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RESOURCES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING: TIME, MONEY AND GUIDANCE

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Introduction

«Lifelong learning encompasses all purposeful learning activity, whether formal, non-formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence» (Eurostat, September 2012). The aim is to provide people of all ages with equal and open access to high-quality learning opportunities, and to a variety of learning experiences. The Europe 2020 strategy acknowledges and support an improve of education and training, a development of skills as key elements in response to the current crisis (not only economic, but also social, values).

The combinations of this two words, “lifelong” and “learning” means that in the whole life a person can enter in relation with education and training even when he/she hasn’t any intention, or when didn’t know that happen. Therefore can learn from different activity which we can define formal, non-formal, informal. Formal education corresponds to education and training in the regular system of schools, universities, colleges, and other formal educational institutions. No-formal are structured learning activities but without a qualifications. It can or can’t take place in educational institutions and cater to persons of all ages. The last, informal training, are more invasive than others. This activities are, for example, a friendship. In other words, this sector of education and training don’t come a qualification.

«A Lifelong learning perspective imples integrating literacy and adult education in all sub-sector of education, from early childhood programmes to both formal and non-formal adult education programmes» (CONFINTA VI, sixth international conference on adult education, final report, 2009, p.16).

Promote lifelong learning mean to enable citizens at any age and any point of their life to improve and increase their knowledge, competences, capacities and interests. Expanding access to adult education can create new possibilities for active inclusion and enhance social participation (European Union, 2011). It is also believed that the commitment of national economies depends heavily on the capacity of societies to encourage and to facilitate lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning is individual path of learning, that prepares the adult to meet the demands of social living.

This increase of knowledge, skill and competence is due to globalization. Indeed, this phenomenon implies enlargement of labour market, and so need more and more constantly update own cultural background (Wikipedia., 2013). Societies and communities are constituted through and with education; the processes that permit the production and re-production of cultures are educational processes. (Ed. by Boffo V., 2012). Inculturation, education, learning and human formation are educational processes that guarantee man’s survival in the forms of different life civilizations (Ed. by Boffo V., 2012). With these aims, both governments and OECD, EU, UNESCO, promote democracy and economy growth.

In the next paragraphs, when I’ll go into the detail about the lifelong learning in Italy, I’ll use empirical data from European research which are available on line. Furthermore, I’ll talk about the mobility of governments, about Europe 2020 and in the end I’m going to do a comparison between Italy situation with other European countries. But how you’ll see, there are not much policies and social support for lifelong learning in Italy.

In detail, I’ll concentrate in the first paragraph data from research led in Eurozone, goals that Europe wants follow. «It is impossible today to understand the European

strategies for lifelong learning without examining the growing influence of the European Union and international agencies over member states, organizations, and individual learners» (Eds by Guimaraes P., Lima L., 2011 p.12) .

I'll talk about even who is, although the social inclusion policies, cut off from lifelong learning, o any form of education and training.

In the following paragraph I will talk of lifelong learning in Italy, its strengths and weaknesses. Particularly, under the guidelines of European Commission and other international organizations, how are implemented these form of learning? Who promote lifelong learning? You can understand that I'm going to deal money, time of Italian education and training.

In the end, in third paragraph I'll speak about learner's point of view, or rather the particular situation in which find the person who want change own living conditions. The transition from a level to another will be carefully analyzed in relation of learning and education's quality.

Eventually, in the conclusion, I'll write my personal consideration about lifelong learning ad even about European documents, and other paper that I had found for compiled this paper.

1. European data analysis, barriers at non-participation, Europe 2020

By statistics, did in the European territory, we can see that the proportion of the population who has participated in such lifelong learning activities is higher among women (9,6% in 2011) than among men (8,2%) (Eurostat, 2012).

Denmark, Sweden and Finland stand out with their report considerably higher proportions of their respective populations aged 25 to 64 participating in lifelong learning, raging between one fifth and one third. By the contrast, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Hungary report lifelong learning participation rates of less than 3%; Italy is stalled at 5.7% (Eurostat, 2012).

