Citizenship/citizenships: old and new issues for education policies[1]
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Citizenship/citizenships: old and new issues for education policies

*Elena Besozzi**

Abstract: The idea of citizenship is strictly connected with the society and culture it develops in. In the present day, the experience of citizenship as well as its formal asset have undergone many transformations, connected with numerous factors, like the intense and consistent movement of people and of goods, progressively multicultural societies, the consequent fall of material and symbolic confines between states and the crisis of the nation-state. Citizenship is therefore a multiform concept on the social (macro) level and the individual (micro) level. In any case, it is closely connected with the dimension of rights and individual liberties, and highlights the importance of processes of recognition of full dignity for all and the rights to difference and diversity. Citizenship has always been at the heart of education and of the development of educational systems, not only as an evident social mandate that society places on schools in modern society. Thinking of citizenship today in relation to educational policies means rediscussing the issue of the right of education and its full implementation. Citizenship is, in sum, an experience dense with ties and resources and is at the crossroads between the realization of rights and the exercise of individual liberties.

Keywords: citizenship, equality of opportunities, human capital, educational policies

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Introduction

Educational and citizenship policies have always been connected by an unavoidable bind due to the fact that citizenship claims are precisely what moves modern society towards the creation of educational systems and their subsequent democratization. Schools are born as an organic response to the deep transformation processes of traditional societies. Education becomes relevant both as a sphere where the expectations of modernity are realized – therefore as a function of progress and of economic and social development – and as the space where social integration can effectively take place and the good functioning of social institutions can be ensured. As Roberto Moscati (1989, p. XI) emphasised quite some time ago, the problems posed by social change highlight the need "for the reconstitution of the social order and the adaptation of society to the new directions and the new rhythms of evolution induced by industrialization, as by the acceleration of economic development and the needs of consolidation of the new nation states". Between the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, sociological thought puts the accent on the need to *shape the worker* and the *citizen*. These are two central figures of modernity, closely connected to the deep social, economic, political and cultural changes, largely determined by the two revolutions of the end of the 18th century – economic on the one hand (industrial revolution) and socio-political on the other (French revolution) – which gave way to new modes of production, of labour, of being together within a new political configuration, that of the nation state, which has redefined the basis and the exercise of social and political citizenship.

Citizenship emerges with an ample programme for the realization of new forms of inclusion, of belonging, and of integration at both the political-giuridical level and at the economic and social levels. Indeed, the development of *civil society* is deeply connected with the making of the modern nation state: the relationship between state and civil society is to be one of the main themes of modern society, even though the interpretations of this relationship will be diverse and manifold, like the forms civil society will take on in the different nation states[2]. One can immediately appreciate

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[2] For an in-depth analysis both of the concept of civil society and its different interpretations see Magatti, 2005, especially Chapter 2, which offers a discussion of four ideas of civil society, based on different traditions: statalist, individualist, associative, communicative.

how the development of civil society – whether as an experience of aggregation or as locus of control – is directly implicated in education, and therefore with the shaping of the citizen and with the capacity to exercise citizenship; in this case also with a plurality of meanings and of strategies that can be attributed to the role of education[3].

The main issue broached by this paper is that of the relationship between citizenship and education policies. First and foremost, we will consider the deep transformations that the idea of citizenship has undergone and thus focused our attention on the pluralisation of contemporary forms of citizenship both as a structural fact – the presence of different citizenships within a single territory – and with reference to the multiple forms of expression it can take on in individual and social existence, in terms of rights and the exercise of freedom. The argument I want to make is that the central heart of citizenship is made up of a set of rights, which may be aptly summarised in the well known expression 'equality of opportunity'. It is only by overcoming an analysis based only on granted rights that one can come to appreciate the deep change in the idea of citizenship and its experience, as well its relationship with public policies. Particular attention will therefore be dedicated to citizenship rights, especially to demonstrate how, within increasingly multicultural Western societies the modern concept of citizenship, founded on the nation-state and on the prevalence of the political-juridical dimension, is currently in crisis. This generates the need to rethink citizenship according to a cosmopolitical dimension, yet with an articulation of universalistic and particularistic approaches to human rights, not only for single nationalities but also for single groups or people. The idea of an "active citizenship" – thus of a dynamic citizenship – becomes the turning point both for the realization of individuals and for social policies, specifically for educational policies, which are engaged, in an interdependent circuit, with the agency of subjects and of groups.

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[3] The issue of citizen education is central to the arguments made in this paper and is a question that can be considered crucial in Western countries in recent years, especially in Italy, in relation to a widespread weakening of a "civic culture", i.e., of the levels of engagement, of participation but also of trust and loyalty towards institutions (Sciolla, 2005, pp. 23-32).

Citizenship-citizenships: a crucial transition

Offering a definition of citizenship is far from being a simple task, both as a result of the necessary historical references that such a definition implies, and because of the vast literature on the subject, both past and contemporary, which has discussed and studied its different aspects, often expressing contrasting opinions. The debate on citizenship today requires not only a newfound attention, but also new categories or concepts for the analysis of contexts and situations. This is true for a number of reasons, among which the globalization process, on the one hand, and the consistent migratory flows, on the other, are the most cited. In fact, we could say that the debate has re-acquired force as a result of a full-blown *crisis* of the traditional concept of citizenship, founded on inclusivity and on a definite closure within the confines of the national community.

The individual as a subject of rights: democratic and inclusive citizenship

The idea of citizen in modern society emphasises the idea of belonging in a new way[4]: it defines the relationship that develops between "an individual and the political-giuridial order in which he is included" (Costa, 2005, p. 3). If citizenship can be defined as the full belonging to a community (Marshall, 2002), this same belonging presents different forms across time. Many scholars have stressed the radical change in the experience of citizenship with the development of modern society (Baglioni, 2009). N. Bobbio speaks of a radical reversal of perspective and thus of the development of new dimensions of citizenship over and above simple territorial or community belonging. *No longer subjets but citizens*: this is the fundamental transformation, which promotes an individualistic conception of society, as opposed to an organismic, superior and pre-individual model (Bobbio, 1992, pp. 127-128). The new idea of citizenship in modern society – defined as democratic citizenship – implies a *status*, that of citizen, that is juxtaposed to the idea of *status* in feudal times, which was "the mark of class and the measure of inequality. There was no set of rights and obligations offered to all peoples (aristocrats and non-aristocrats, free men and serfs) by virtue of being members of society. In this sense, there was no principle of equality of citizens to oppose to the principle of

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[4] The transformation of belonging according to ascribed characteristics is completely evident in modern societies, whereas it was clearly defined in pre-modern societies.

class inequality" (Marshall, 2002, p. 14). In sum, the individual is in a new condition, where the rigid criteria of adscription – based on census, on community and on parenthood – gives way to the *primacy of the individual, considered as a rights-bearing subject.*

Modern citizenship has two focal references: on the one hand the individual, increasingly conceptualized as a separate, autonomous, subject endowed with rights; on the other hand, the nation state, the result of the slow process of the development of a territorial unity, delimitated by geographical borders, but also by political and cultural unity, a 'community of destiny', that offers its members the status of citizen, denied to those considered aliens.

It is well known that we owe Thomas H. Marshall[5] the development of the concept of citizenship rights, whereby the idea of citizenship itself acquires more weight, meaning and structure, transforming it, to all effects, into a category with which to interpret the dynamics of modern society and the development of the nation-state. As we shall see, this a "heuristically fertile" concept (Baglioni, 2009, pp. 32-33), still strategic today for the "analysis of the existing relations between the forms of inequality based on socio-economic traits (class, profession, type of consumption) and socio-cultural elements (gender, age, ethnicity, education). These elements inform the individual's subjectivity and at the same time are subject to the processes taking place in the broader context of late modernity".

