals; to diffuse research findings all over international scientific networks and practitioners’ mainstreams; to launch further strategies and networking alliances on local, national and international scale; to provide a new space for debate and evidences to educational policies. In this framework, more than 800 participants, including academics, educators, university students, had the opportunity to engage in a productive and fruitful dialogue based on research, analyses and critics, most of which have been published in this volume in their full version.

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Citizenship, Work and The Global Age

A Premise

What is education for? This philosophical question cannot be answered ignoring contributions from social and educational sciences. The growing focus on learning outcomes should have prompted discussion on the values and aims in defining policy objectives and developing accountability systems and evidence-based approaches. Whereas for years public discourse on education has most frequently been confined to a merely sector-based perspective, without addressing the relationship (i.e., interdependency and/or autonomy) with globalised societies or to face the new challenges of contemporary's world. The relationship between education and society and the issue of aims can be observed in a new context which has seen the weakening of the society-nation equation and the strengthening of global dimensions.

The crisis born of the pandemic is more and more global and multidimensional. It inevitably obliges to ask what the post-pandemic socio-economic scenarios could be and what challenges might emerge from the transformations of education and training systems and policies. Many researchers and observers think that the most relevant of these challenges is that of inequalities between and within countries. The medium-long term nature of many of these challenges poses a complex question: does the pandemic tend to widen or narrow the time-space horizons of people perceptions, rationalities, and decisions?

For decades, the field of education and training has witnessed continuous growth in globalization and internationalization: just think of the role of the large-scale assessment surveys and the increasing influence of international organisations. Phenomena and concepts such as policy mobility (lending and borrowing) or – within another field of research – policy learning, as well as global scaling up, global-local hybridization and policy assemblage might find a useful opportunity of debate and in-depth analysis in this stream. This might also be true of the related issue regarding how comparative research must be carried out and of the relationship between some government 'technologies' adopted in the latest cycle of policies – for example, quasi-market, evaluation, and autonomy of schools and universities – and the ever more criticized neo-liberal paradigm. In this framework, without any revival of the political or methodological nationalism, a critical rethinking of the national dimension, perhaps too hurriedly assumed to be 'obsolete', can be useful also for a comparative reflection. As to our continent we are in the presence not only of globalization of educational policies, but also of their Europeanisation, due to the extent of the European Commission's strategy and its Open Method of Coordination. Beyond the official distinction between formal, non-formal, and unformal learning, it seems European initiatives and programmes shape a new policy world preparing the future of education, particularly through different expert networks, new ways of conceptualizing knowledge, and disseminating standards. On these issues there is no lack of reflections and research, some of which very critical indeed, whose results deserve to be broadly shared and discussed, too.

The equipping of the new generations with the tools – knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values – to live in a plural and interconnected world is delicate matter indeed in Europe. It is the issue at stake for the encounters – and at times clashes – between old and new visions and

forms of pluralism and secularism. Around this theme are developed educational policies and strongly heterogeneous curricula. Such topic is linked also to the variability in young people's competences and attitudes towards 'cultural otherness'.

Life-long learning is another question of notable importance at international level as it implies both a diverse temporal horizon for education and its link to the dimensions of work. And a different approach to the relationship between school and extra-scholastic (life-wide) learning is also implied. From this stems the necessity of greater investment for example in both the early years (ECEC) and the adult education. We might ask, however, how much has been done to achieve this goal, and whether it risks remaining a fascinating but largely unfinished project for a long time.

Within a general rethinking of the aims and the means at the disposal of education systems, many papers ask whether until now enough has been done to educate towards citizenship and democracy and whether various national educational systems have adopted this issue as their core mission.

A second group of questions derives from some crucial challenges – such as the dramatic deterioration of the biosphere, the climate, and the health – which impose both the necessity of rethinking this mission in a planetary context and redefining the 'citizenship' as a concept not merely national, but multi-level, that is ranging from global to local; and in our continent European, too. How deeply are our nations presently involved in the task of educating their citizens in terms of knowledge of global and trans-national issues? And are they striving to build a collective common consciousness in Europe? What help is being given in this sense by proposals elaborated and experiences promoted by international organizations or the EU?