The obstacles to participation in education and training are many and different types: health or age, no time due to family, do not the prerequisites, too expensive, lack of employer support. In 2007 in data registered by Eurostat, in Italy there was almost a 50% of people who didn't participate in formal, non-formal, informal education and training because they hadn't time due to family, and a 26% who considered too expensive.

There are further obstacles at the participation in education and training activities: gender, for example, or social-economic inequality. This is the most decisive dimension that shape educational outcomes. «Globalisation, especially in financial and economic terms, have caused social and economic polarization by drawing distinction between the have and have-nots» (Eds by Guimaraes P., Lima L., 2011, p.30).

In add, in many cases, minority groups have lacked equal access to learning resources of denied basic human rights (OECD Observer, 2013). Countries have taken numerous policy initiatives to address linguistic and cultural diversity, and the lack of material and social resources that too many compound the problems faced by minority populations.

Policy strategies need to reinforcing inclusion and participation. Despite the relevant differences, there is a growing consensus about positioning the adult learning and education policies within the comprehension frameworks of lifelong learning and Education For Sustainable Development (ESD) (CONFINTEA VI, sixth international conference on adult education, final report, 2009). «In our rapidly changing world, educational equity can no longer be addressed only in terms of what happens in schools and colleges but throughout our lives. The scope is now much more ambitious as countries aim to make lifelong learning available for all» (OECD Observer, 2013). Equity policies often call for additional resources, but their quality and use are just as important for effective change as the quantities involved. Education policies alone will not suffice. Progress depends on more coherent, co-ordinated public policy, embracing employment, welfare, health.

The European Commission provides to encourage and support policy cooperation between Member States, funding for educational, vocational and citizenship-building programmes.

Why create all these policies and measure? What is the main aim?

All this measures are created even in related with work. Work is seen today as a primary activity of man (Ed. by Boffo V., 2012). An adult spend a lot of own life on the work, and «in the workplace we are formed and transformed» (Ed. by Boffo V., 2012, p. 15). It is a determining experience in the life of every young, adult and elderly person, as well as being a very important fact for understanding family well-being (Ed. by

Boffo V., 2012, p. 15). So, is becoming necessary to strengthen the connection between adult education and labour market initiatives. «Adult education supports economic development, by building a more creative, productive and skilled workforce» (CONFINTEA VI, sixth international conference on adult education, final report, 2009, p.19).

Currently, there are three specific goals for education and training systems: quality, improve their quality and effectiveness; inclusivity, that everyone has access to them; international accessibility, open them up to the wider world. So, lifelong learning for all has become a widely shared policy objective within OECD countries and beyond. It is seen as a necessary condition for individual success in the labour market and social well-being as well as basis for democracy and citizenship.

The European Parliament Resolution of 16 January 2008 about lifelong learning said that «it is never too late to learn» (European Union, 2011).

Lifelong learning solutions are actually relating life to a long series of learning experiences useful and effective, in tune with a certain economic rationality that tends to instrumentalise life and detach it from its less marketable aspects. But some approaches forget or reject the concept of life throughout learning, because have opted for narrow standards of usefulness and individual adaptability, sometimes to the point of alienation.

In the 1970s lifelong learning and lifelong education were developed by international organizations, most notably the Council of Europe, UNESCO, OECD (Eds by Guimaraes P., Lima L., 2011). In the course of the years these concepts have evolved, and this process of conceptual change is interpreted in term of policy change and is associated with different concept of state and even with the role of the nation state in a context of globalization. «The appearance of new social functions ascribed to the market and civil society, and, further, to the centrality of the individual learner» (Eds by Guimaraes P., Lima L., 2011 p.12) .

