
Recensione del volume di V. Boffo, **RECENSIONE**
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It is very interesting to discover the results of empirical research in the field of adult education, especially when they concern such a topical and strategic issue of pedagogy as the employability of young graduates. The topic of *Educational Jobs: Youth and Employability in the Social Economy* is an analysis of the relationship between youth and labour market through the lenses of the social economy field. The book, edited by Vanna Boffo, Paolo Federighi and Francesca Torlone, investigates 'the demand for competences in the most important sectors of the social economy' (p. X) and examines how this sector has been able to employ highly skilled workers, with the aim of gathering 'indications on ways to build initial training curricula' (p. X) for the social economy sector. The authors are members of the adult education research group at the University of Florence Department of Education and Psychology: Vanna Boffo is Associate Professor in General Pedagogy, Paolo Federighi is Full Professor of Adult Learning and Head of Department and Francesca Torlone is Senior Project Manager in the field of training, executive education and individual and organizational training needs analysis processes. They represent the University of Florence research group in the SALM project consortium, promoted by Universidade Catolica Portuguesa-CEPCEP, which also consists of partners from Malta, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom.

In detail, the book intends to focus on the expansion of employment in the specific context of the social economy and 'on the impact that the social economy has on the employment of young people' (p. IX). The study, which presents empirical findings from the SALM research project, 'takes into consideration the cases of organizations working in Portugal, Malta, Romania, Scotland, Spain and Tuscany' (p. X).

The theoretical framework of the research is pedagogy of work as a field that directly deals with the continuous transformations of this primary human activity. As a matter of fact, work is a central dimension of individual life: it involves the most part of daily life and its content and sense make up a huge part of human identity in modern societies. Moreover, mostly in the recent years of high unemployment rates, work has become an essential element for the effective transition of young people into adulthood.

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In this direction, many authors such as Mantz Yorke and Peter Knight have developed a pedagogical approach to employability which is also likely to affect the curriculum in higher education pathways.

This approach, which takes into account the relationship between university and economy, aims to support students' transitions into work through educational and curricular processes: employability is defined as a set of skills, understandings, capabilities and personal attributes that are developed within learning activities. However, the concept of employability, in Yorke's perspective, is not just an attribute of the new graduate, but a dimension that concerns the person's whole personal and working life. In this sense, the concept is closely related to the subject's formation as a person and as a citizen (p. 152). The dimension of research on higher education and the labour market has been well developed in Anglo-Saxon pedagogical literature since the end of 1990s by authors as Hillage, Pollard, Dacre Pool, Sewell and McQuaid: they all investigate the issues of how to match these two fields and which competences could fill the gap between them. That is why reflection on employability has led to the analysis of the dimensions of learning and curriculum as a way to support skills development for students' growth and employment. Specifically, the topic of a 'pedagogy for employability' (p. 156) is developed in accordance with the literature that discusses how higher education organizations formulate curricula and how learning and teaching take place in order to build up employability. This approach, as a consequence, refers to didactical and placement practices, but it also creates a strong link with life and work experience as tools to contextualize learning. In this sense, the background of the research can be clearly identified in Dewey's pedagogical device (p. 151), which suggests a way to think the connection between the theoretical dimension and practical experience.

Regarding the specific area of Educational Science degrees, which is the focus of the book, the study is based on many reports published by international institutions that make an in-depth analysis of the social economy field. The topic is identified through the analysis of European Commission documents that define the term 'social economy' as 'a specific part of the economy: a set of organizations [...] that primarily pursue social aims and are characterized by participative governance systems' (p. 122). Within the field (consisting of social enterprises also of a cooperative nature, including non-profit institutions), education and training represents one of the main fields for youth employment: that is why the relationship between higher education and labour market is investigated here through the case study of Educational Science students and social economy enterprises.

The book edited by Boffo, Federighi and Torlone concentrates on young graduates' employability from a pedagogical perspective: it aims to set out an analysis and to propose measures that could aid the development of employability in Education degrees. While focusing on educational policies and measures for employability, it also intends to have a direct impact on the micro level of individual pathways towards the labour market.

According to the theoretical framework, the study concerns the relationship between youth employment and social economy with a specific focus on educational pathways that could bolster the development of employability in initial university training.

The broad context of the social economy has shown ‘a higher potential to attract young people with high levels of competence in the field of education and training’ (p. 123).

Moreover, the field also pays attention to disadvantaged groups such as the ‘unemployed, migrants, elderly, poor and disabled’ (p. 124) according to their principles of reciprocity and solidarity: in this way the enterprises do not only provide programmes and specific projects, but they also create job opportunities for these vulnerable groups. That is why the social economy, from the educational point of view, often also uses work ‘as a tool for social inclusion’ (p. 124), with employment programmes assisted by tutors and mentors.