Finally, starting from infant and primary schools, what weight does citizenship education have in schools, what approaches are adopted and what have shown to be the most effective? What didactics are applied and what seem to be the most promising experiences? To what extent are teachers prepared and motivated and students interested in it? Universities and adult education should also play a role in citizenship education. What proposals and significant experiences can be described and examined?

The Volume also includes contributions on the relationship between education and economic systems which is a classic subject of social science. During the twentieth century, the functionalist perspective established a close link between 'school for the masses' and the construction of individuals personalities conforming to values and social objectives. Professions have then become more and more specialized and therefore requiring ever more targeted skills. Hence, the insistence on the need to train future workers in technical and technological skills, as well as more recently in the 'soft skills' climate, increasingly necessary in certain sectors of the economy (Industry 4.0). The alliance between the functionalist perspective and the neoliberal visions finds its conceptual and practical pivot in the employability conceptual frame. On the other hand, since the 1970s, critical research has highlighted that formal education system contributes to the reproduction of inequalities, confirming and strengthening hierarchies and power relations between different actors of the economic system. These lines of investigation have underlined the weight of cultural and social capital in determining school performance, but also the inflation of educational credentials as a combined effect of mass schooling and changes in the economic system. In more recent times, the fragmentation of the educational and training systems, because of the

multiplication of public and private agencies in charge of training citizens, in addition to the explosion of the non-formal and informal as learning places (e.g., on the Internet), challenges the school to maintain its primacy as a place responsible for training workers. Moreover, it questions its ability to continue to represent a social elevator and / or a place of social justice.

The issue of the reproduction of inequalities and differential returns of educational qualifications fuels lively and stimulating interdisciplinary debates: economic stagnation, mass unemployment and job instability affect the inclusion of young generations in the labour market. Recently, in the context of lifelong learning policies, the relationship between training and work has become increasingly central, but the definition of the goals of these policies is not neutral: in the neoliberal mantra it is a question of guaranteeing the adaptability, employability and autonomy of each individual, so that one can occupy a place in society according to the dominant values. There is no shortage of critical voices about this individualistic and functionalist interpretation of the Lifelong Learning vision. On the other hand, even the supporters of neoliberal-inspired policies want an inclusive training offer (from a meritocratic perspective), as it is essential for recruiting resources and supporting flexible production systems focused on knowledge.

The attention of scholars focuses on the effects of the 'knowledge society' in the educational system of European countries. In this perspective, several studies have focused attention on the orientation processes that contribute to the reproduction of inequalities as the students from the lower classes tend to orient themselves, and are oriented by their teachers, towards the vocational paths, stigmatized within the educational systems.

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Special Education and Economy. New Scenarios for the Life Project of People with Disabilities and Their Caregivers

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ABSTRACT: *This chapter deals with the delicate issue of taking charge of families with children with disabilities, focusing on the delicate transition phase defined as Dopo di Noi ('After Us') and the criticalities of the current social welfare. The authors are arguing about the pedagogical and economic criticalities this period is living with it and they are focusing on the planning value: this planning is conceived over time and in time and is oriented to the Quality of Life of people with disabilities and their caregivers and, therefore, a new Welfare State. Among different proposals, the step from Durante Noi (During Us) to Dopo di Noi becomes important thanks to the creation of an Integrated Training System, which sees the people themselves and their ability to choose at the centre.*

KEYWORDS: *People with Disabilities, Caregivers, Special Education, Economy, 'After Us*

Introduction

The research on the field of Special Pedagogy has achieved several results and has been able to identify and to interpret new pedagogical emergencies in response to current times. In this paper, we are going to deal with the fundamental issue about the *Dopo di Noi* ('After Us'), which attracts considerable pedagogical, social and economic challenges. There is always a careful action of planning and anticipation for future challenges in every goal achieved. As Montobbio and Lepri point out, all the life projects are «the results of a sentimental-educational and exponential process, precociously starting from an imaginary and a project, which is realised step by step, day by day, provided that it is clearly understood in which direction to go and which steps to take» (Montobbio, Lepri, 2000, 26).

