

INTERPRETATIONS. MARKET, WORK, TRAINING

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ABSTRACT: What of the job market in the era of Brexit and in the international arena of the Trump presidency? Naturally, there are various perspectives, but forms of emotive or propagandist rhetoric threaten to hold sway here. Above all, *Guidance Towards the Job market* means recognizing the complexities of geopolitical change within our information-sharing and collaborative networks, as well as the various and contrasting interpretations that arise. The current decline of the European Union – of which the UK public referendum result is symptomatic – and the ‘America First’ slogan, now a distinguishing feature of the current US government, are only two of the multiple forces interacting and defining pervasive transformations in economic, labour, and educational policies.

KEYWORDS: guidance, market, work, training.

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Conflicting views abound. Take, for example, the challenge of agreeing on multilateral interventions to address the issue of immigration. Or the relationships between *market, work, and training* considering Europe’s infringement procedures for excessive debt, which affected Greece so drastically, and the lack of any formal rebuke by EU authorities regarding Germany’s excessive trade surplus.

Globally, professions and employment dynamics ‘are coming to terms’ with interpretations that the official statistics reports summarize with expressions such as «the slowing of the world economy», «increasing inequality and the acceleration of change», «quality of

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human resources and attraction of investment» and «oversupply and low-cost labour».

When the CENSIS Foundation processed the latest data from the *International Labour Organization*, the *International Monetary Fund*, and the *Bank of Italy*, it observed a global increase in unemployment and in the number of poor and vulnerable workers, confirming the continued use of forced and child labour¹. In many respects, the data on *Employability and Competencies* was unsettling.

In light of these trends, it is logical to refer to a document that had a global resonance fifty years ago. In his Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI noted: «An ever-more effective world solidarity should allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny», «every human life is called to some task» (Pope Paul VI 1967: nos. 65 and 15). This cautionary message from 1967 was echoed in the words of Pope Francis, both in his United Nations Address and in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*: «The misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion» (Pope Francis 2015). And «we are not simply talking about ensuring nourishment or a dignified sustenance for all people, but also their general temporal welfare and prosperity. This means education, access to healthcare, and above all employment, for it is through free, creative, participatory, and mutually supportive labour that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives. A just wage enables them to have adequate access to all the other goods which are destined for our common use» (Pope Francis 2013).

Since the 1950s, we have seen the acceleration of technological progress, an increase in gross domestic product, and economic-financial interdependence on a global scale. These have become part of a concept of development preoccupied with production, oriented towards increasing profit, and not to the general improvement of living conditions, nor the creation of a supportive society.

¹ CENSIS, *Rapporto sulla situazione sociale del Paese 2016*, FrancoAngeli, Milan 2016, p. 159: «Lo slowdown nell'economia mondiale. World growth was 3.1% in 2015 and 2016, and will not exceed 3.4% in 2017. World trade grew on average by 6% between 1990 and 2011, and by 2.7% annually between 2012 and 2014. *Global unemployment is growing*. In 2015 global unemployment reached 197.1 million, which is around 30 million more than the pre-crisis figure. Between 2016 and 2017, the figure is expected to rise by 3.4 million. The unemployment rate is stated to be around 5.8%. In 2017, the number of unemployed is expected to exceed the 200 million mark. Poor and vulnerable worker numbers are increasing. Precarious employment, with limited access to protection, affects 1.5 million workers, around 46% of the total employed. *The "rest" in the informal economy, forced labour and child labour* Informal employment in non-agricultural sectors has reached 50% globally. 21 million people are in forced labour, whilst child labour is estimated to account for around 167 million people.»

Today, Pedagogy contributes *iuxta propria principia* to develop cultural sensitivity and lead the political consensus towards a concept of *change governance*. Such a perspective focuses on the relationship between education and work (Federighi 2010), and between the individual and the sense of community. This is a regulatory objective still to be reached and never fully achieved globally or substantially on the ground; including the concept of *stakeholder* in this scenario *personalizes* the responsibility of companies, public entities, and educational institutions towards society, identifying the specific groups or individuals to be taken into consideration in the actions associated with transforming the labour and education ‘markets’ (Vischi 2011).