The glance at this field of educational jobs provides interesting perspectives for graduates of the Educational Sciences area. The specific sector of the social economy represents a huge opportunity for them to gain employment and for their career development. In this sense, the study developed by Boffo, Federighi and Torlone sets out to investigate the ‘potential of young graduates with education and training competences’ (p. 157) in order to analyse the relationship between the social economy labour market demand and the students’ supply of competences. The aim is to accompany, in a pedagogical perspective and through educational actions, the transition of students from higher education to the social economy labour market.

In line with the main aim of the study, the analysis can be targeted at different groups. As said, the study refers to higher education policy makers who could develop specific measures to foster employability in the curriculum and to support transitions to the labour market; on the other hand, the book also relates to young people, employers and practitioners who represent the key target of the programme: in this sense, the project is not just a research tool, but it intends ‘to improve the young people’s competences and employability’ (p. 8) through specific toolkits for each of these categories.

From the viewpoint of methodology, the paradigm is naturalistic ‘in the sense that the research is performed in a natural context in the place where young people look for work to build their future’ (p. 28). Through this, the hypothesis put forward evolves as the research proceeds and transforms, since the research style ‘is adapted inductively and not deductively’ (p. 31). The same transformation process that involves the researchers also concerns the participants in the interviews or focus groups, who ‘join a process of modification and self-reflexivity’ (p. 28). The research process is therefore developed from the sociological and economical point of view of findings and publications about the social economy, labour market and graduate transition data. However, the book implements an innovative pedagogical viewpoint that focuses on ‘the meanings of the paths followed by the young people and the competences requested in order to get a job’ (p. 29). According to this pedagogical aim, the book sets out evidence-based research that could support policy learning for youth employment at different levels: at the macro level, it illustrates ‘the evidence, already known, of a mismatch between the world of work and that of education and training’ (p. 29); at the meso level, it concentrates on ‘measures to adopt in the places of youth training and in the university curricula, at both the levels of learning and learning methods’ (p. 29); at the micro level, it investigates the case of ‘the university training course for the area of Educational Sciences’ (p. 30) at the University of Florence.

Following these different levels, the investigation adopts a qualitative method that starts from the identification of best practices through a survey on social economy enterprises, to then use the case study approach through focus groups and in-depth interviews with employers. According to this, the interviews (carried out with students on the European Master in Adult Education course) have 'a central role in permitting contact and communication between the researchers and the entrepreneurial fabric of the social economy' (p. 31); moreover, they create a relationship between employers and potential workers (students) as well. In this way, the SALM research creates 'a virtuous circle [...] between the interviewees/employers and the interviewers/potential workers' (p. 31) which could represent, at the same time, a research action, a tool for employability and a concrete opportunity to match supply and demand.

Hence, the book develops from this theoretical and methodological framework. The Introduction (Chapter 1) presents the main topics and the aims of the study through challenges and solutions regarding youth employment. In line with this, the book takes an in-depth look at the issues of the SALM research: the skills mismatch issue is analysed through the context of Scottish policy and measures at macro level (Chapter 2). The methodological approach adopted in the SALM research project, with a specific focus on research phases and the toolkits developed, provides the framework for the whole study (Chapter 3). For the demand side, the competences required by social economy organizations are displayed through an analysis of the various characteristics, legal and management models, missions, targets and services: the map of the services offered expresses the very great array of employment opportunities for Educational Sciences graduates (Chapter 4). Then, the issue of solving the mismatch between the demand and supply of competences in higher education pathways is investigated through the analysis of education and training professionals and a model for their initial training (Chapter 5). While the social economy labour market is strategic, on the other hand the role of higher education is the other pole for effective university-to-work transitions, hence Chapter 6 focuses on the concept of employability as a way to strengthen the relationship between higher education and the labour market through a specific focus on the skills achieved by graduates. This concept, which is an innovative pedagogical perspective towards work, suggests creating a pedagogical construct that aims to 'give the students the necessary capabilities for their growth, formation and learning, to build the future for themselves and for the environment so that they can live as well as possible' (p. 153). The reflexive and transparent process followed in the project (Chapter 7), with internal evaluation and quality assurance, is therefore shown as a way to ensure the 'relevancy and the utilization of results' (p. 169).

All in all, the book makes an in-depth investigation of both the supply side, namely young workers in the social economy, and the demand side, that is employers and labour market actors, through an evidence-based approach. Therefore, it provides a broad and interesting overview of this growing sector, with a focus on actions to solve the issue of the mismatch between supply and demand, and on educational actions to foster the development of employability at higher education level.

This is why the book edited by Boffo, Federighi and Torlone does not just give a glance at the social economy field and its issues: moreover, it suggests an innovative and original approach, for higher education and policy makers as well, to understanding employability and building up educational pathways at university level. At the same time, it is interesting to underline the transformative approach to the research, which, through the interviews and focus groups with students and employers, aims to create a real opportunity for more effective transitions towards the labour market.