Marshall defines citizenship as a *status* that endows each individual with rights and duties, across three dimensions: civil, political and social (Marshall, 2002, p. 12). He identifies a sort of development of these rights, according to a historical[6] and linear perspective. First came civil rights – personal freedom, freedom of speech, of thought, of faith, rights of property and of justice – in the 18th century. Then, during the 19th century, we have the formation of political rights, also as a result of claims made by a part of that strata of population which has traditionally been excluded from political participation. One right, such as the electoral right, is progressively extended in order to achieve universal suffrage. It is during the 20th century that we have the formation of new rights: social rights,

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[5] The reference here is to T. H. Marshall's well know book, "Citizenship and social class", originally edited in 1950.
[6] Historical here is in reference to the English context considered by Marshall, who cites many examples of the development of rights also in relation to precise historical facts and normative acts.

based on education, wellbeing and social security. For Marshall, this third dimension of citizenship is also what clearly qualifies modern citizenship and brings the subject to best express himself also in the civil and political dimension: "education is a necessary requirement for civil liberty" (Marshall, 2002, p. 28).

The development of the dimensions of citizenship highlights the fundamental principle which underpins it, namely the principle of equality. Marshall emphasises that all those who possess the status of citizens are *equal with regards the rights and duties conferred by such a status* (Marshall, 2002, p. 31). This is a *universalistic* criteria that seems to be in conflict with the system of social stratification and market economy, based inherently on the inequality of positions. At this point he deals with a crucial question, which will be the object of ample debate to this day: to what extent is the egalitarian drive of citizenship rights able to coexist with the ideals and values that support a market economy, free competition, the recognition of merit and thus a differentiation in the distribution of benefits and social privileges? Marshall's answer goes in the direction of a problematization of the concept of class, which evolves from a system of separate groups to a consideration of social class (and of differences in access to material and symbolic goods) as a result of processes connected equally to propriety and to the commitment of individuals and groups, but no longer as part of a consolidated and shared system of rigid social hierarchies. In sum, social citizenship does not eliminate inequalities, yet it modifies the system in which they are structured and makes them permeable and modifiable, via the process of social mobility.

T.H. Marshall's contribution to the analysis of modern citizenship still represents an important milestone, although it has not gone without criticism, especially regarding his overall vision of the evolution of rights, considered too linear and sequential and characterized by an excessive optimism and with an underestimation of conflict[7].

At the end of the 20th century, especially, there has been a split between those that believe that citizenship rights are progressively expanding[8] and

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[7] For an exam of these criticisms to T. H. Marshall, see: Zolo (1994).

[8] N. Bobbio, in *L'età dei diritti* (1994, XIV-XV) argues that we are currently in the presence of citizenship rights of third and fourth generation, after those of first (civil and political rights) and of second generation (social rights). Third generation rights refer to collective rather than individual issues, such as the right to live in a non-polluted environment, the right to peace and the right to communication. Fourth generation rights, which are still quite

those who argue that the overall project of modernity – and therefore the full expansion of rights – has produced an infinite proliferation and an unsustainable burden for the State and for policies, at one and the same time registering a tendency to consider rights almost exclusively as procedural and instrumental means used by interest groups to make new claims, in the presence of ever-new requests often in contradiction one with the other. In sum, as Donati (1993, p. 21) observes, in the long run democratic citizenship shows its fragility and vulnerability, especially in the light of the visible waning of common and shared values, which have enabled it to emerge and become consolidated, albeit in a contradictory form which has never been resolved, namely that of enabling, simultaneously, emancipatory actions and actions of social control.

Citizenship: an ambivalent concept

The fragility and vulnerability of modern citizenship highlights how it is a concept dense with antinomies (Baglioni, 2009); in other words, how it is decidedly ambivalent[9]. This element is precisely what determines both its dynamism as its crisis. Indeed, modern citizenship, as we have seen, is founded on a universalistic criteria which, nonetheless, must come to terms with the particularism of specific interests or situations. Citizenship highlights a tension between two inalienable dimensions, that can, however, at times clash with each other: that of individual freedoms, on the one hand, and that of equity and of equal opportunities in access to social and cultural resources, on the other. But citizenship is also, at one and the same time, both a powerful tool for integration and an area of conflict. Moreover, citizenship systematically poses the *inclusion/exclusion dilemma.* The issue of rights (political, civil, social), as well as the system

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vague, according to Bobbio, anticipate a new scenario, connected with the development of biological research, when issues such as the integrity of one's genetic inheritance will become prevalent.

[9] As is well known, *ambivalence* is a sociological category, which describes social situations as conditioned by instances that "are in such a relation as to appear opposed, irreducible one to the other, equally inextricable because each ensures the existence of the other; they cannot be resolved with a synthesis and they create a field of tension within which the social actor moves" (Calabrò, 1997, p. 4). The concept of ambivalence thus well represents the reality of modern and democratic citizenship, at the same time inclusive and exclusive, formal and substantial, universalistic and particularistic, integrative and conflictual.

of relationships with institutions, the development of civil society, in other words, the exercise of citizenship in itself, inevitably brings along a debate on freedom(s), on the equality between citizens (and especially on equality of opportunity), on solidarity, with all the implications that come with it. In this perspective we can also immediately see how democratic and inclusive citizenship inevitably implies exclusion, with the – historically well-documented – consequence that those who are excluded tend to denounce their exclusion and claim rights for full participation. This happened across different dimensions of political, juridical, civil, and social citizenship and today the forms of political pressure and demands have increased, partly as a result of a general weakening of the political sphere, and of its ability to ensure legitimacy in enforcing security and control. This is partly due to the deep crisis that has impacted upon the foundations of community belonging, shaken also by the presence of a plurality of citizenships and of cultures within a same territory. As S. Mezzadra (2002, p. XXIX) observes, the crisis concerns the inclusive and progressive image of citizenship as outlined by T. H. Marshall, which "takes the *national* perimetration of citizenship for granted, and ends up being fatally dated when faced with the formidable tensions that appear to confront it within the context of globalisation processes, and which are at the basis of discussions of 'global justice', of new hypotheses of 'cosmopolitan citizenship' and of the relationship between citizenship and human rights".

Towards a cosmopolitan, dynamic and plural citizenship

As we develop these ideas we come to appreciate how the crisis of modern citizenship is in close relation with a reconsideration of the nation-state and of what has been termed *methodological nationalism*[10]. This is an approach which appears utterly insufficient to describe and explain both the causes of international migration and their direction and stabilization. Ulrich Beck (2003, p. 10) speaks of an epistemological shift towards a *cosmopolitan gaze*, "a daily gaze, vigil on history, reflexive. This dialogical

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[10] By 'methodological nationalism' we intend the approach that considers society founded on the nation-state at the centre of analysis, operating an identification between modern society and the nation-state, which conditions also the observer or the researcher's gaze and that becomes limited to national borders. This gaze, situated in a national perspective, is historically definable: the study of society develops in parallel with the development of nation-states and there has been a tendency to take for granted that society coincides with its historical-political configuration.

gaze emerges in a context in which confines, distinctions and cultural contradictions disappear. It not only shows the 'laceration', but also the possibilities of organizing one's life and community living in a multi-ethnic cultural frame."