In order to provide the reader with the coordinates of our work, we will start from the criticalities, which a family (in old age) often has to face, when there is a person with disabilities who has now reached adulthood, and we will finish analysing new operational procedures, which are able to guarantee adequate levels of Quality of Life of the entire family system (Giaconi, 2015a). Therefore, as we dealt with in previous studies (Giaconi *et al.*, 2020), we will take a semantic field leading us to rethink about a new Welfare State, which is more attentive to the caregivers of people with disabilities (including the complex ones), and a different 'After Us', which is able to plan in time the best living conditions for an adult with disabilities, beyond the life horizon of his/her family members.

1. Scientific basis for a new 'After Us' thought in the 'During Us'

The scientific literature about Special Pedagogy examined the complex world of families with disabled children and highlighted how the criticalities of the existential course of the disabled person and his/her family often worse, when the perspective of the 'After Us' seems to be imminent (Pavone, 2009; Giaconi, 2015a, 2015b; Cottini *et al.*, 2016; Besio, Caldin, 2020). Sudden decisions due to emergencies (e.g., the illness or the death of one of the parents) or solutions, which have been thought out in advance and are largely corresponding to the life plan of the person with disabilities, take over especially at this particular existential moment of the families. Caldin and Friso remember how «the work of supporting the development process leading to adulthood already begins in the minds of the parents who have a little child and enjoy a forward-looking planning dimension» (2016, 29).

The scientifically based crucial point is represented by planning: this is a dimension characterizing the delicate process of growth of the child with disabilities towards adulthood on the one hand, and the family, who finds difficulty to think about their child's future, especially in the 'After Us' on the other hand. Expectations, fears, constraints, possibilities, rights and duties do not always balance each other and do not often make natural for families to think for the future, especially after the school period. Up to a certain point in a child's existential life, a family can enjoy the support of the school institution, which often represents one of the few certainties, as well as the potential source of an institutionally guaranteed inclusion. The end of school represents a leap into the void (Pavone, 2009; Giaconi, 2015a) and is associated with states of anxiety, feelings of abandonment and loss of learning opportunities and social inclusion (Pavone, 2009; Giaconi, 2015a; Aiello *et al.*, 2017; Del Bianco, 2019; D'Angelo, 2020).

We agree with d'Alonzo (2011) that people with disabilities and their families are «left without any help, because they do not strictly fall within any bureaucratic, health or social protocol, and are therefore

forgotten, because they are unfortunately in a 'no man's land'» (2011, 11). In this direction, the dream of a life project is undermined by a widespread predestination-oriented attitude (Ianes, 2007; Maes *et al.*, 2007; Pesci, 2009; Beadle-Brown *et al.*, 2016), which could prevent the 'After Us' from being pointed out in time and, therefore, lead young people to find themselves 'catapulted' without any support towards adulthood (Giaconi, 2015a; d'Alonzo, 2009) and projected into a «pre-structured adult life» (Midjo, Aune, 2018, 34).

Our reference literature underlines how the lack of planning the transition phases of a family with children with disabilities leads to perspectives, which can undermine the Quality of Life of people with disabilities and their caregivers (Giaconi, 2015b; Gauthier-Boudreault *et al.*, 2017; Lindahl *et al.*, 2019; Del Bianco, 2019; D'Angelo, 2020; Giaconi *et al.*, 2020). Since this is a delicate question, it is worth reflecting about some points of awareness and, at the same time, pointing out potential project lines, while avoiding rigid interpretations.

Starting from the title of this contribution again, if one of the new challenges in special pedagogy is the 'After Us', the preceding treatise has shown how it is not appropriate to think on answers, which are limited to certain times, but rather it is necessary to think on planning forms, which start from the 'During Us' (Giaconi *et al.*, 2019). The complexity of taking charge of people with disabilities should lead human services and social policies to rethink about courses and projects, which are able to guarantee «adequate levels of Quality of Life in terms of independence, social participation and well-being» (Giaconi, 2015a, 127). This ambitious goal cannot be achieved without an integrated perspective of interventions, services and people. Therefore, it is essential to have a network of local authorities, institutions, families and people with disabilities, so that actions are able to take shape and to support a future, which can be imagined (Ianes, Cramerotti, 2007) and designed over time and in time (Montobbio, Lepri, 2000; Ianes, Cramerotti, 2007; Giaconi *et al.*, 2020). In fact, in order to contribute to the achievement of ecological existential courses (Giaconi, 2015a), it is necessary that this planning does not withdraw into constraints, but rather it is oriented towards trajectories of meaning (Dainese, 2015; D'Angelo, 2020), which can be thought, chosen and shared only within this network.

