

Poverty and Educational Poverty: What is the role of Adult Education?

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It is widely recognized that countries with lower rate of literacy have often higher rate of poverty (World Bank Group, UNICEF, 2016). Poverty is associated with a vast and complex array of factors: political instability, corruption, gender imbalances, social inequalities, low life expectancy, starvation, high child mortality, lack of participation in civil society activities, high rate of school drop-out (Eurostat, 2016). Sen (2002) has expanded the meaning of poverty linking it to social dynamics and social justice issues: poverty can be interpreted as a lack of freedom and capabilities to the participate and act in the economic life autonomously and independently for his/her own well.

The 2015 Save the Children report on educational poverty highlights that access to education and culture represents a problem for many children even in countries such as Italy. Correlations with family background characterized by cultural deprivation is inevitable as well as the intergenerational replication of social, economic and cultural disadvantages which follows. Overcoming situations of educational poverty become a challenge in order to modify inequalities systems which reproduce exclusion and marginalization.

While, European documents consider education as the most effective lever for the reduction of poverty rates and for the achievement of sustainable development goals (Europe 2020 strategy and European Platform against poverty and social exclusion COM (2010) 758), Adult Education is not explicitly and significantly mentioned as means to contribute. Even the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (General Assembly ONU, 25/9/2015, A/RES/70/1) rarely refers to Adult Education. Only two publications underline instead the important role of Adult Education in poverty reduction: the 2008 NIACE Report *The Impact of Lifelong Learning on Poverty Reduction* and the EAEA Policy Paper *The Role of Adult Education in Reducing Poverty* published in 2010

Today, facing multiple and new forms of poverty led by economic downturn, migrations, and new social arrangements, the risks of living in a situation of educational poverty concern both youngsters and adults. Adult Education cannot be addressed as a separate sector of policy beside financial, economic, welfare, social and training arrangements. Data from OECD issued in 2012 on functional competences possessed by the global population show that, in country like Italy, 28% of population is located at level 1, and only 3% at level 4 and 5.

Lifelong Learning should represent a tool to prevent and fight multiple forms of exclusion and marginalization of people of any age. Migrants and Inmates are only two examples of them, but we could also think to who comes from economically fragile areas of our country or is experimenting illiteracy after leaving the school system. Skills mismatch between educational outcomes and the labour market needs should also be considered as it can result on new forms of pauperism.

Research and critical analysis on policies are more than required as well as a clear understanding of their role by services, operators, and other kind of human resources involved in the field of Adult Education and Learning.

The Issue n. 30 of the review will host contributions that:

- contribute to the definition of the concept of educational poverty at any stage of life;
 - present researches on policies against educational poverty, even in a comparative way;
 - present research results on the correlations between adult education and poverty reduction;
 - deal with the theme in different contexts highlighting the role of professionals, learning paths, methodologies, tools, networks and partnerships that can help to face educational poverty.
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