Of course, the cosmopolitan gaze corresponds neither to an idealistic vision of a pacified humanity nor to an end to differences or inequalities. Rather, it's an approach that emerges from the realization that "political, economic and cultural actions, much as their consequences (more or less self-aware) know no confines" (Beck, 2003, p. 28). The transnational and transcultural perspective enables us to understand the experience of plurality and multiple coexistences. We are all *global players*, as Beck suggests (2003, p. 109). The interpretative paradigm shift in citizenship has significant effects also on the ways migrants and their children are received and integrated, as it is in contrast with a vision limited by national borders and must come to terms with the real conditions in which life choices are made. Conditions which are still deeply rooted in the inclusion/exclusion distinction and in the provision of citizenship rights defined within completely limited and closed territorial and political contexts, such as the different nation states in a Europe of cultures that for the most part continues to act as a 'fortress', which defends itself from the outside and protects itself from the inside (Withol de Wenden, 2001). As L. Zanfrini also observes (2007, pp. VII-IX), "immigration is disturbing because it unveils the way in which a State thinks of citizenship, assuming a coincidence between the people, the nation, sovereignty and citizenship – the principle of isomorphism at the basis of modern nationalism – that migrations specifically contribute to dissolve". Then again, the tendency to separate citizenship rights from a national citizenship – inclusive but exclusive at the same time – is increasingly visible in relation not only to those contributions by authors and scholars interested in the issue of rights, but also in the development of awareness and in the progression of the debate in different local contexts among groups or minorities of natives or foreigners. In this trend, W. Kymlicka (1999) envisages a "multicultural citizenship", which encompasses ethnic diversity and the requests for inclusion of immigrant subjects, in order to allocate rights on the basis of group belongings, which ensure cultural minorities are safeguarded, in the belief that such a recognition is in no way incompatible with the values of a democratic culture. Multicultural citizenship corresponds to a "differentiated citizenship", defined as the concession of poly-ethnic,

representational and self-governance rights to specific groups which, *de facto*, almost every modern democracy recognizes in some form (Kymlicka, 1999, p. 303).

Within a discussion on the crisis of the nation-state and the concept of modern citizenship, we cannot ignore the importance of critical stances regarding the "culturalist" emphasis of inclusion processes. G. Procacci (2008), for instance, albeit supporting the analysis of the current crisis facing citizenship, expresses a critical position with regards multiculturalism: "its insistence on ethnicity as the heart of culture brings it, in fact, to deal only with minorities; in receiving societies, majorities still forcefully resist the idea of thinking of themselves in ethnic terms […] This inevitably leads to the ethnicization of social conflicts" (Procacci, 2008, p. 111). According to the author, the inclusion/exclusion dilemma must necessarily be tackled, in order to deal with the various difficulties in activating political, civil and social citizenship rights for immigrants. Citizenship policies appear to be subordinated to immigration policies, which are generally oriented in a restrictive sense. This means citizenship fails to be considered as an integration factor for immigrants, which in turn leads to the prevalence of policies based on control and limitation (Procacci, 2008, pp. 115-116).

Citizenship in contemporary society – also as a result of the impact with immigration – shows that there is no way around certain dilemmas, such as the inclusion/exclusion dilemma, and, more generally, the crucial importance of belonging and thus of the community dimension with respect to formal principles and statements. In sum, citizenship today appears to be a differentiated concept, less solid and homogenous than its initial theorisation. If, on the one hand, it is borne from universal rights, it is also less contstrained by territorial or national binds and from the juridical principle of belonging. One can thus speak of a "contextual universalism" (Beck, 2003), which leads to the question of how universalistic principles are interpreted and applied in different parts of the world, but is also the premise for interventions in conflicts and in violations of human rights.

In this direction, the dimension of *residence,* defined as a *new space of citizenship*, for the development of real citizenship practices rather than pure formal attribution, acquires significance (Baglioni, 2009). If one looks closely, in our contemporary – multicultural and cosmopolitan – society the issue of belonging and of identity are posed in a novel fashion: cultural identity becomes "a mosaic" and personal identity is multiplied and

discursive (Besozzi, 2006), founded on recognition as a "dimension of intersubjectivity" (Crespi, 2004) and on multiple belongings (local, national, transnational)[11]. A new vision emerges regarding the existential condition of each and every one of us: that of *multiple belongings*, represented as a case in point by the condition of the migrant subject. The migrant subject is often a transnational subject, that lives within different social fields, both material and symbolic, often with an ample space for reflection and decision-making, influencing the modes of inclusion and the perception of the self as a migrant or as belonging to a new national community (Pollini & Venturelli Christensen, 2002).

To conclude these introductory thoughts – which would deserve more space than is available – it is important to underline how citizenship today is increasingly plural, in light of a morphogenetic change that is leading to progressively multi-ethnic and multicultural societies. But plurality is given also by the presence of different and heterogeneous dimensions related to the experience of citizenship (political, social, cultural, economic, etc.) and to the *real discontinuities* that we can extract from the experience of individual subjects as from citizenship practices. The emphasis on the 'juridical' dimension and on the formal aspects of citizenship, especially, appears utterly insufficient to explain the multiple and diverse needs for belonging, recognition, and participation. These are new needs that also express the deep transformation in issues surrounding rights, including the emergence of new rights (cultural, cognitive, environmental, ethical, etc.), of third or fourth generation (Bobbio, 1992), that highlight further complexities in the dimensions of citizenship and of its dynamism and demand recognition especially at the policy level in terms of protection for specific groups or individuals (Baglioni, 2009, p. 135). In summary, a cosmopolitan, multiple and differentiated citizenship must overcome two classical interpretations of citizenship: the liberal interpretation, centred on the universalism of rights and the communitarian interpretation founded on

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[11] The concept of transnationalism is beyond the scope of this paper, but could find ample space for analysis, as it is employed in various ways and different fields, opening a new perspective for analysis and an ample debate that is still open (Ambrosini, 2008). Here, the concept of transnationalism is used to explain a rupture in a univocal cultural belonging to a community or a group and therefore the formation, under the influence of a multiplicity of contacts and experiences, of a multiple and open identity. It is evident how there is a connection between transnationalism and globalization, although it would be incorrect – both theoretically and empirically – to assume they are synonymous.

belonging to a well defined and cohesive community (Cesareo, 2000). It is therefore possible, today, to outline a re-conceptualization of citizenship on the basis of a close combination of rights and needs for belonging, in order to avoid a dichotomous and juxtaposed view of contemporary reality, which is distant from the direct observation of the experience of citizenship or from the multiple forms of exclusion. The explicit reference is to what P. Donati (1993, p. 299) calls "societal citizenship", which outlines citizenship as a dynamic process that expresses "the concrete mobilization of energies, resources, values and networking practices of different *social freedoms* within a context of universalistic guarantees", in contrast to a purely contractual vision of citizenship and an atomistic and individualistic conception of the subject. Citizenship thus becomes a "sociality of human rights, visible in real-life social formations and in processes of continuous intermediation. Citizenship rights are in this way redeemed from purely instrumental interpretations, in order to be relocated within human existence, which gives value to exchanges founded on reciprocal obligations, where each subject can rediscover the meaning of being together day after day. What becomes evident here is the importance of citizenship education here becomes evident as, more generally, that of educational policies in shaping individual needs for belonging and self-realization, in the context of an active and responsible participation.