By fully taking a systemic and integrated charge, it is possible to achieve good practices, which can be created starting from sharing common languages able to overcome the fragmentation of individual professional interventions (Pavone, 2009; Giaconi, 2015a; Giaconi *et al.*, 2020; Galanti, 2020). For example, this means rethinking on the habilitation courses for young people with disabilities in the direction of a specific training, which is aimed at acquiring skills for independent living and fostering processes of self-determination (Giaconi, 2015a; Aiello *et al.*, 2017; Del Bianco, 2019b; Galanti, 2020; Giaconi *et al.*, 2020) to be carried out starting from the family environment (Curryer *et al.*,

2018) to the community one (Abery, Stancliffe, 2003; Wong, Wong, 2008).

In conclusion, it is only through an integrated system of services designed in this way that it is possible to plan courses oriented towards the adult life of people with disabilities, when a family network can still be one of the strongest planning elements, that is, at the time of the 'During Us' (Giacconi *et al.*, 2019).

2. Towards a new Welfare State

The challenges which a family, whose economically relevant members are old, faces are different: concerns about the future of an adult person with disabilities on the one hand, a modern Welfare State, which introduces a change of paradigm in producing and/or financing social care for people with complex disabilities on the other hand. If the 'After Us' represents a solution to market failure or inadequacy in economic terms, this is created in the 'During Us' in pedagogical terms and requires new actions, which are aimed at the life project of the person with disabilities.

The 'After Us' perspective, which introduces support and care to people with serious disabilities, falls within the definition of a modern welfare state. Made up of a mix of direct production, tax incentives and economic-financial management tools shared by regions, local authorities and third-sector organisations, this new programme provides the possibility of guaranteeing disabled people the innovative residential interventions, which are able to reproduce the housing and relational conditions of the original home, beyond the life horizon of their family members. The 'After Us' represents a change of paradigm in directly producing and financing social care to disabled people after their family members' death, which is traditionally managed through private resources or by their legal guardian, and introduces a programme of economic and financial tools, which are aimed at an innovative solution from a social point of view. The reforming scope of the 'After Us' is undoubtedly to be found in the system solution adopted, which is mainly entrusted to public planning through the adoption of two fundamental strategies: directly producing care services and directly financing the production of care services together with a regulatory phase, which is aimed at evaluating the socio-economic feasibility of the project to be financed and evaluating the allocative efficiency of resources. In economic terms, the 'After Us' project represents a first solution to market failures, both in relation to the distribution of incomes, because this does not necessarily guarantee that non-self-sufficient people will have sufficient assets after their family members' death, and in relation to the need to guarantee the choice for an excellent wellbeing of disabled people who may not be able to autonomously evaluate what to do in their own interests. The

obvious information asymmetries characterizing this kind of services (adverse selection and moral hazard), which are linked both to the phase of signing the contract and its execution, makes possible to include the 'After Us' among the rights to be protected and, therefore, to consider our legal system inclusive. So, the 'After Us' project is a meritorious good, which strongly justifies public intervention aimed at protecting the interests of non-self-sufficient people, when they specifically use these particular care services. In fact, in the case of meritorious goods, market failures are an unacceptable social risk and for this reason it is desirable to have a significant intervention by the State. From this point of view, only the intervention of a public institution with an infinite time horizon is able to guarantee an intertemporal solution, which is aimed at caring for the quality of life of people who are partially or totally dependent, when it is not possible to adopt organizational formulas based on coexistence and cooperation. In its ambition, the proposed objective requires that those who make political choices in the caring field are increasingly conscious of the impact such reform programmes have on economy and social system. In fact, the production or the self-production of permanent care services have both a productive value, since the necessary services are able to generate income and employment, and also an educational, (formal and informal) training and social value. Addressing the creation of the 'After Us' by emphasizing the importance of the productive component also facilitates numerous advantages from a social point of view. In fact, in a system characterized by low growth and lack of public resources, the attention of policy makers often turns to sustainable public spending, which is able to contribute to the achievement of a social objective without neglecting the impact on public budget. The possibility that the market solution can generate market failures with significant effects of social exclusion is very high in the face of a very unequal distribution of incomes. The 'After Us' can enter this debate and also be considered as a qualifying element of the Welfare State in terms of a driver for economic growth and the inclusion degree of a country. For this purpose, it is essential to help creating the conviction in the current political class that this kind of incentivized public/private spending has a social and economic value.

