Young people and active citizenship. What perception of labor unions in adolescents from Puglia? An empirical investigation

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Abstract. In recent decades, the issue of political participation of young people and active citizenship has been the subject of debates, research and studies. In recent years, the crisis of trust in politics had a significant impact even in those intermediate institutions, such as labor unions, once more attractive for all those young people passing from school to the world of the work. However, how much do young people know about the reality of labor unions? How do teenagers from Puglia perceive such unions today? How can we attract young people for active citizenship also involving in labor unions? The empirical research carried out on a sample of one thousand upper secondary school students from Puglia, tried to answer these questions.

Keywords. Young people, Participation, Citizenship, Labor Unions, Empirical Research

1. Introduction. Young people and active citizenship.

In recent decades, the issue of political participation and active citizenship of young people has been the subject of debates, research and studies. In recent years, the crisis of trust in politics has had a significant impact even in those intermediate institutions such as labor unions, once more attractive for all those young people passing from school to the world of the work. Starting from these premises, a study table was set up in Puglia to discuss on this issue with the participation of upper secondary school students, teachers, researchers and representatives of a Labor Union. Some questions were raised within this discussion group: how much do young people know about the reality of labor unions? How do teenagers from Puglia perceive today such unions? How could a labor union involve young people to attract and stimulate their participation? How can we attract young people for active citizenship also involving them in labor unions? In fact, among new young people is growing more and more this sense of distrust about "communitas", which feeds itself of precariousness as a permanent condition and that, compared to the past, affects all aspects of life, accompanying their growth with a disheartening and disappointing underlined tone (Cambi, Dell'Orfanello, Landi, 2008). Starting from solicitations emerged from this study table, we decided to start an empirical research (that I have personally designed and coordinated) in the territory of Puglia, based on a sample of 1.000 students attending the third, fourth and fifth classes of secondary upper school. The Experimental Pedagogy

constitutes the structure of the research (Paparella, 1997). With its tools, we intended to investigate the dimensions of responsibility, ethics, community and participation.

Ethic of responsibility, universality of rights, communities and social bonding are all essential aspects that qualify and orient the democratic dimension of human groups (Papisca, 2010). A pedagogical reflection can try to unify all those dimensions that define the concept of citizenship (Santerini, 2010): from legal to ethic, from social-political to cultural, from private to public, from singular to plural and from national to supranational. The ethical dimension that calls on all citizens to actively participate in the formation of a society, where the universality of human rights might prevail over the mere principle of citizenship. Today, we cannot think to belong exclusively to a *micro* reality, such as the one of being a citizen: as stated by Franco Cambi, this is «the habitat that gives reference, security and sharing» (Callari Galli,Cambi, Cerruti, 2003 p.20) . However, it inevitably turns on itself and generates closure towards the other-than-self. Instead, we could read the meaning of citizenship through three concentric circles: the first concerning the membership, the second referring to democracy and the third, the external one, represents the dimension of globalization. The citizenship as globalization is an *advening* citizenship; it is going to reach us and claims a major restructuring of our being citizens as well as a reform of our thinking (Baruzzi, Baldoni, 2007).

This is the third millennium mission, which can no longer feed itself on feelings of traditional civic spirit. Instead, it should represent a "work in progress" area for a subject able to live his memberships, national and supranational, in terms of recognition of a universe made of values and cultures, ethically oriented to respect various ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic identities (Ulivieri, Loiodice, 2017). This way, the concept of citizenship abandons traditional contents and establish itself as inner condition of the individual who, while claiming his own specific identity, understands that his fulfillment requires to recognize to be member of a wider community. Such a community, with its ethical, civil and political heritage, is the synthesis of a plurality of perspectives and world visions, representing a guarantee to the effective exercise of citizenship. In fact, being citizens always and anyway presupposes an active and participatory dimension, which starts from the willingness of the single person to perform an action, proactive and negotiated among his community, with the purpose to improve it. Today, the very idea of community is still a subject for further review. We cannot forget the importance of an education to a *global* citizenship (Guerra, Hamburger, Robertson, 2002), planetary, to a sort of new cosmopolitanism.

Which role do younger generations (D'Amico, Di Nuovo, 2010) play within these processes? Listen to young people is not only important to meet legitimate scientific curiosity, but also to get a clear understanding of their condition of *citizens*. On one hand, the community where we belong as citizens establishes a territorial affiliation tied to a political organization; on the other hand, it sets a delimitation, or a group of people culturally, socially defined and with specific rights, among which the person can be active and involved. Speaking of citizenship and young people condition, it then appears obvious the need to refer to the city (of course, the term citizenship has a concrete meaning that pertains to the enjoyment of political rights in a given country. However, it is not in this 'strict' sense that such a term presents that kind of strong ethical and pedagogical (Costa, Tarozzi 2012) value that we would like to examine in our research).