Educational and citizenship policies. Elements for a discussion on equality, diversity, and merit

The previous considerations on the making of modern citizenship and on its recent and deep transformations highlight an essential connection between education and citizenship and, more specifically, how the strategic function of the making of the citizen has, since its inception, been assigned to schools. At the heart of citizenship we have the issue of *equality,* and educational systems, time and time again, have had to deal directly with this fundamental principle of modern citizenship. One can underline how the *equality of opportunities presents a challenge to educational and training policies*, but it is also evident how its interpretation and consequent legal actions are articulated differently over time, also in relation to a progressive maturation of concrete issues posed by the presence of a school population that has profoundly changed over time. In what follows I will

try to offer a brief overview of educational policies (with reference especially to Italy), considering the realization of the (social) right to education and thus of different contemporary interpretations in the face of more or less novel citizenship claims.

Equality of opportunities in relation to education

It is well known that the development of schools as institutions is in close relation with the growing expectations of that new social class – the bourgeoisie – that grows and develops with industrial society. The model of the *bourgeois family*, well described by Peter Berger (1984), is founded on a strong *ethos* and on the care of internal and external relationships: the model of the bourgeois family corresponds both to a process of rationalization of family life and to the development of the process of individualization and therefore of the appreciation of the single subject within it (Berger, 1984, pp. 164-165). The author emphasised how the bourgeois family – for its 'tight knit' structure which represents a sort of 'revolutionary' form compared to consolidated models up to the 1700s – has been the motor of modernization and a role model for other social classes and for the bourgeoning school system. The values that characterized the bourgeois family are, on the one hand, a particular emphasis on the ethical and normative dimensions and, on the other hand, a specific attention to children's development and care, with the central role of women in the creation of a balance between individualism and social responsibility or, in other words, between the development of individual *acquirement* and a sense of altruism. The bourgeois family therefore develops a specific lifestyle, centred upon a separation between private life and public commitments, with an attention to the home, the education of children, to 'good taste' and to reciprocal 'respect'. More generally, we can note how the school, as a *formal acquisitive institution*, set between the family and the workplace, takes on a significant role in education as well as a new placement for human resources. But it is important to emphasize, for the implications in terms of the analysis of rights to education and to equality of opportunity, that schools are first and foremost an answer to the needs of a specific class, the bourgeoisie, whose typical characteristics and values it has come to adopt. This will be one of the crucial aspects of the ample debate in the '60s on equality of opportunity and thus on the efficiency and efficacy of schools in terms of academic results.

During its development, schools are clearly assigned two fundamental functions: that of *socialization* and that of *selection* (Besozzi, 2006).

The socialization function takes place along two dimensions: the cognitive and the moral. According to Talcott Parsons (1972) the fundamental criterion through which the teacher operates is that of *achievement* (success), which represents a discriminating category adopted by schools to promote learning among students, rewarding their efforts and thus differentiating them according to various levels of cognitive and moral achievements which, in the future, will correspond to a diversified distribution of roles and social positions. Schools are, therefore, a multifaceted learning space, not only a place for the education of new generations. The moral dimension, which is certainly not irrelevant, impacts on the same evaluation set that the teacher undertakes for each pupil, and will end up also being at the basis of that "moral merit", believed to be a prime requirement for personal success (Abravanel, 2008).

The second function of schooling is that of selection, closely connected to the process of teaching-learning, via which schools test the abilities of individuals and direct them towards different educational careers and work opportunities. Since its identification, this function has been linked directly with one of the intrinsic characteristics of the process of school learning, the evaluation of results. The role of evaluating learning implies a selection of the most able, the most deserving, the 'best'; in other words, a selection of those who express a full correspondence with the expectations of the teacher and the educational system. One can thus clearly appreciate the fact that *schools cannot avoid evaluation* but, at the same time, the dilemma emerges plainly: how to evaluate? In relation to a learning standard or in relation to the progresses made by each pupil? More generally, the issue that must be posed is that of *merit*: what does it depend on? What hides behind merit? How is it constructed?

The reference to an old-standing and complex debate is here fully evident. It was in the second half of the last century, during the process of democratization of education and of a widespread and shared idea of scholarization as a fundamental right, and with the *realization of the principles of equality*, that support for the idea that the selective function of schools ought to be eliminated took hold. It is a position that contains an explicit condemnation of the inequalities present in the classroom and not considered by schools. It is important to emphasise how, still today in Italy, the term 'selection' as applied to schools generates many resistances, so much so that the term has gone in disuse in favour of an apparently more neutral term, that of 'school drop-out'. But this has only generated further

confusion – rather than clarity – surrounding the problem of school selection. It is especially important to stress how, over and beyond ideological interpretations, selection ought to be reconsidered, in order to avoid the impossibility of going to the core of school functioning. We will come back to the problem of selection later, dealing with the issue of merit more directly.

In sum, given the organizational asset of the school system, its functioning and its scope, selection – so closely connected with evaluation – appears as an inextricable part of the process. As part of their selective function, schools also possess a *certifying* power, whose relevance, Gasperoni (1997, p. 98) observes, "transcends the relationship between teacher and learner. Through evaluations schools certify, to the eyes of others (Higher Education, the workplace, etc.) that any individual who has successfully completed an educational cycle has a given set of knowledge and skills […]. In other words, the activity of evaluating implies important functions and represents a central element of school practice".

Clearly, reconsidering schools' evaluative function doesn't mean supporting the return to selection according to forms considered amply out of date, but rather rendering explicit those processes and mechanisms which currently take place in schools and surrounding which there often fails to be sufficient critical thought.

It is more useful, therefore, to discuss the aims, the criteria and the modes of selection today. The debate in the '60s and '70s left an important legacy, that of *selection connected with academic and career oriented evaluation*, which focuses attention not only on the idea of a *standard* or of objective results, but also on the constructive process of learning and therefore on the results achieved by the subject in his or her academic career. This means putting the accent on those aspects of differentiation and personalization of curricula and of learning rhythms and enabling us to rethink the selection process more effectively, in terms of the reality of contemporary schools and their functioning, within the broader perspective on *scholastic success* that has emerged in recent years (Colombo, 2010).

More generally, we can note how, acknowledging the unavoidability of the selection process, it is possible to pay closer attention to those processes of inclusion and exclusion – that took place in the past but which can still be observed – and to examine Italy's educational policies.

It was in the second half of the 20th century that the debate on equality of opportunities in education came to the fore of discussion, in a radically

new fashion, as a result of school entry of children from all social classes. Such widespread access to education is the result of a process of increased awareness regarding the importance of a generalized basic scholarization for all. Indeed, the post-war years in Italy have been marked by a crucial social and political dilemma, which Marzio Barbagli (1974, p. 21) has defined the *selection/socialization dilemma*, that points to an opposition between two radically different positions: that of operating a strong school selection in order to produce future leaders and professionals, versus that of privileging the school's educational and socialization role, accepting the greatest possible number of pupils in order to guarantee the social integration of new generations.

It is evident that in those years the new constitutional order pressed for the democratization of access to education and culture and thus for a consolidation of the literacy rate, as well as for greater access to post-elementary school levels, which in the Italy of the '50s and '60s was still more of a goal than a reality. According to the 1961 census, over 24% of the population was still illiterate or literate but without any certifications, 60% had only an elementary school certificate, and those with a degree were 1.3%. Despite this backwardness in the level of education of the population, however, the 1950s political debate for a reform of the school system continued to highlight deep divisions regarding the educational model proposed, an example of which was the battle for the preservation/abolition of Latin in the soon-to-be reformed middle school. This debate highlights two positions: one which defends a humanistic culture considered by many elitist and discriminatory; the other that appears to accept the pressures posed by families, including lower-class families, for an investment in education aimed at an improvement of one's social and professional conditions.

This attitude towards investment in education is visible already in the 1950s, with the increase in rates of scholarization first in middle school and then in upper secondary school[12] and represents the aspiration of the lower social classes towards emancipation and social mobility.