This set of uncertainties contributes to highlight some criticalities, which characterize the current institutional arrangements. Uncertainty in the provision of support services for people with disabilities entails a careful reflection from the point of view of a positive and regulatory economy. In fact, it is necessary to implement a careful analysis at a macroeconomic level, which is aimed at unambiguously identifying the role that the production of these services plays in terms of generating added value and its related impact on employment. The tertiarization process of the economic system, the demographic dynamics in place and the improvement in life expectancies are some of the reasons, which lead to the demand emergence for this kind of requirement in a

family at the same time and the search for a market solution over time, if a solution cannot be found within the family. The production of these services employs primary factors of production at the same time and activates the intermediate demand of several production processes. The absence of a market solution, which is mainly linked to the difficulty of concluding contracts and the application of a subsequent control phase, represents one of the main justifications for the direct intervention by the State structuring an additional sector for public spending, which is aimed at directly producing and financing operators who decide to undertake these activities. Therefore, at a system level it is necessary to structure an intervention programme based on the principles of solidarity and inclusion, where structural interventions increase the direct productive ability of the Public Administration. This process is based on the principle of a direct production aimed at providing a service, which is considered essential, when the family is not able enough to autonomously determine a solution. At the same time, the planning of a public intervention must include the introduction of tools for demand incentives or production subsidies, in order to generate greater opportunities for disabled people to access support services. Direct state production and public financing for this kind of services can help achieving the goals of effectiveness and efficiency for the system, mutually supporting each other.

An attempt to fill the regulatory gap about the above-mentioned aspects is represented by the law on the 'After Us' (Law 112 of 2016 *Provisions about the care of people with serious disabilities without family support*), which aims at enhancing the private resources of families and the right to autonomy enshrined in the UN Convention through a fiscal and financial planning of the person to whom the law is addressed. This law is innovative since it specifically deals with care, well-being, social inclusion and autonomy of people with serious disabilities and also provides for various tax benefits, the establishment of trusts and the availability of special funds.

This law enabled the establishment of the Care Fund for people with serious disabilities without family support. These resources can be used to finance programmed support courses for leaving the original family unit, that is, deinstitutionalization; support interventions for home care; programmes to achieve the highest possible level of autonomy; interventions for creating innovative housing solutions; and, residually, interventions for temporary permanence in a non-family housing solution.

Numerous tax exemptions were defined regarding tax benefits on assets and insurance, guarantee of social inclusion and development of autonomy, e.g., assets and funds placed in trusts are exempt from inheritance and gift taxes. Another kind of benefit, which is offered by the 'After Us', is the tax exemption for the conclusion of insurance policies aimed at protecting the disabled person.

This law also encouraged the creation of partnerships among banks, associations, cooperative groups and NPOs in general. Several banks have further strengthened their commitment in recent years. For example, in 2011, the Social Bond, that is, a bond issue linked to a liberal donation, was launched. Some banks created internal divisions, which are devoted to third sector and with which they devise financial tools, products and services for families or third sector operators – such as bank accounts, advances and financial support, life insurance, advice on generational transition – as well as specific solutions linked to fundraising activities and donations promoted by organisations, who carry out projects.

In conclusion, outlining these trajectories in a context without an economic system planning, which is aimed at highlighting the income-generating capacities of these services, could represent an operational limitation to the selection phase of the policy and technical component. Getting a picture of the economic relevance of intervention programmes, which are aimed at supporting the strengthening of the Welfare related to care, could be a diriment element, immediately increasing the degree of inclusion for disabled people.

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