In these contexts, the citizenship has developed (Chistolini, 2006) in stages, through struggles and concessions, until it conquered the meaning of freedom, autonomy, security, participation and sharing that the civic experience can realize within a common space. Today, in this scenario, we overcome a purely normative vision of citizenship (the physical condition of the individual to whom the legal order of a State recognizes the fullness of civil and political rights) to achieve a substantial vision (active exercise of rights). In summary, from being citizens (*citizenship*) to act as citizens (*citizenry*). The declination in *active* key of the concept of citizenship allows an original interpretation that emphasizes the democratic and supportive content of the idea of citizen. Namely, an individual who fully realizes himself only in a specific social context where he already feels *to be* part and is committed to *be a part.* We so establish a connection between expanding the practice of citizenship and consolidating the democratic culture, and enhancing the participatory function in achieving civil progress. According to this practice, the citizen not only chooses to act for the realization of the kind of society he deems more appropriate to develop his own freedom and security, but takes care and supports the community, which makes it possible to realize his own guarantees (Baglioni, 2004). Therefore, social and political institutions of a Country are judged based on their ability to spread and actually grow the democratic ethos. There has been a change in the function of media information. Television became more important than printed media, promoting less reflexive modalities than those enabled from reading a written text. As a result, it is easy to think that social problems acquired a more complex character. The increase of social and economic inequalities is adversely affecting educational opportunities that would benefit different social groups. There is a disparity in the acquisition of citizenship's competences (Calaprice, 2004). This is leading to a metamorphosis of the citizen: the active and thoughtful citizen gives way to the passive and superficial one, who renounces to participate and falls back in the role of a mere political consumer (Alessandrini, 2001). He limits himself to choose among various electoral offers simply based on television information. In view of this, it is essential to identify those necessary conditions to relaunch the possibility of an active and critic citizen, willing and available to commitment and participation. To this purpose, some elements of revitalization of democracy are necessary. However, there are forces working against this and also the Web information through internet, which risk overloading the user. That's why we need to learn how to select, evaluate the reliability of sites and look for cross-feedback. Thus, the need to form new kinds of skills and mindsets is born. In parallel, it is essential to restore forms of participation that stimulate active citizenship and ensure lifelong training elements for citizens. Carmen Leccardi asserts that we are facing the gradual lengthening of youths and their postponed entry into adult life, especially in regard of professional roles profile. Along with this phenomenon – surrounded by the difficulty to develop long-term life projects and, specifically, to define one's own identity – young people must face a problematic young age experience. Nothing new on the condition of youth compared to what is in the literature since the late 1980. Substantially, what many young people have in common in their lives is their condition, which risks to be labeled as the dimension *of lack*: lack of opportunity to design their future, especially about a working profile, but also lack of opportunity to live the present with a significant quality. The daily extra school and extra work time often becomes "boring" (although crowded most of the time by peers) instead of being a meaningful

time or having "sense". Although presently this trait tends to spread among adolescents and young people of all industrialized Western countries, in many cities (especially in the South) it seems to link mostly to the extreme lack of opportunities offered to young people of the territory to meet, aggregate and socialize.

Today, among new young people grows more and more the feeling idea of job insecurity as a permanent status that, compared to the past, affects all aspects of life, accompanying their growth with a disheartening and disappointing underlined tone (Colazzo, Patera, 2009). We should say, however, that this does not happen with all young people. Outside disappointment and mistrust do not always affect the inside of the youth's identity. There are those who obstinately cultivate an individual vision of their own future. In these cases, which may seem sporadic bur in reality are many, willingness to invest on oneself substitutes the defeatist attitude. In addition, in such cases emerge the youths' culture of making projects (Castells, 2012) that inspires the development and pursuit of "strategies" for the present life, in view of the future and of the achievement of long-term objectives.