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[12] Still in the 1950s compulsory schooling, extended to the 14th year already with the Gentile reform of 1923, remained largely unattended, so much so that in the academic year (a.y.) 1952-53 only 53.2% of young people aged 11-14 were enrolled in school. According to ISTAT data, however, it is precisely from the second half of the 1950s that we can observe a rise in rates of enrolment in middle school: in the a.y. 1959-60 students enrolled in middle school were 1,311,000, with a rise in the last 5 years of 405,000 new students. The

The law that formally ratifies the opening of the Italian school system is the institution of a universal and compulsory middle school (law n. 1859, 31 December 1962), which marks the passage from an elitist institution to a school *for all*, precisely because of the fall of the double binary system present until then[13]. We can assume that the creation of a universal middle school represents, on the one hand, the result of a long and complex debate on schooling that began in the post-war years and of the efforts towards a general project of reforms of education in relation to the mandates of the Constitution and of the republican state. On the other hand, this normative change sanctions the increased demand for education and the desire for social improvement among the lower classes. In general terms, this new normative asset regarding the base segment of scholarization in Italy reconsiders and reformulates *the issue of access*, but also, in a much more evident fashion, raises questions regarding processes of inclusion and exclusion that accompany the growth of scholarization rates and the gradual process of universalization of lower and upper secondary school from the second half of the last century to the present day. Indeed, although this reform of a segment of the school system[14] constructs, from the '60s onwards, core schooling as a place for the affirmation of the right to access and thus of equal opportunities, it immediately becomes evident that there

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rise of enrolments in upper secondary schools is also visible between the mid-1950s and the beginning of the 1960s: from 1956 to 1961 upper secondary school students go from 70,000 to 123,586. The expansion of upper secondary school has already started in the 30s and let us stress the significant contribution of female enrolment rates already since the 20s and then in a consistent number in the post-war years (Fadiga & Zanatta, 1976).

[13] The double binary was represented by middle school for those who continued studying versus vocational and professional schooling for those that would then enter directly in the workplace.

[14] Universal middle school, despite its inclusive tendency, still represents a process of partial reform, as it is part of an organization of the overall system of education that remains unaltered for years. In order to have the new programmes of elementary school we will have to wait until 1985, when demanding programmes that created a sort of "secondarization" of elementary school and led to the reform Law n. 148 (1990) were introduced. These included modules, recognizing the need to entrust more than one teacher with the task of completing programmes that require in-depth abilities and knowledge. For its part, since the 60s, upper secondary schools will be the object of discussions and reforms that will only come together with the approval of the law 53/2003 (Moratti law) and the measures taken to reorganize lyceums and reformulate technical and vocational education (DPR n. 87, 88, 89 of 15.03.2010). This was an important reform that introduced important changes for educational career choices in the second cycle of education.

is a need to reconsider *the way equality of opportunities in education are to be understood*, in order to overcome a conception of equality as pure formal access. In other words, it is precisely as a result of the consolidation of the universal middle school, as well as of the further expansion of enrolment rates in upper secondary school, that we can observe how equality of access ensures the possibility of entering the educational system at its various levels, but *not a full and optimal fruition nor positive results among many students*. In fact, it is precisely the 'school of the masses' that will render social inequality visible, as it enters and manifests itself forcefully in the classroom both in middle and upper secondary schools. In other words, the inequality of access, which takes place in all the school systems in the West from the second half of the 20th century onwards, doesn't correspond to a full realization of the equality of opportunities.

As J. S. Coleman (1968) observed long ago, if the equality of educational opportunities is understood as the equal possibility of exposure to a specific curriculum, two profoundly different visions emerge regarding how this is to be intended and achieved. Whereas a liberal ideology emphasises the *equality of access* and a *meritocratic conception*, on the basis of a belief in equal starting positions, with a legitimation of inequalities in outcomes, a Marxist and socialist ideology posits that equality of opportunity concerns not only access but also the achievement of positive results (*equality in outcomes*). This latter conception expresses a *substantial vision* of equality, in contrast to the liberal approach, which can be defined as a *formal vision*, based on a universalistic principle of access and participation.

More generally, we can stress how, in the light of the progressive openness in school systems, we are observing a transformation of the above mentioned dilemma (selection or socialization?). Indeed, at this point it is no longer a question of deciding on access (who can enter and who can't), but rather on the *conditions and possibilities of remaining in the educational system*. The selection process in schools thus clashes directly with the issue of equality of opportunities (*selection or equality?*). Here the focus of the analysis moves from the issue of equality of opportunities to that of *inequalities in education*, with a development of the analysis of factors that impact on school success. As is well known, it is at this point that, also in the Italian context, the theory of cultural reproduction of education, whose major exponent is the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1972) come to the fore. According to Bourdieu, schools are not a space for

individual promotion and social mobility, but rather institutions geared towards cultural and social reproduction (of dominant cultural models and of existing social hierarchies).

The *selection or equality?* dilemma clearly sheds light on a tension that emerges around schools' selective function. Indeed, it becomes evident, also for those that tend towards selectiveness in schools, that there is a need for a *redefinition of the criteria adopted*, especially because it appears clear how traditional selective mechanisms produce "early school leavers" in the form of failures, repeat years and drop-outs especially among students coming from lower social strata.

In the 60s there is a first focalization of the problem of *drop outs*, that is to say of all those pupils that fall out of a regular school career, often in a remarkably visible way, accumulating repeat years or managing to complete compulsory education but without achieving a final certification; a trend that appears consistent at least until the end of the 1980s[15]. Indeed, in the 70s and 80s repeat years in elementary school decrease progressively, to the point of becoming only rare occurrences[16], whereas the opposite tendency is true of middle schools, where students who are repeating a year tend to increase. As Daniele Checchi (1997) observed almost ten years ago, if it's true that rates of middle school attendance increased since the reform was introduced (20% in 1945, 59% in 1962, 100% in 1975), those who obtained a middle school license (i.e., *licenza di scuola media*) in the same sample reach 100% only in 1989. Between 1951 and 1991 there is still a variable percentage of 8-9% that hasn't achieved the title. "There is a 'hard core' of the population which is impermeable to the completion of compulsory schooling. This core is based in middle school, which appears not to have reached a situation of complete efficacy, perhaps also as a result of the selection instruments adopted" (Checchi, 1997, p. 94).

Such results will highlight the need to revisit the concept of equality of opportunity in the direction of looking more closely at how school systems work and how they measure efficiency and efficacy. Luciano Benadusi (2006) emphasises precisely this deep change in the way equality of

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[15] In the a.y. 1972-73, ten years after the introduction of a universal middle school, retained students in 1st grade are 7.7%, whereas in 6th grade they represent 10.1%.

[16] In the a.y. 1986-87 retained students in elementary school are l'1.2% in 1st grade, in 6th grade they are l'11.7%, in 7th grade 8.5%, and in 8th grade 4.2% (ISTAT and Censis data).

opportunity is considered, which increasingly ought to become an analysis of *school quality* and of the process of teaching/learning.

But who are these pupils that fail to succeed, that are retained often more than once, or who are early school leavers?

The debates of the past decades among the various positions are well known. However, we can also note a convergence in the interpretation of the causes of school failure. Liberal theories highlight the *deprivation* and *cultural poverty* of many pupils that come from the lower social classes. In this diagnosis the emphasis is put especially on the *loss of human capital* and on *the waste of talent*, that is to say on those human resources that, albeit gifted, cannot sustain the educational commitment due to the lack of adequate cultural resources. In contrast, within conflict-oriented neo-Marxist approaches, Pierre Bourdieu (with Passeron, 1971) emphasises the weight of *cultural inheritance*, convincingly stating that often *merit masks privilege*.