1. Market, stakeholders, educational planning

Examining organizational structures and procedural regulations to achieve better results in terms of service efficiency, and/or product quality becomes a point of reference for a system of reasoning based on the *interdependency between striving for competitiveness and ethical tension*: the civilian community as a whole is the *stakeholder* when it comes to finding the best possible allocation of resources and redistributing the benefits. In cases of inefficient and wasteful services, or expensive, sub-standard products, then expenditure must be reviewed, and, at the same time, the investment must be evaluated from an ethical perspective. The effectiveness of the objectives pursued and efficiency in human work and in the use of material resources are cardinal elements of an approach to educational project design that is attentive to the ethical and economic interconnections of organizational action and the *governance* of its development.

No choices are merely technical or justifiable through *recommendations* or guidelines laid down by specialists in organization. It is inappropriate and misleading to uncritically accept arguments deduced from economic and financial publications and studies on management, to make decisions on spending cuts and cost saving, prioritizing certain administrative or corporate departments over others. *Good deliberation involves well-founded, practical wisdom and takes on a political, ethical, and educational character* that no corporate management theory should underestimate. Much as it is welcome, the work of specialist commissions and technical support must be scrutinized by the *stakeholders* to be adopted appropriately.

Educational planning for organizational change takes place within a context rooted in history, which can be visualized as a group of interacting stakeholders, with the names and faces of members of society. The challenge is to build an authentic dialogue, without forgetting to decide which stake-

holders to engage and how they can best be involved in the deliberation process. In all cases, there are multiple groups of interested parties (shareholders, communities, consumers, suppliers, social activist groups etc.), who require the *management's* attention. Educational planning, in pursuit of the common good, must be tailored to consider the multiplicity of the rights represented by the *principle stakeholders identified* and to manage mediation in all its complexity, to encourage the achievement of coherent objectives and the balanced development of the community.

Human capital formation is consciously and intentionally an ongoing project. From a systemic perspective, educational planning requires the *responsible engagement of the various stakeholders in developing the curricula and the strategies of the training plan*. Its success or failure not only has consequences on the ultimate shareholding *stakeholder* – society as a whole – but on all *stakeholders*, corporations, institutions, etc.

At this dynamic historical juncture, it is essential to reflect on the challenges of *matching competitiveness with social cohesion, technological progress and economic development* in order to explore new routes for educational planning. In order to plan meaningful interventions to manage change, we must *find an appropriate new way to define development*, a prospect that requires *integrity and the skill of political representation*, deals with *growth and equality in economic reforms*, and concerns *the quality and productivity of investments in teaching and human capital formation*.

The banking crisis, which has caused such alarm since late 2007, reveals the danger posed by the distorted dynamics of the markets and credit management systems, by inadequate regulation on new high-leverage 'derivative' products, and by *change governance* models that have related poorly to ethical and moral values and have been ethically inadequate in a number of ways, and therefore not very transparent in terms of the close link between the *management's performance* and the disingenuous sale of risks to the investor. The crisis, the consequences of which can still be sensed in the social fabric of many countries, must inspire constant vigilance with regard to the *need to introduce the question of the moral, political and economic responsibilities of proprietors and senior management in the principal areas of multidisciplinary investigation and public debate*.

The emphasis placed on the crisis, which has had serious and prolonged effects, may also stimulate suitable decisions regarding a *different way of structuring knowledge* (Morin 1999). Today, a thorough reinterpretation of the culture of work and management training is strategically important to guide change and promote innovation. Many success stories demonstrate that it is not by luck that a product or process triggers growth, but is rather by creating a *culture based on creativity* and the willingness to invest in the fusion of human capital, participative leadership and financial resources.

An authentic business culture generates wealth if it is part of a supportive citizenship structure and pursues education on legality as one of the key values in planning and governance. One theory on *human development as freedom* (Sen 1999) binds together the market, the stakeholder, and educational planning.

The pedagogical debate in the last decade in Italy offers various contributions to support the hypothesis that investment in educational planning can bring about an *increase* in value and beneficial participation on the part of the *stakeholders*. The diversity of cultural orientation and the juxtaposition of methods in relation to the planning of education and training in the knowledge-based society, with reference to theories of organization, research into communities of practice, social responsibility, and the relevance of social pedagogy, are all essential heuristic elements, which generate reflexivity and strategic development (Alessandrini 2007; Fabbri 2008; Malavasi 2007).

