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EDUCATION & PARTNERSHIPS FOR TACKLING CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL CHALLENGES

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Sommario

Oggi, la comunità internazionale sta fronteggiando sfide nuove e multi dimensionali. Attori nuovi e diversi sono chiamati a proporre soluzioni innovative, assumendo un ruolo guida nella definizione degli schemi di sviluppo. In questo contesto, l'adozione dei 14 Obiettivi di Sviluppo Sostenibile dalle Nazioni Unite ha senza dubbio rappresentato un momento cruciale. Il nesso esistente tra gli Obiettivi, i temi legati alla migrazione e il ruolo dell'educazione è stato esplorato da diversi autori. Tuttavia, il tema necessita ulteriori approfondimenti, per consentire alle istituzioni educative ed al terzo settore di collaborare, affrontando il tema e condividendo buone pratiche di innovazione sociale.

Abstract

Nowadays, the international community is facing new and multidimensional challenges. Several actors are called to propose innovative solutions, taking the lead in the definition of the development patterns. In this context, the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations has certainly been seen as a crucial moment. The existing link between the SDG, migration issues and education sector has been explored by several authors. Yet, it need to be deepened in order to allow education institution and third sector to cooperate, tackling the issue and sharing good practices of social innovation.

Keywords

Sustainable Development Goals, migration, social innovation, education

Introduction

Nowadays, the international community is facing new and multidimensional challenges. Several actors are called to propose solutions, taking the lead in the definition of the development patterns. Governments and civil society, public authorities and private business are called to contribute in the set up of a new path of sustainable development and in its enforcement. In this context, the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations has certainly been seen as a crucial

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moment, pointing out the failure of the past development policies, the need of change of perspective and the whole international community's responsibilities to improve the lives of people everywhere.

Migration in the SDGs

Migration is one of the most defining issues of this century. Rather than being a negative phenomenon per se, one should always keep in mind the strong existing relation between migration and economic development. So it does the Agenda 2030, which refers to migration, recognizing the economic value of migrants, being migration a strong tool for poverty reduction, not only for those that migrates but also for their families, community and origin countries. The relevance of the economic value of migration recognized by the UN within the Sustainable Development Goals Definition is mirrored, for instance, in SDG 8, where migrants workers are considered in relation to economic growth and adequate work conditions; while, SDG 10 stress the importance of a reduction in the cost of remittances. Rather than being a negative phenomenon, it is nor always a positive one: it can have a negative impact on development or it can reflect a situation of inequality and underdevelopment in the world we live, situations which are worth to be noted and analysed(FDFA; SDC 2017).

Migration as an issue to be addressed is reflected in several Sustainable Development Goals, as defined by the United Nations. The International Organization on Migration interestingly reads 9 out of the 17 SGD as directly connected to its mission. According to the William Lacy Swing, IOM General Director: "No longer is human mobility seen as just background context for development, or worse merely seen as a consequence of lack of development. Rather, with the SDGs, migration is an issue to act upon to enhance sustainable development". Obviously, as one could expect, IOM didn't stress the relation between the SDGs and the migration flows reaching Europe. Indeed, rather than an European emergency, it is worldwide migration that represents an emergency itself –when it comes together with human rights violation and inadequate living. Going back to IOMs stressed links, the goal number 3 (*ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages*) is reflected by IOM in the objective of assisting vulnerable migrants and affected communities living in and around IDPs settlements in health facilities (Somalia); the goal number 4 (*ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*) can be connected to IOM action of conducting resettlements activities including teaching, cultural orientation and travel arrangements (Myanmar); the goal number 10 (*reduce inequality within and among countries*) in terms of

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improving human security of vulnerable migrants by strengthening the response capabilities of governmental institutions and CSOs (Mexico) (IOM, 2017).

An interesting document regarding the strong relation between SDGs and Migration has been prepared in 2016 by Patrick Taran (GMPA – Global Migration Policy Associates) in partnership with other authors from European Universities and other agencies (Taran, 2016). It is drawn on a matrix and elements originally prepared by Mihail Peleah, Programme Specialist on Green Economy and Employment, UNDP Istanbul regional Hub. The study represents an opposite exercise to the one made by IOM, but equally notable. It is, in fact, prepared to “ensure attention to migrants, refugees and displaced persons in the *implementation* of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals” (Taran, . It aims at being considered as a useful tool for the establishment of specific actions and relevant indicators for the application of SDGs in the migration field. An example may be useful to understand the relevance of the analysis. The authors, for 14 out of the 17 SDGs, identified a set of considerations on the existing correlation (direct, indirect, causal, partial) among the main target of the SGD and the migration issue. The analysis is deepened at the sub-level of sub-objective, for which a set of explicit action referred to migrants/migration are stressed, coming along with relevant indicators and other and more specific notes. The actions are designed to achieve the goals and targets regarding migrants, potential migrants, returning migrants and in some cases also refugees and IDPs (internally displaced persons), but also those conditions which are considered as compelling migration. For the SDG N°1, *End poverty in all its form anywhere*, P. Taran recognizes the lack of a direct and causal relation between poverty and migration. The poorest people usually are not the ones that emigrate, unless they’re forced by other causes, such as conflicts, or environment degradation. Yet social protection, the access to adequate and sufficient resources and the resilience capacity are considered key factors for remaining in a country. The authors go further examining the target 1.3, *Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve sustainable coverage of the poor and the vulnerable*. For this target, explicit actions referring to migrants have been identified, such as their inclusion in social protection/social security mechanisms, together with ad hoc indicator (qualitative and quantitative measures of the legal and administrative inclusion of migrants population in social protection and social security systems). Among the notes, it is stressed how social security may represent critical issues for migrants.