In relation to the debate on equality of opportunities in education and the unmasking of those factors that impact on school failure, in the last decades of the 20th century there has been a prevalence, especially in Italian schools, of the application of the principle of inclusion, in the direction of 'a school for all'. The use of terms like selection and merit has been criticised in various contexts, while compensatory measures aimed at reducing the initial gap among students are sought after. It is a conspicuous effort, especially considering a highly heterogeneous student population in terms of social and cultural origins and differences in motivations, expectations, learning requirements and, especially, in the presence of a consistent and multifaceted phenomenon of school failure – albeit progressively more evident at the level of upper secondary schooling, in a sort of 'deferred selection', whose effect is that of unburdening compulsory education from dealing with the issue of selection in a novel fashion, in light of a population that has radically changed its composition and its characteristics.

Considering the most recent data, in the last couple of years, one can observe an overall improvement of the rates of scholarization and longer schooling and/or training careers. This is a result of a national and regional effort to comply with the new legislation on rights and duties regarding mandatory education and training now set to age 18 (Law 53/2003) and of

the creation of DDIF courses for basic triennial training[17]. The objectives of the 2000 European Council of Lisbon, which called for the reduction of young people aged 18-24 without upper secondary school certification and not in training (*early school leavers*) to 10% across all European countries, however, in Italy have not been met. In 2006, 20.8% of young people only had a middle school licence and were not enrolled in any training programme, in contrast to a European average of 15.3%. The most recent data from 2013 – albeit indicating an improvement – still highlights the distance between Italy and the European average: in 2012 the incidence of young people aged 18-24 with only a middle school licence and no longer in training is 17.6% compared to the European average of 12.8% (Mpi, 2013).

In terms of failures, repeat school years, and drop-outs, the last decades has seen a transformation of the phenomena of selection and school drop-out: the decrease in early school leavers, especially in middle school, is associated with a rise in failures[18].

But the most striking data indicates the presence of a *covert selection* in parallel with an overt selection: many students formally achieve the middle school license albeit with visible gaps in learning (Perone, 2006). This must be considered an important indicator of how schools – and especially mandatory schooling – haven't undertaken a transformation of the teaching-learning processes, but only tweaks aimed at complying with the formal requirements in terms of the principle of equality and with the now widespread criteria of equality of outcomes, without paying full and close attention to the individual and his or her actual learning outcomes.

The egalitarian perspective, particularly present in Italy both in schools and in the workplace (Bianco, 2009), pursued in a univocal fashion – without paying attention to the real aspects of teaching-learning processes, such as the needs of gifted children with few resources or stimuli or who get bored in a levelled or low profile teaching environment or, again, of

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[17] Triennial modules of initial education and training have been activated with the State-Region Agreement of 19th June 2003. Thee courses offer a national-level qualification.
[18] According to Ministerial data (Mpi, 2011) in the a.y. 2009-10 rates of failure (non-admission to the next academic year) affected 4.8% of those enrolled in middle school and 14,5% of those enrolled in upper secondary school. The passage from one educational level to another still appears attention-worthy: 6th grade fails 5.5% of students, 9th grade 20.4%. School failure is particularly evident in vocational institutes (21% not admitted to the following year) and technical institutes (18.5% not admitted).

students with disabilities or of foreign students – appears increasingly weak, especially because the inevitable consequence is a general lowering of learning standards, which recent OCSE-PISA studies have already highlighted regarding the performances of 15-year-old Italian students compared to other countries[19].

The issue of merit

In recent years, also as a result of a relevant effort made in Europe to deal with the problem of school dropout and in order to create incentives for the acquisition of higher educational certificates, Italy has committed to improving the existing delay compared to other European countries. The elevation of compulsory schooling to age 18 and the redetermination of the end of compulsory schooling to age 16 have generated an improvement in the rates of scholarization, but also the need for a different analysis of academic success in order to prevent and contain failures and drop-outs before reaching certification (Colombo, 2010).

School policies in this last decade, however, clearly highlight the challenges in developing linear and coherent strategies, but also the great uncertainty in conjugating equality of opportunity and merit. The debate on the equity of schools (previously called "justice in education") has struggled to take off due to a resistance in rethinking an interpretation of equality of opportunity as decidedly un-differentiated, indifferent to diversities and differences, which flattens students' overall performances downwards and contributes to their demotivation (Bianco, 2009, p. 194).

In order to reconsider the issue of the relationship between *the right to equality and the right to merit*, we must *immediately get rid of a misunderstanding which states that pursuing equality means ignoring diversity and differences*. In this perspective, equality is understood, in a completely reductive fashion, as the uniformity of careers and outcomes, giving little emphasis to talents, motivations, expectations, personal requirements and the need for differentiation. But, even within this approach, one can nonetheless observe the persistence of inequalities and the emergence of new forms of exclusion. The fact that there continues to

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[19] The PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) studies measure the level of proficiency reached by 15 year old students in various subject areas (mathematics, reading, science, problem solving). Proficiency is measured in terms of abilities and the possibility of using them in everyday life (Bratti, Checchi & Filippin, 2007).

be an 'educational segregation' on the basis of social or socio-cultural origins is not irrelevant, and determines the fact that family background and citizenship (Italian versus non-Italian) determine upper secondary school choices. The most recent research (Ballarino, Checchi, 2006; Cavalli, Argentin, 2007; Ballarino, 2008; Besozzi, 2009) clearly shows the link between social stratification, choices and educational outcomes. If the weight of economic factors as an influence on educational choices and continuing education appears partly reduced, the significant role of parents' cultural capital, especially in terms of educational qualifications, considered a *predictor* of children's academic and professional careers, emerges clearly. Nor is it irrelevant that those most affected by school selection are students with a low cultural and social capital that schools aren't able to compensate. In general, especially in the Italian context, merit continues to be largely influenced by the economic and especially cultural advantages available to the student. Many recent studies suggest schools still seem to operate as a space which, for the most part, confirms a student's cultural inheritance, in a sort of *inertia* that is not able to increment the social and cultural capital of every student. Therefore, conjugating merit and equity appears to be one of the major challenges for educational and training policies.

In order to exit this stalemate one must immediately get rid of a misunderstanding and overcome a false dilemma that puts equality against difference. As we have seen, equality belongs to the sphere of rights and concerns those social relations that are created between individuals, where there is a process of evaluation, of appreciation and therefore the preference for certain characteristics rather than others. Diversity and difference[20], on the other hand, refer to individual or group characteristics such as sex or ethnicity (diversity) or those measurable characteristics such as intelligence, stature, income, and age. These attributes receive a different weight during social interaction, which defines the possibility of gaining access (or not) to social resources.

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[20] The terms diversity and difference are often used in an interchangeable fashion, although they refer to two different characteristics of the subject: diversity refers to qualitative attributes (sex, citizenship, language, etc.) whereas difference refers to characteristics that can be measured or ordered (educational level, income, stature, weight, etc.). he subjects in education present characteristics both of diversity and of difference. The production of inequalities corresponds to a differential treatment of diversity or difference, but appears sensibly more unfair in terms of diversity. For a more in-depth analysis, see Besozzi, 2006.