The adult world is in crisis and no longer able to speak to young people, children and teenagers, to fulfill their need for meanings and life expectancy with plausible proposals and trusted testimonies. The culture of doing, appearing and consuming prevailed and continues to prevail on the culture of being and sharing. The weakness of the thinking caused by the consumer culture led to the impoverishment of the concept of citizenship. The identity and rights of the consumer often prevails on the identity and rights of the citizen. Therefore, the crisis of education is the symptom of a crisis affecting the adult life and its ability to offer good identifications and exciting living prospects. Often young people do not want to grow because the image offered by the adults does not appear tempting, promising and reliable, but frightening and suspicious. They always tend to be defensive against a tough world and a future now perceived as a threat. The youths' world, immersed in the consumer society, has invented many prostheses: addiction, substances, virtual sex, gambling, alcohol and smoke. This generates the time of sad passions and great existential sufferings. Therefore, with no desires, the today's man lives crushed in the present, without even looking at the future that looks menacing. In so-called advanced societies, the school institution is the last place left for initiation to the social bond, before being submitted by spreading individualism and dominated by the "alternative culture" of mass media, which has become the first agency of socialization for children and young people. The breaking of the pact with parents, who are increasingly becoming arrogant and aggressive attorneys of fragile and cynical children, is one of the most disheartening factors (Bauman, 2009). Often, at school, young people do not show their true face, what they really are. Students bring at school the social complexity and problems generated by the perception of a lack of future. Without the ability to think, to say that somebody exists in the world remains only to act with violence.

A growing number of young people has no prospects for the future. They do not know what they want, have few interest and all tied to the everyday life banality: things to own, what to eat, clothing and entertainment – the "paradox" of Umberto Galimberti (2008) whereby young people look for entertainment because they do not know how to rejoice – and then, a course of action started from childhood dictated mainly by instinct.

They are not able to give themselves long-term prospects. Kids today have less and less ability to read their experiences, to give a name to what they live. It is therefore necessary a pact of co-responsibility between family, school and territorial agencies where the student is integral part. Education is not possible without the active participation of the subject (Tarozzi, 2001). Together, it is possible to reconstruct a fabric of relationships to regenerate that horizon of values, which is the foundation of individual and social growth, capable of restoring a full meaning to life: respect for the individual, acceptance of the other, search for common good, attention for the weakest, love for justice and truth and building a peaceful coexistence characterized by solidarity (Dewey, 1916). These are values included in our Constitution, which we all should contribute to realize in everyday life, but especially inculcate them in the conscience of every person (Pourtois, Desmet, 2007). Therefore, we need to recover the ability to aggregate and interact in social settings now deeply individualistic and competitive, to recognize the value of distributed intelligence and culture, to facilitate the integration and inclusion in today's multicultural society, to implement initiatives for participation where students are protagonists of paths of active citizenship at local, national and European levels, to promote actions and patterns of interaction between school and institutions, agencies and territorial entities, to give the issue of citizenship completeness as an integrated system of inter-institutional network (Delors, 2005).

2. The research. Purposes and methodology

The project we carried out starts from a reflection directed not only to a political education, but rather to an education to politics, whose difference is not about contents but about purposes (Santelli, 2004). Such an education, other than dealing with topics as power, State and government, does not aim at consensus but helps to understand how to improve social coexistence. The detachment of the interest of young people about political issues is a current problem. For this reason, if we want to understand the dynamics and complexity of the society and build a society better than the present one, it is very important the education to politics. In view of this, we should identify those conditions necessary to relaunch the possibility of an active and critic citizen, willing and available to commitment and participation. Thus, the need to form new kinds of skills and mindsets is born. The complexity of the world we live in, defined by Zygmunt Bauman as "liquid modernity", indicates the fragility and uncertainty as main dimensions characterizing our time, constantly forcing the global citizen to make decisions and, at the same time, not allowing him to do so, because of fast mutability and not governance of the environment. A sense of distrust is growing more and more among new young people about "communitas". It feeds itself of precariousness as a permanent condition and, compared to the past, affects all aspects of life accompanying their growth with a disheartening and disappointing underlined tone. What are the educational challenges of our time? What educational emergencies question the planet? Moreover, how can labor unions better catch juvenile instances to fully involve them in labor unions existence? These are the basic questions of this research. This survey focuses on the perception that today young people have regarding labor unions: all their knowledge about that, proposals and solutions to expand the labor unions network also in the youth's universe.