With the launch of the SDGs, migration has been included for the first time in the global development framework. However, the increasing flows of migrants directed towards Europe keep

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representing a big challenge for European countries, from the economic, political and social point of view: an increasing amount of resources is needed to manage the migration flows; European and national decision-makers are asked to take into account both regional and national interests and perspectives; racism and discrimination are still an incumbent phenomena, emphasized by all the social implication of the economic downturn as well as by the increasing politicization of the migration phenomena. According to Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Union, migrations are determined by a combination of economical, environmental, political and social factors: in the migrant's origin Country (push factor) or in the destination Country (attraction factor). Traditionally, economic prosperity and political stability of the EU have been strongly drawing migrants. In the destination countries, international migrations can be useful to fill the existing gap in the labour market: however migrations alone cannot be able to invert the actual trend toward population ageing recorded in many areas of the Union (Eurostat, 2017).

Still according Eurostat, a successful integration of migrants into European society can be considered as a key driver for the maximization of the positive opportunities coming along with migration, and thus, its contribution to European Union development. Migrants' integration can be measured according to their employment situation, health, education level, social inclusion and active citizenship in the destination country (Eurostat, 2017 *bis*).

Several European policies and declaration have been drawn in this direction, better trying not only to guarantee migrants' integration in the society but also ensuring a better measurement of this, through a set of measurable indicators.

In strong contradiction with the above-mentioned pathway, towards a deeper and fruitful integration of migrants into European society, there is the fact that the so called "refugee crisis" determined the acceleration of a latent conflict between different visions of EU. On the other side the rising of extremist parties in several EU Member States, together with racist and xenophobic movement, deeply rooted in social dissatisfaction and economic crisis effects. In the recent European election, the extreme rights has risen celebrating populist slogans and anti-immigration discourse. Nationalist, anti-liberal and anti-European movements are rising all over Europe, demonstrating both the urgency of the matter as well how embedded it is in European societies (Postelnicescu, 2016)

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Migration and Education: links to be further investigated

Although it may not seem immediate, the link existing between the social challenges related to the migration phenomena and the mission of Universities and the education sector is strong and polyvalent. In fact, the field of education and training has been recognized as fundamental not only for the professional life of students and young people, but also for its role in the development of individuals as members of a peaceful and diverse society.

Christian Dustmann and Albrecht Glitz (2011) found migration and education as issues extremely intertwined. They have actually investigated all the potential relations between the two areas. One contact point is, according to the authors, the fact that migration is often driven by economic reasons and considerations, which are, in turn, strongly influenced by education as the latter can be considered a wage driver. This connection can be read both ways: as lack of high level education determining low wages and, thus, representing a pushing factor towards other countries; on the other side as high level education system leading to economic development and a related wages higher average, acting as an attraction factor. Moreover, some migrants may leave its origin country solely for education reasons: an example of this phenomena, are student migrants, often attracted by the so called “learning centres”, countries such us UK, Australia o Usa which offers educational product within an international market, or by the need to acquire skills (such as language or technological skills) abroad, in order to be more productive and attractive in their own home countries. Interestingly, it is also well-noted by the author that the existing links between migration and education are note exhaustive in how migration is affected by education, but it goes also in the opposite direction: indeed, migration can affect the life and educational path of those that do not migrate, in the destination countries and in the origin ones. In different measures, migration can change the skill bases of both origin and destination countries, it can affect – both in positive or negative - the levels of education so generating, in some cases, education externalities.

One of the most challenging issues for the European contemporary society is represented by the integration of refugees and migrants. Even though many links exist between migration and education, in this work we want to start exploring the one according to which the education sector and notably Universities can support migrants and refugees integration. In fact, Universities have a central role in building up open and tolerant societies, in fostering intercultural dialogue and preventing exclusion and radicalization. The initiative Science4Refugees, launched by the European Commission, is a clear example of the diverse relations existing between the academic world and the inclusion and integration needs. Science4Refugees enable talented refugees with asylum status

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and a scientific background to obtain job position in universities and research centres with job vacancies, may they be internships, full-time or part-time jobs.

In its policy framework for migrants' integration¹, the EU has undertaken a series of actions related with migrants pre-departure, education, labour, basic services, social inclusion, overall coordination. As per the object of this article, the education actions part of the Integration Action Plan includes²: Policies (*Council Recommendation on Upskilling, EQF Revision*); Resources (Online Language learning, *Skills Profile Tool*, Exchange of practices between teachers, Toolkit for Schools, Courses for Teachers, Platform for Teachers, *Toolkit for Qualifications Recognition*, Manual on Qualification Recognition); Mutual Learning (Peer Learning on Reception, Peer Learning – UAM, *Peer Learning of Qualifications*); Funding (*Policy Network*, Erasmus + Social Inclusion).