Is it a realistic ambition for educational planning to develop a structured understanding of *governance* and *guidance towards the job market* in line with the perspective of the International Conference *Employability and Competencies. Innovative Curricula for New Professions?*

An affirmative response is closely linked to the relevance assigned to the culture of education as a vehicle for human development. The texture of solid inter-institutional models, and planning that respects the various partners' prerogatives and competences, are cooperative approaches that generate value i.e. human dignity and economic profit, in a long-lasting way, if they are targeted at reducing inequality, redistributing revenue, building social cohesion, and cultivating/protecting the common good.

2. *Competences, Education, Work. Learning and working: a case in point*

An integration between the educational system and the world of work, based on the promotion of human life and real justice, must be considered essential for the development of future competences and professions, and for steering the education of young people and adults in a fair and supportive way (Bertagna 2011; Bocca 2000; Federighi 2011; Vischi 2014).

The complex issue of employment calls for the transition from school and university to work to then be constantly improved. On the one hand, it is important to enhance policy and the educational offering in relation to the professional profiles and qualifications required; on the other, we need to improve the acquisition of competences that are adapted to the demands of the production and services system. Meanwhile, we must restore the confidence of many of the

young people who do not study and do not work, for whom personal frustration leads to the mistrust of institutions and the lack of any sense of belonging, which is likely to result in insecurity, confusion and a marginalized experience of life.

In Italy, the introduction of obligatory participation in the work-related learning programme in the last three years of the high school is a profound innovation and marks a real change. National Law no. 107/2015 encourages young people and schools to engage in work-based learning programmes. Learning and working, beyond the restrictions of complying with regulations and implementation challenges, brings us closer to vital situations and contexts: corporations, associations, social voluntary work, and *service learning*, etc. Specifically, it «enables students to develop confidence in terms of tasks, schedules, and ways of working in the professional word, as well as testing out their own competences (including social and emotional ones)» (Rosina 2015: 83). Our future prosperity depends on the young, as the European Commission points out in its report *Youth on the Move*, in support of the *Europe 2020 Strategy*. This is particularly relevant to Italy, which is one of the advanced economies most lacking in complete and suitable tools for including new generations in the enhancement and creation of wellbeing (European Commission 2011). Young people who could potentially serve as a resource for development may become, paradoxically, a social cost, partly because of the absence of comprehensive, active work policies, incentives for enterprise, and sufficient investment in research, development, and innovation. If we do not take incisive action, such social disadvantages will become chronic. Indeed, authoritative international research institutes anticipate a potential *lost generation* (IMF 2015). The issue of employment must be integrated into a structured system of measures that coherently combine vocational guidance with education-to-work transition, «but also the achievement of autonomy and the construction of a solid basis for planning one's own life. Policies, therefore, that are not only motivating but also enabling: tools that encourage autonomy [...], reduce starting inequality and make young people more dynamic and responsible [...] less vulnerable to becoming trapped in long-term unemployment or entirely precarious employment (Rosina 2015: 98).

A culture that is constantly considering new *work-related forms and ethical content*, within the changing historical and social context, constitutes an *educational endeavour* hinging on personal freedom and the equal dignity of the various professions, with important legal, economic, technological, religious, and media-related implications. This article is exploratory in nature, and its aim is not to examine the many issues and technicalities at play, nor to develop the ethical and moral

dimension of work, the relevance of which is often overlooked. The issue of organizational wellbeing and the fostering of loyalty in professional relations should be carefully explored, along with means for reconciling family time and time at work, training for professional abnegation and overcoming doubts and resistance regarding investing in the younger generation.

Pedagogy, the science of education and training, understands *change governance*, in its multi-faceted complexity, to be an inexhaustible field of experience and processes upon which to reflect in terms of planning. Beyond and through particular conjunctures and events, the success of policies for *socioeconomic* growth and related ethical and moral enterprises to raise the quality of life for everyone on the planet, is closely linked with the ability to generate a *creative momentum* and enhance the talents of one and all. The anthropological choice behind work-related education stems from a holistic view of humanity, which understands the education of the *individual* to mean promoting their dignity and responding to the human vocation for work; this is considered essential for development, against a backdrop of rapid change and the pervasive nature of mediatization throughout the world.