Indeed, nowadays the economic crisis are playing an important role in the creation and diffusion of the lifelong learning policies; it «has highlighted the major role which adult learning can play in achieving Europe 2020 goals, by enabling adults – in particular the low-skilled and older workers – to improve their ability to adapt to changes in labour market and society» (European Union, 2011, p. 1). Adult learning provides a means of up-skilling or reskilling those affected by unemployment, restructuring and career transitions, as well as makes an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development (European Union, 2011).

Taking into account the specific circumstances within each Countries, and in accordance with national priorities, Member State are invited, with appropriate support of the Commission, to focus on improving the quality and efficiency of education and training, promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through adult learning, enhancing the creativity and innovation of adults and their learning environments (European Union, 2011). Indeed, it is impossible today to understand strategies of each Country for lifelong learning without examining the growing influence of the European Union and international agencies over member states, organizations, and individual learners.

But the continual and constant funding cuts weigh upon not only on numbers of initiatives but also on level of quality. Namely, there are a lot of European guideline about participation, social support, funding, but each country had a particular vision of lifelong opportunities.

2. Italian situation

Facing the current international economic crisis, which has been afflicting the Eurozone, Italy is showing its own weaknesses. Comparative data demonstrate evidence of decline: Italy has the lowest number of graduates in the EU, the lowest number of high-school degrees, the highest rate (nearly 40%) of unemployment for young people. The latest OCSE report, *Education at a Glance 2012*, shows that almost half (45%) of the Italian adult population has studied only up to the middle education.

Eurostat demonstrate that the participation rate of Italian adults aged 25 to 64 in education and training decreased from 6,1% in 2006 to 5,7% in 2011 (Eurostat, 2012). The propensity of adults to invest in upgrading their skills is irregularly distributed across the age groups. It grows and declines according to the use adults can make of it.

Indeed, low investment in adult learning is reflected in poor participation rates. Lack of funding derives from low political commitment and the poor visibility of adult education. More pressing is needed to stress the public good aspects of adult education and to change from a discourse of cost to one of investment and benefits. Private-public partnerships and co-financing can offer new resources. The Government should attempt to stimulate more financial contributions to adult education from the private/corporate sector, civil society and learners/individuals (CONFINTEA VI, sixth international conference on adult education, final report, 2009).

Employers invest in adult education, and their investment have a positive effect for their business. In Italy, who provide most of education and training activities are employers with 27,6%, in contrast with formal education institution, 12,9% (Eurostat, 2012). But in many cases, who provide is the family or even a self-help (only when it is possible) (Federighi, 2006). The prevalence of private intervention has created a situation in which participation in adult and continuing education is unevenly distributed, offering particular encouragement to certain groups (such as people with high levels of education or favoured social and cultural origin), while less advantaged groups are doubly disadvantaged (European Commission, 2013).

The likelihood of having access to lifelong learning varies largely according to region of residence. Nevertheless, there are region that, in spite of unfavourable conditions, are making faster progress than the best-performing countries. What makes the different is not a matter of national history or policy, but the capacity of the state to make an impact on the cultures, economies and conditions of the populations of its various territories.

The reasons that push the Italian employees to participate in non-formal education and training are improve career prospective (47,6%), increase skills useful for everyday life (20,9%) (Eurostat, 2012). Adult are certainly more likely to participate in learning programmes if they believe that they will gain some personal, economic or social rewards from their learning in return for their investment of money, time, energy and commitment.

This trend is reinforced by the market pressure towards privatization, as adult education is no longer a responsibility of the public administration but of private bodies (for instance no-profit organizations). Which also means that adult education is increasingly subjected to the pressures of competition and even commercialization (Eds. by Guimaraes P., Lima L., 2011). There is a growth in the range of agencies, and a decline of State commitment.

It is difficult to measure and report the wider benefits of learning to all stakeholder, including government officials and individual. It is clear that what is needed are better, more reliable and comparable sources of data on which we can make political decisions (CONFINTEA VI, sixth international conference on adult education, final report, 2009).