It is precisely the distinction between the two terms – that of inequality and that of diversity or difference –that enables us see the opportunity for new analyses aimed a better understanding the mechanisms and the reasons that determine individual academic choices and success, within structural and normative constraints. In light of this distinction, we can make it clear that the *equality/difference dilemma* should not be a problem, as we ought to focus not on alternatives or oppositions but on putting both instances at the forefront and therefore attempting to conjugate the right to equality (equal opportunity to access, fruition, and treatment) with the right to be different, therefore to individualization and personalization of choices and careers.

Specifically, the recognition of a right to difference puts the question of choice and the intentionality of actors at the centre of the debate. Thinking about diversity and difference in education thus means introducing a different interpretation of the same social conditionings and accepting the possibility that the subject may take them into account and therefore begin to question expectations and constraints, with the recognition of degrees of freedom for the subject. These considerations lead us also to relocate the issue of equality of opportunity within a debate on equity, which as L. Benadusi (2006, p. 22) points out, are not at all synonymous terms. Indeed, although equality and equity can be considered two principles of the same kind, with the term equity we mean "not putting aside, but problematizing and relativizing the concept of equality, which has always been considered in a non problematic form in the past, as if it referred to a simple, clear object, whose meaning was incontrovertible and susceptible to precise measurement". In sum, the concept of equity rethinks equality and problematizes it, offering the possibility of 'fair' inequalities and taking a distance from uniformity, which always ends up being profoundly unfair.

This brings us to don Lorenzo Milani's great intuition. The educational choices of the Minister of Barbiana represented a challenge both for the time (the 1960s) and for the pedagogical climate, but have becomes even more relevant today. For don Milani, egalitarian optimism and the defence of the principle of equity, as forms of equality of treatment, in fact mask an intense selective action often reiterated on the same subject. It is precisely the attention he brings to difference among students in a classroom, connected both to traits like intelligence and personal effort and to different social and cultural conditions, that represents a turning point of radical discontinuity with the modes school functioning in the 60s. Rather than

being fascinated by the myth of equality that led to the institution of a universal middle school, he takes on and deconstructs a paradox, stating that "there is nothing more unfair than making equal parts among what is unequal"[21].

In sum, with the experience of the school of Barbiana, don Milani sets the basis for the construction of a pedagogical action based on two fundamental rights, one relative to the subject – the right to difference, to uniqueness, to be oneself – the other, relative to the relationship between people – the right to equal opportunities, to equity, to justice.

This process of increasing sensibility to the issue of differences has had a significant acceleration in the last two decades and has led to an increased attention to the various forms of difference and diversity, such as disability and, more recently, to those students that come from various parts of the world and for whom there is a need for further research and for good practices of reception, inclusion, and educational integration.

The debate in the last few years has focused primarily on this challenge of trying to conjugate equality and diversity/difference. This has not been merely an affirmation of principle, but also a concrete effort to develop good practices that can limit the numerous pitfalls and hazards that systematically endanger educational discourses, such as an emphasis on meritocracy without having developed its criteria or foundations or the exasperation of differentialism, that becomes early stigmatization of canalization.

In the light of the arguments developed thus far, it appears evident that the question of equity in education cannot disregard a consideration of the diversities and differences of individuals or groups. The maturation of such awareness is a slow and largely onerous process, as it implies putting at the core of the teaching-learning process both the individual student and his or her opportunities, and the teacher, with his or her pedagogical-didactic skills and ability to simultaneously keep under control both a global process and end goals that must be met and individual paths of appropriation and elaboration of knowledge and skills.

In the same way, the problem of merit – meritocracy – that has recently been amply covered in debates and in the development of educational and

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[21] Barbiana School (1992). *Lettera a una professoressa*. Firenze: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, p. 55.

school policies[22], cannot be considered a goal of educational and training systems without an adequate consideration of to those dynamics that are taking place in terms of equality of opportunity and differentiation of gifts, motivations, expectations. The issue of merit, approached from this perspective, clearly demonstrates the need for the application of an *un-equal treatment* of all those gifted students with scarce possibilities of demonstrating their talent, given the lack of stimuli, the limited focus on achievement, already underdeveloped within the family environment, the cultural distance with a school culture founded on writing and abstract thinking, that requires rich and articulate linguistic skills for the development of knowledge.

On the other hand, merit should enable the diversification of results, allowing excellence to emerge and restoring schools' high mission, that of *taking care of talent*. All the studies and research in this area highlight that the road to undertake for the re-foundation of a 'fair' meritocracy is that of *freeing merit as much as possible from background social and cultural conditionings*.

From a concern with 'the best' (who are often children of the higher and privileged classes) to a 'cultivation of talents', with an awareness that there are different forms of intelligence and various possibilities in which talent, and thus merit, can be expressed (Bruner, 1988). Talent is spread across the school population and finding it often requires effort and skill.

Put in these terms, the *question of meritocracy* corresponds to the issue of human capital and talent wastage and brings to the fore a debate that has been open for the last few decades, that of *school quality*, measured on the two axes of efficiency and efficacy.

Efficiency refers to the construction of an optimal balance between means and ends, in order to reach a positive balance with reference to the activation and the use of available resources and to the goals identified. Efficacy, on the other hand, considers and measures the impact of educational actions and their ability to transform and increase available resources. Otherwise put, efficacy sheds light on the extent to which an educational context is able to impact on the development and improvement of any given situation. It is evident that this concerns primarily subjects in education, where educational efficacy corresponds precisely to the capacity

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[22] See Roger Abravanel's (2008) volume and the debate that followed on the media and in various blogs on the internet.

for the emergence of an individual's (or a group's) intellectual, relational and moral potential in order to bring it to its fullest development.

With reference to these considerations, we can note the distance from the parameters of efficiency and efficacy shown in many school contexts. We have mentioned the risk of inertia and waste of both social and human capital, inside and outside of schools. More generally, there is reason to believe that there are important, and to some extent worrisome, transformations that are occurring with regards to the construction and consolidation both of cultural and of social capital and their connections and influences on new generations' educational choices and school outcomes. J. S. Coleman (2005, p. 390) defines social capital as that capital "incorporated in *relations* between people" that is "created when relations between people change the ways that facilitate action". What is crucial in this concept is the dimension of *reciprocal trust*. This means that social capital can be spent within interactive situations, in exchange processes that broaden and benefit also those who have not directly created that type of social capital. Today we see increasingly diversified situations that can present a lack of synergy and therefore a dissociation between social and cultural capital, or that present weak social capital and strong cultural capital or vice versa. Subjects with strong cultural capital – as is often the case of migrants – find themselves in an exceedingly weak position in relation to the main exchange processes of a given society, with a weakness in terms of recognisability, appreciation, and trust. Conversely, subjects with strong social capital derived from their consolidated structural position can end up with cultural capital that is inert or scarcely spendable or weakened by the incapacity of remaining within educational systems or in information and knowledge circuits. This is the case of many students that come from a background of social and cultural advantage, but whose family cultural legacy is inert, that schools appreciate only as *positional income*, confirming a situation which is destined to be culturally poor, with problematic outcomes in terms of human capital as well with respect to economic and social development.

Conclusions. Developing citizens from here and elsewhere

In the concluding remarks we cannot avoid a reference to the supranational European dimension, especially to emphasise the importance

of a wider context that has been important for Italy not only as a catalyst in overcoming stagnancy in school policies, but also in inaugurating a new season of reflections surrounding the challenge of equality of opportunities and equity in education. Europe and international exchanges more generally have no doubt been the motor for the creation of policies in line with the development of specific education and training systems in recent years, defining the goals for investment in education, standards of learning, and introducing issues such as the evaluation of institutions, of teachers and of students.