The role of a form of *pedagogy* open to multidisciplinary dialogue is: to evaluate the fusion between professional knowledge and business practices; to identify needs and provide vocational guidance; to develop theories and operative protocols to instruct and engage the community, taking a holistic view of humanity (Giuliodori, Malavasi 2016). The inequity of issues such as absolute poverty, hunger, and youth unemployment is related to *environmental, social, and economic sustainability*; it calls for the ‘deployment’ of the sciences and technologies, imposes a participatory model for *doing business*, and calls for the contribution of religious values.

In the face of the dominant ‘market’ ideology centred on short-term profit, research and intervention on ways of ensuring that our *schools, universities and businesses* do not create inequality in society are essential. The importance now attributed to the *human capital* economy, amid much controversy, must be transformed into competences as a common good, *competent planning* (Birbes 2012) *increased dignity and value*, and opportunities for enterprise on an intergenerational scale.

Competences are often represented in a functional way, as a sort of *unit of certified educational capital*, which can be exchanged on the global work market as a *standardized* commodity, with a ‘guaranteed origin’ to be recognized by potential interested parties for its declared value. This supposed transverse validity about the curriculum justifies the adoption of the term in close continuity with that of ‘certification’ (Guasti 2000). According to the usual interpretation, a *certified skill* is

now considered the necessary condition for an individual's educational and professional mobility. The rigour of certification procedures and the reliability of the results lead to the dynamics of interpersonal communication and inter-professional exchange. Above all, one needs to gather the coherent features between the two dimensions of competency, the internal interaction between knowledge and experience, and external universal recognition, which reflect and justify each other, the one influencing the other.

Competences are related to technological development and management principles: flexibility and mobility within a company, as well as on an inter-company and inter-system level, surpass national boundaries and constitute the necessary attributes in a context where the scale and quality of production is changing, and not only in negative conjunctures, but as a normal condition of market unpredictability. Linked to the faith in succeeding to create a system for rationalizing human capital centred on competences, is the by-now considerable credit attributed to standards, which 'legitimize' the prescriptive value of competences by internationalizing them (Guasti 2003).

In many respects, the debate on competences affects the theory regarding work-related training and is one of its main heuristic crossroads. Nevertheless, at the same time, we cannot overlook the criticism of a new formalism that could impact research programmes if it endorses a procedural culture based on certification, indicators, and standards. Beyond reductive semanticizing, B. Rey underlines the importance of second-level analysis, according to which, competences maintain an irreducible position, since they define the capacity to choose, combine, and modify knowledge to respond to an unprecedented situation (Rey 2006).

The epistemology of business practices has brought to light the fact that these have authentic, specific, theoretical properties. Placing the central position of the act of learning at the start of the process means not foregoing a *technical and personal parameter* with which to consider the credibility of the term *competence* in terms of its vast use in international regulations. Educational and economic models of human capital – or, as U. Margiotta theorizes in Italy, *welfare delle capacitazioni* (capacity-building welfare) (Margiotta 2011) – can recover, through a clear-sighted appraisal of the real condition of the skills market, a sphere of knowledge that cannot be reduced to traditional discipline-based systems (no less specific, such as business administration), compared to which they have sometimes been considered *minor* or simply *applied* versions.

The discovery that every generation of entrepreneurs, teachers and students must make on the key role of *practical knowledge*, which is in many ways *original* both in terms of phylogenetic and socioge-

netic reconstruction, is what provides the richness in combining the «curricular route with the construction of an individual's identity».

Learning also *happens* through identification with qualified professionals and a certain degree of mimicry typical of *non-didactic* (i.e. practical/applied) learning. Skills, beyond the didactic mediations of teaching and the taxonomies of learning, belong to the world from which emerges: the profession.

The proactive synergy between school, university and work, the alternation between skills-based and creative life experiences can create the future, subverting situations that appear hopeless, alongside realistic forecasts of decline. The education of individuals and communities in navigating towards a *good life, with and for others in decent institutions* is not dependent on the current situation, unchangeable as this may seem, and opposes the processes breaking down the human experience and those of the contextual, associated paroxysmal diversifying of convictions and conventions.

Building society in an intentionally participatory and creative way calls upon the educational sector or the entirety of essentially human experiences that define and form *humanitas*, laying down the undeniable principles such as the pursuit of the common good, respect for life and moral responsibility in the practices of freedom, *employability, and competences*.

Innovative Curricula and New Professions. Lectures towards the Job market and Education.

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