Good practices at the local level: University programs and new partnerships

Several European and Italian Universities are working in this direction, promoting the mobility of their staff, students and trainers and supporting cross-border and cross-sector cooperation between actors working in the field of education. Creating new partnerships and setting up shared paths, Universities and other bodies working in the educational field can tackle together common challenges and offer great and innovative solutions. In this regard, it is interesting the collaboration agreement signed between IUSEFOR³, born in 2012 to foster the cooperation between University, public administration, managers and local communities, and the Albanian Universitetii Shkodres “Luigj Gurakuqi”. The agreement aims to promote skills acquisition and to foster the national excellences at an international level. The parties recognize the mutual interest in establishing,

¹ Presented in June 2016, the Action Plan on the Integration of Third Countries Nationals sets 50 actions aiming at supporting EU Member States in migrants' integration. At the following link a detail on each tool promoted is available: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/main-menu/eus-work/actions>.

² The elements in italic represents the ongoing actions, while the others the completed ones.

³ Training Agency of the University Institute for European Studies, founded on July 30, 1952 when, in Western Europe, we were just five years after the Marshall plan was presented to Harvard. That were years in the most acute phase of the cold war at world level, the same years in which Europe saw a ferment of ideas, hypotheses and discussions about Europeanism. The secret of these sixty-five years of life of the Institute lies in having been able to answer to specific training needs of the local and international community: an evolving service that has been continuously updated to keep up with the growing need for information, progressively renewing the techniques of training approach to the public and local realities to Europe. <http://iusefor.it/about-us/>

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maintaining and developing several types of collaboration in education activities, within the field of European studies and European projects' designing.

Following the same logic, the University of Piemonte Orientale (UPO), within its Department of Economics and Enterprise Studies, started from 2017 to promote the "Free Mover" Call, also known as "UP!Ong" project, whose aim is to enable its most gifted students to do a curricular internship abroad, in NGOs or SCOs selected by the project itself, both within or outside the European Union. The activity is specifically connected to the student's personal interest, regardless the institutional exchanges already occurred under the Erasmus + Programme.

The existing connection between the education field and the need to find innovative answers to challenging social issues bring the academic debate to a broader area of research and action, known as Social Innovation. Social Innovation can be described as the trend to give sustainable solutions to social problems, determining a set of benefits for the direct beneficiaries of the solution, rather than for its creator. It is also defined as:

"innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly diffused through organisations whose primary purposes are social" (Mulgan, 2006: 146)

Universities and educational bodies can be considered as prominent actors in this field. They are, in fact, rich in resources (knowledge, expertise, information, technical skills, creativity and energy) that can be mobilized to contribute to find out innovative and sustainable solutions for social problems. Embracing this vision, the report prepared by RAND Europe entitled Europe's Societal Challenges (Stijn Hoorenset al, 2013), and commissioned by ESPAS,⁴ highlight the need to stimulate innovation through strong partnerships between universities, business and financial institutions, organized around innovation ecosystem (European Commission, 2014).

At the international level, Ashoka, the world's largest network of social entrepreneurs launched the initiative "*Ashoka U*", aiming at catalysing social innovation in the higher education environment through the creation of a network of entrepreneurial students, universities departments and community leaders and believing in the need of higher education to shift from traditional to innovative approaches. Within the broader "Ashoka U" Initiative, *Change makers Campus* has been created as a community of leaders and institution working to make social innovation and change-

⁴ ESPAS is the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System. More info available at: <http://espas.eu/orbis/espas/>

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making more and more common in the higher education environment. In a few words, Ashoka challenged universities all around the world to have a social impact, empowering students and staff to be change-makers, and recognizes the designed universities as model campus-wide excellence in social innovation and change-making, committed to transforming the field of higher education. In Italy, the University of Piemonte Orientale started the process scan to become the first Change-maker Campus in Italy and in Continental Europe.

Conclusions

The SDGs certainly represent a starting point for deepening the migration issue and its intertwined links with other sector, among which surely there is the education one. Within the education sector, several actors are looking for a major role, playing social innovation rules. In order to obtain win-win dynamics, however, cooperation and collaboration is needed as well as the recognition of the added value coming from the latter.

The UPO, IUSEFOR as well as other bodies working in the field consider the establishment of international partnerships and the cooperation on crosscutting issues as corner stones. The achievement of high-level results necessarily entails the development of renewed strategic partnerships. A more structured cooperation between Third Sector organizations and Universities represents a starting point for a wider and more effective mobilization of social resources.

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Acronyms

EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESPAS	European Strategy and Policy Analysis System
EU	European Union
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization on Migration
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
SCO	Civil Society Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UAM	Unaccompanied Minors
UN	United Nations
UPO	University of Piemonte Orientale