As is well known, the European Comission's report *EUROPE 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* outlines the strategies for the next ten years and, among its main objectives, there is a reduction in the rate of school drop-out to under 10% and an increase in higher education degrees among at least 40% of young people. How is this goal to be realized? With what policies and strategies? The Commission, amongst its seven priority actions, introduces a programme for young people, *Youth on the move*, in order to improve the efficiency of educational systems and support young people's entrance in the job market. Specifically, at the national level, Member States will have to:

- guarantee efficient investments in educational and training systems at all levels (from pre-primary schools to higher education);
- improve results in each educational segment (pre-primary, primary, secondary, professional and higher education) via an integrated programme that includes fundamental skills and aims to reduce school drop-out;
- improve the openness and relevance of educational systems creating national frameworks for qualifications and aiming to better integrate results in the educational sector with the needs of the job market;
- foster the entry of young people in the job market via integrated actions that includes, among others, counselling, guidance and traineeships.

The specific attention to young people is also outlined in another 2010 European document, dedicated to Vocational Education and Training (VET)[23], which reads:

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[23] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Council and the Committee of the Regions. *A new impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 strategy*, Brussels, 9.6.2010.

> The more vocational education and training goes beyond the pure labour market aspect, the more it will promote equity. VET can support both development of people's professional and social identities and their sense of belonging to communities of practice. This contributes to social capital, trust and integration in societies. Key competences for active citizenship can be developed through curricula, participative working methods, through learners' participation in decision making and through partnerships between VET providers, local communities and civil society organisations.

It is an ambitious programme that inaugurates an explicit discourse on education to citizenship, anchoring it closely to education and training experiences that are not always confined to sectorial professional or job skills, but rather in relation to local contexts and to the subject's reflective abilities. The emphasis placed on participation outlines a clear attention to the making of citizenship among new generations, in the face of the condition of young generations that, in Italy especially, face countless challenges to citizenship, exposed to uncertainty and marginal with respect to civil and political participation (Baglioni, 2007), and affected by a "restricted sociality" (de Lillo, 2002), which makes the experience of citizenship itself inactive.

Europe continues to be the reference point if we consider the directions of integration policies for the children of immigrants. The 2008 Green Book emphasised the learning and outcome challenges (with direct reference to the PIRLS and PISA data), consistent drop-out, and early canalization in vocational training institutes, arguing that in various European countries the educational system has not been an integration factor for migrant students and the deterioration in educational level risks penalizing and increasing social exclusion amongst this cohort.

In general, the argument is that, at the school system level, the large concentration of migrant students can increase the tendency – already present even in the best systems – to segregation on the basis of socio-economic criteria. This can take different forms: students from more privileged backgrounds can leave schools where there are more migrant pupils. Whatever the mechanism, this phenomenon aggravates the inequalities between schools and significantly increases the challenge of ensuring equity in education. The Commission concludes observing that the presence of foreign students *poses a real educational challenge*, that must

always be considered in the broader context of social cohesion. Indeed, the failure of full integration among the children of migrants in schools may generate a more ample failure of social integration. In sum, the Commission clearly observes that if the children of migrants leave school and the experience of poor outcomes and segregation continues in their adult life, this pattern is likely to be reproduced in the next generation. On the contrary, if schools manage to carry out their role, the children of migrants will be ready to successfully undertake the route of full integration in the job market and in society. In this way a positive school experience among migrant students pursues the goals of equity and efficacy.

The presence of foreign students in Italian schools has revived the question of equality of opportunity and equity, but recent political decisions do not seem able to go beyond contingent measures and sectorial actions. This 'new' presence and the citizenship instances it brings with it (Colombo & Santagati, 2014) unveils a general shortcoming that is still present in educational policies in Italy, that of not being very sensitive to the development of an interdependency with the contexts and actors of educational practices, placing the emphasis on participation, engagement, and commitment (Scannagatta & Maccarini, 2009). Policies are often activated in response to emergency situations of specific institutional or political targets, but tend to be weak in terms of activation of a virtuous circuit between decision-makers and end users.

As a conclusion to this exploration of the relationship between citizenship and educational policies, it appears important to pose the question of *citizenship education, as a fundamental element for the activation both of large scale strategies and of good practices on the pedagogical-didactic level.*

Citizenship education enables us to give substance to the needs of belonging and self-realization of each subject, but in the broader and multiform context of active and responsible participation.

One must, however, first clear the ground from possible misunderstandings.

Firstly, citizenship education is not a particular or perhaps the 'best' declination of civicness, but is rather to be intended as a real 'connective tissue' of the experience of development and thus represents the heart of pedagogical action and, more generally, of educational policies. Citizenship education doesn't concern merely a subject's agency, meaning that it's aim

is not only that of rendering individuals more competent and able in the exercise of their rights and in the respect of values, norms, rules. Rather, citizenship education is founded on the experience of the other, as the basis of sociality and of the possibility of developing cooperation and responsibility. The dimension of the other also activates a set of questions regarding the construction of identity, of belonging and in this way creates the premises not only for living well in society, but also for constructing society, opening it to a continuous and well-rooted *experience of Us.*

In sum, citizenship education is *education to a common political culture* via the deliberative process. As S. Dell'Avanzato (2010, p. 132) observes, "what we want to consider is *an educational project whose main objective is to increasingly institutionalize those procedures that promote the rational development of collective will*, and create those favourable conditions for individuals to experience the possible positive results of a meeting with the other". This is an idea of citizenship that is substantial and not only procedural, that certainly implies an emphasis and a focus on rights, but not only as a mere affirmation of principle nor as a simple manifestation of personal needs. Citizenship education carries with it an evident reference to the question of inequalities, of equal opportunity, of equity and of justice, and thus inevitably leads one to consider the presence of others, and one's personal investment in relation to others. Citizenship education is therefore learning about the exercise of rights, but also an education to otherness, to the ability to establish and develop social relations oriented to living together, to solidarity, to sharing material and symbolic goods.

What we want to emphasise here is the role that citizenship education comes to fulfil today, defining it a real 'connective tissue' of education in its broadest sense. In a multicultural and multimedia society, it is the dimension of citizenship that frees the subject from a set of risks inherent in the ample freedom to act and in the lack of meaningful points of reference. The subject that feels he or she is a 'citizen' activates effective connections between knowledge and relations, transforming them in skills to live his or her life fully with and through others. Citizenship education is therefore rooted deeply in the subject's experience, often characterized by multiple positionings, by participation to different contexts and areas of life, that require continuous recompositions, where the subject's reflexivity and communicative skills become absolutely fundamental tools in the reconstruction of a biographical unity. We can state with Dubet (1994, pp.

92-93) that citizenship education is to all effects and purposes a "way of constructing the world", an activity that "structures the fluid character of 'life'". It is only the strong construction of a continuous and rooted experience of citizenship that enables the subject to face the hazards and the risks of contemporary reality, especially those that are often less visible, but operate in an underhand fashion and that deteriorate the very foundation of being together. The reference here is to the risk of erosion of social capital, that is of the richness of relations and of exchange processes within a community; but also to the risk of inertia that affects our individual lives, undermining any motivation to act for oneself and for others; and finally, the risk of wasting culture, talents, and human capital, that ends up impoverishing not only individuals, groups or families, but the entire community. Citizenship education as the connective tissue of education thus represents a challenge for school contexts (Santerini, 2010), but is also a key to understanding the global, intercultural and multimedia dimension of contemporary society (Luatti, 2009), as it engages each subject in a transversal fashion on tasks that are not only specific and "school-based", but are connected with a sense of being together and therefore with highlighting differences, but also deep inequalities and thus the need for their management.

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