Unfortunately in Italy, as we can see from data I wrote before, there isn't a lot of attention at adult education. I didn't find a lot of informations on lifelong learning of my country, only data that I have reported, belong at European research. Italy has stayed behind with European goals which I had told in first paragraph. Last draft bill dates from 2007, and due to anticipated term of fifteen legislature, everybody has forgotten the draft bill.

«Skills development strategies and institutional change are necessary to increase the connections between adult education and labour market initiatives. It is increasingly essential to invest in labour competency, vocational improvement and the professional re-adapting of workers» (CONFINTEA VI, sixth international conference on adult education, final report 2009, p.19).

But if isn't national policies legislation there isn't a social support, indeed, the relationship between resources and quality of lifelong learning remains unclear.

In my opinion, we can overcome the problems starting from the results of this European survey. The serious and heavy deficit that Italy brings back is due to a lack of interest toward citizen-person. Adult (but more in general, individual) well-being is a collective responsibility. Involving them into these programs will increase its personal culture and even its quality of life.

«[...] Public policy on adult and continuing education can be referred to three main objectives: to guarantee the availability of a skills supply adequate to the demands of economic growth; to correct the failings of initial education and training; and to support dynamics of cohesion and social inclusion» (European Commission, 2013, p. 10).

But for realize this, the Italian government have to finance a lot of activities and build a legislative background so that the adult education will begin public. With this policies there will follow rules on how to create projects and activities. With the mobilization of time, money, and guidance the State will invest on own citizen and in their future, and like this, in this light, will improve conditions of a person's life, even the labour conditions and will create activities that anyone can benefit. Only in this way Italy has an opportunity for to exit from crisis. «Learning is achieved by acting, intervening and experimenting» (Eds by Guimaraes P., Lima L., 2011, p.44).

What is required for greater mobilization of resources to finance adult education? I suppose that is important conducting research to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of adult education and literacy programmes, multiple strategies to mobilise financial resources, developing multi-sectoral approaches which embedded adult education in all public policy portfolios, developing effective monitoring and evaluation systems for adult education (CONFINTEA VI, sixth international conference on adult education, final report 2009).

Last but not least important is clarify the benefits that belong to adults, the goals and the path that a person can undertake for improve itself. An important aspect about quality of lifelong learning, for me, is even the significance that play education and training activities for the individual. Namely, highlight adult's personality.

3. Learner's point of view

Learning starts in social relations, continues throughout life, in all its aspects, is based in social needs (Eds by Guimaraes P., Lima L., 2011). Try to motivate adults and to foster new forms of participation and social-political intervention is important to convince persons to re-enter in learning and knowledge activities. «Among the population there is a widespread capability for self-direction in learning. This learning culture is a wealth that public policies should cultivate, respecting individual motivation» (European Commission, 2013, p. 23). «Sanz Fernández argues that adults' potential for learning should be used in ways to help them become aware of what they are capable of learning» (Eds by Guimaraes P., Lima L., 2011).

How we can do?

In Italy, the school system is based (unfortunately yet) on asymmetric and authoritative teacher-student relationship which often cause drop out of school. For this reason, there are a low level of men and women who participating in education and training (as I said in the first paragraph). In Eurostat statistics, between the many obstacles there is also the category “did not like idea of going back to school”. There has been a 16,5% of Italians who responded like that.

The school (institutional) model is mainly found on formal learning, but we know that a person can learning in every single moment of its life, also there isn't intention. Each moment shape the person, its cognitive, emotive and social dimensions, and according to Zygmunt Bauman, the processes of personal formation, known in Germany as “Builung” ongoing unfinished and re-formation the individual (Field J., 2012).

To help the people get back to believing in education, from several years the transition has put under observation and reflection.

Transition means crossing from a situation from another, and in whole life of a person there are a lot of changes and transitions, for example when a man or woman get married, is a transitions from a social status to another, or when a person moves in a new country. Even when a young is moving toward adulthood is a transition. Substantially, it is a continuing change across the life course.

