



CENTRO INTERUNIVERSITARIO
PER LA RICERCA DIDATTICA



RESEARCH IN EDUCATION AND CULTURE

DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE SOCIALI E DELLE ISTITUZIONI
UNIVERSITÀ DI CAGLIARI



Seminario di studi nell'ambito del progetto regionale
"Tutti a Iscol@ - Linea A"

What education for a post-globalized world?

Can social justice, democracy and cooperation once again become the keywords of a new social and educational paradigm?

Cagliari JUNE 1st 2017

h. 15,30– 19,30

Aula Motzo – Facoltà di studi umanistici

Via Is Mirrionis 1

Introduction

Marco Pitzalis, CIRD, University of Cagliari.

Diane Reay, Professor of Education. University of Cambridge
Addressing Educational Inequalities : Cautionary Lessons from a Post-Brexit, Austerity in Britain.

Peter Kelly, Director, Centre for Education, Training and Work in the Asian Century
Neo-Liberalism's 'war on young people': What hope for education and social justice?

Chair

Giuliana Mandich (Professor of Sociology, University of Cagliari)



THE SEMINAR

“What education for a post-globalized world? Can social justice, democracy and cooperation once again become the keywords of a new social and educational paradigm?”

The seminar will focus on the role and function of educational systems in (and for) the transformation of society in a post-globalized world and on the persistence of social, ethnic and gender inequalities.

In the last twenty years, educational systems have undergone profound transformations: internationalization, competition, managerialism, commodification, increasing institutional differences and social inequalities are just some of the elements singled out by scholars.

Throughout this period, goals of social equality and inclusion have become little more than the subjects of tired rhetoric, inducing social justice and democracy to turn into peripheral notions in national educational agendas.

This is a model that substantially differs from the role that educational systems had during the large part of twentieth century, in which their function was one of national integration and social cohesion within the frame and the goals of the national state. In the second part of the century, it was viewed as a responsibility centered primarily on social justice and the affirmation of democracy as central values of our societies. Towards the last part of the century though, the increasing spread of neo-liberal models brought about a transformation in both the structure and goals of educational systems. Thereafter, educational systems began to be considered pivotal in the frame of the “new” Utopia of the “Knowledge Society”, becoming the chief instrument needed to connect individuals’ aspirations to the job market. Emphasis was put on “competencies” considered as measurable assets that individuals acquire, conserve and improve during a never-ending process of training and guidance. In such a scenario, accountability and effectiveness constitute the guiding principles for educational systems. The chief goal is to develop a workforce of people who have measurable skills and competencies to sell in a work market broadly viewed as perpetually innovating, changing and highly competitive. However, the responsibility of the process was placed on educational institution as well as on individuals, social, gender and ethnic inequalities continued to manifest as a not unexpected consequence of this competitive system.

The crisis of the globalization process – the consequences of which have become glaringly evident with Trump’s election and Brexit – leads us to contemplate whether or not this change will produce a crisis of dominant educational paradigms and the need for a new paradigm to rekindle the founding values of democracy, social justice, cooperation and integration, solidarity and social cohesion.

1. Diane Reay – Professor of Education University of Cambridge.

Addressing Educational Inequalities: Cautionary Lessons from a Post-Brexit, Austerity Britain

The 21st century post-global world of education presents enormous challenges for those committed



to socially just education. This paper outlines the contemporary inequitable state of play, taking post-Brexit, Austerity Britain as a case study. It argues that the entrenched elitism in education is a continuation of the past in the present, while the current focus on aspirations and social mobility constitute a new fantasy of meritocracy. Yet, British education remains deeply divided and unequal. I argue that the major problem that has never been addressed is that of social class inequalities in education, which mirror rather than ameliorate the huge and growing social class inequalities in wider British society. Any new social and educational paradigms would need to sweep away the still powerful strands of elitism, recognize the inequalities and damage created by the focus on social mobility, and appeal to the underlying decency and fairness of people rather than build on their fears and anxieties and engage with their self-interest and greed. Such a move, both ideologically and in policy terms, requires a gigantic shift in hearts and minds. But it is one, in our current unequal times, that those of us committed to social justice in education have to fight even harder for.

2. Peter Kelly - Director, Centre for Education, Training and Work in the Asian Century

Neo-Liberalism's 'war on young people': What hope for education and social justice?

Drawing on a number of recent and ongoing projects this presentation will make some initial contributions to developing a political economy of education, and of youth studies, that marks out space for re-imagining 'the promise of education' in the context of the globalisation of a neo-liberal capitalism.

21st century capitalism is increasingly globalised, digitised and bio-genetic. Through myriad processes and developments, that are largely autonomous and reflexive, and which answer to a single logic above all others - privatise, monetise and commodify all that is possible in the pursuit of profit - the neo-Liberal version of capitalism individualises and atomises the person. This type of person is made responsible for the choices they make about all aspects of what we have come to know as a life (Childhood-Youth-Young Adulthood-Adulthood).

I will suggest that the processes of making individuals responsible for the choices made and not made, and for the consequences of choices made and not made, can be thought about in terms of the *mythic dimensions* of choice, and the *ambivalence* that always accompanies the possibility of choice, the actuality of the practice of freedom, in 21st century neo-Liberal capitalism.

Drawing on the recent political philosophy of John Gray, together with the sociological work of Zygmunt Bauman on ambivalence, and the concerns of Michel Foucault with ethics, the care of the

self and the practice of freedom, I will argue that in neo-Liberal capitalism concepts of individualised 'choice' and 'freedom' are 'mythic'. That is, they structure the dominant stories of what it is to be human, how it is that we have become who it is that we are, what it means to grow up in the first decades of the 21st century, to imagine, to *hope*, what a life is, what a life can be.



These powerful illusions, and the ambivalences they produce, then divert our attention from neo-Liberalism's undeclared war on young people. From the consequences of the commodification and privatisation of education. From the possibility of the permanent disappearance and precariousness of work - our main hope for an earthly salvation. From the tragic dance of State, surveillance, insecurity and freedom. From the rise of digital machines, networks and systems - the Internet of Things - that make billions of dollars for a very few, promise a version of *togetherness* for many, and spawn autonomous drones, vehicles, other non-human agents and the promise of war without human casualties – at least on 'our' side. And, from the brutality of millions of young people around the globe cast adrift as refugees and asylum seekers, sexually abused, humiliated and exploited, enslaved and forced to labour, criminalised and incarcerated, condemned, as Zygmunt Bauman (2004, p.12) argues, to live *wasted lives*.

I will argue that it is this powerful idea of individualised choice, this governmental obligation, this moral project of making people responsible for the choices to be made, and the consequences of choices made and not made, that proves most problematic for the very idea of 'social' justice.

Neo-liberal governmentalities, and neo-Liberal capitalism require, even demand, that young people, their families and communities, imagine themselves as being responsible for identifying and managing the paradoxes of a globalised, risky, bio-genetic and digital 21st century capitalism. In these rationalities the idea and the actuality of 'social justice' makes little sense – particularly when we can, as individuals, be so easily identified as either 'strivers' or 'skivers', as 'lifters' or 'leaners'.