The transitions are even an important focus for adult education research (Field J., 2012). Indeed, if education policy regard the adult who entrate in education and training activities in its whole personality, with its social, private aspects, it would feel recognized and valued.

The new attention to the significate of transitions concentrate not solely on the skills and knowledge required for each new role, which can be understood as a part of the economic function of adult education, but also on education system's ability to develop the general capabilities required to manage transition successfully (Field J., 2012). In this sense, the focus of attention change from teacher-centred to learner-centred.

«Studenthood is not merely a transitional process, but can also be understood as a traditional identity. Much recent research on adult learning has emphasised that this must be also understood as a process of biographical learning [...], as the capacity to design and redesign our lives, as individual trajectories lose their clarity and shape» (Field J., 2012, p. 10).

The object of adult education, view in lifelong process, are to develop the autonomy and the sense of responsibility of people, and to promote coexistence, tolerance, and creative participation of citizens in their communities, in order to enable people to take control of their destiny (Eds by Guimaraes P., Lima L., 2011).

For all this happen, play an important role the quality: quality of education is a central issue in European co-operation. Article 149 of the European Commission says that «the Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation between Member States» (www.eu.europa.eu, 2013). Its presence is due to by many factors, first of all the funding. Unfortunately in Italy there aren't many resources (as you have read in second paragraph) and who is affected are just the individuals that decide to improve own life's conditions.

Quality regard both relationship between teacher and student, and the environment (in the case of formal education). In the first case, I mean quality as a relation founding on sharing own personal aspects, no more asymmetric but a relation where two person can learn from each other. This can happen in a place carefully set. For example, I have studied that children who grow up in an educational environment prepared, establish important and significative relationships.

In the European Agenda for adult learning, for the period 2012-2014, Member States are invited to focus on «improving the quality of adult education staff, for instance by defining competence profiles, establishing effective systems for initial training and professional development [...], ensuring a viable and transparent system for the funding of adult learning» (European Union, 2011).

I suppose that this sense of quality is on the basis of lifelong learning. Indeed, lifelong learning approach imples investing in people and knowledge, improving the individual's status.

Focusing on individual dimension, the benefits don't fall solely on the person but even on community. Indeed, if the adult is prepared towards solidarity and equity, will help other people in various times of need. That isn't less than one of many priorities of lifelong learning.

Conclusion

Knowledge, skills and competences are considered a prerequisite for the personal development of all citizens and for participation in all aspects of society from active citizenship through to labour market integration.

«In order to achieve an adult-learning sector capable of supporting the Europe 2020 strategy, much more remains to be done in relation to effective and efficient financing; in relation to the provision of second-chance opportunities and the acquisition of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, but also digital skills in relation to targeted learning for migrants, early schools leavers and young people not in education, employment or training, as well as for people with disabilities and older adults» (European Union, 2011).

Indeed, while I was researching about news on lifelong learning, I have understood that there are important and even strength index and misures for realize education and training activities during all course of life, but there are at the same time a lot of problem which prevent that goals are realized. These obstacles are inequalities (gender, socio-economic,...) financial resources, and many other. The aims of lifelong learning, or of Europe 2020 are majestic but not are always realized.

I mean both at developing countries and developed countries like Italy, that I unfortunately found only bad news. Italian State should adopt a variety of roles, as coordination, measurement, regulation, monitoring, and evaluation of the educational policies and provision.

«[...] The factor that, more than others, determines the likelihood of accessing learning opportunities is geography: the city, region and country of residence. This confirms the importance of past and present policies and, hence, the potential role of the state» (European Commission, 2013, p. 7).

In my opinion, in the absence of suitable informations, people don't know potentiality of these activities.

But even if the current political-social disposition found in difficulties, I hope that in future will be a major mobilize by State, governments, and stakeholder for increase and improve adult education. The world is continuing changing and so skills, competence and knowledge are transforming, are in continuing evolution. For example, digital skills nowadays are very important for an employee, more than several years ago. So, even lifelong learning priorities would be totally different in future from how they are now.

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