It is now firmly established that the school, as well as the family, aims to promote the integration into social life, adapting to the needs of trained subjects. Unfortunately, the number of young people who are unable to study or work is increasing; scholars have defined this group as the "Neet" generation (Not in Education, Employment or Training), which translates as "do not work, do not study, do not update". Therefore, the NEET generation indicates those people that at the same time are out of employment, education and training and that have stopped looking for a job or do not intend to do so. These are young people between 15 and 29 years old of age, in a certain way resigned and disheartened, who do not have significant values and future prospects, frustrated and unable to ask themselves about important questions. Italy has rather alarming data about the NEET generation. According to the Report on social cohesion published in 2010 by the National Institute of Statistics, more than 2 million young people are not employed and not enrolled in a regular course of study. Translated into percentage, 21,2% of the Italian young population is not working or studying: 18,2% of males and 24,4% of females. The situation becomes even more dramatic if we consider the territorial concentration; in the North of the Country 14,4% of young people is into the NEETs category, 16,1% in the Center and even 30,3% in the South (ISTAT, 2010b). Other sources affirm that in 2007 the proportion of Italian NEETs reached 17%, classifying Italy at the third place among the members of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010) after Turkey and Mexico.

The chosen sample was composed of 1,000 students of third, fourth and fifth classes of upper secondary school, a group from 16 to 20 years of age; the data has been collected through a questionnaire consisting of 33 questions, of which 31 with close-ended answers and 2 with open answers. The closed-ended questions allowed the subject to choose between predetermined alternative responses; as a result, we obtained a less rich and varied but more structured information (Baldacci, 2001) that we could process with common techniques of data analysis (of statistic type). The open answers allowed us to investigate modalities of thinking, avoiding pre-packaged answers, but having the product of a thoughtful process leading to the activation of a personal and critical thinking (Piussi, 2001).

A search, then, of quantitative/qualitative type with ideographic intent. The empirical choice fell on the study of case because it is a suitable strategy adapt to "explain" the phenomena; the "how" and "why" of things. In fact, the study of case allows observe/retrace mechanisms and processes or, more generally, the dynamic part of a phenomenon. For the quantitative analysis of data, we used the Google Drive Modules app, enabling us to structure the questionnaire and submit it on line (Bonaiuti, Calvani, Ranieri, 2016). We also performed the tabulation of data through the SPSS software (Barbanelli, D'Olimpio, 2007) for the bivariate analysis. To insert certain questions in the questionnaire we have used the Likert scale, while for the qualitative analysis we used the Atlas Ti software (Varadanega, 2008), which allowed the creation and analysis of hermeneutical units (Trinchero, 2001).

Through the tabulation of data, we acquired information useful to the preparation of new paths able to stimulate active citizenship and ensure lifelong processes of citizens' formation. What remedies can be put in place and which scenarios can we offer to new generations? Disappointment and mistrust do not always come from the outside

to the inside of the youth's identity. There are those who obstinately cultivate an individual vision of their own future. In these cases, which may seem sporadic bur in reality are many, the willingness to invest on oneself substitutes the defeatist attitude. In addition, in these cases emerge the youths' "culture" of making projects, which inspires the development and pursuit of "strategies" fro the present life, in view of the future and the achievement of long-term objectives. Starting from an empirical analysis, our research wants to trace possible scenarios and choices that can make the modern-day man increasingly "civicus" and less "hemptor" (Cassano, 2006). The results of the research, fruit of a careful scientific work of detection in the territory, constitute interesting material for programming further effective labor unions' politics that should pervade broader sections of the local society.

3. The results of the research.

The breakdown by gender of the sample appears balanced (Vertecchi, 1992) being constituted for 50,8% by men and for 49,2% by women. With regard to educational institutes attended by the sample, there is a prevalence of students from technical institutes (48,8%) followed by students of scientific high schools (14,9%), masterful institutes (12,7%), students from other types of institutes (12,4%), a small part from classic high schools (7%) and only 4,2 % from professional institutes. As regards the cultural level of the families of the sample, 42,6% of students' mothers possess a diploma of lower secondary school; 36,7% possess a diploma of upper secondary school, only 11,8% have a university degree and only 1,5% have a PhD. As for students' fathers, 43,8 % possess a diploma of lower secondary school, 36,1 % possess a diploma of upper secondary school, 10,8 % have a university degree; a small part of them possess an elementary school diploma (7,8 %) and a PhD (1,5 %). The level of education of both parents remains on percentages very close to each other, without having gender-related differences.

Have you ever heard of labor unions?

Yes	93,5%
No	6,5%

The sample highlights that 93,5 % had heard about labor unions, while only 6,5 % had not. In other words, only one individual on fifteen had never heard about labor unions. Therefore, we can see how information about labor unions are transmitted. Television plays a dominant role (27 %), followed by the family (23%), the school (20 %) and social networks (7,1 %). So, formative agencies still constitute a point of reference for new generations. A reflection appears obvious: several scientific researches show that the use of internet has recorded a strong increase in the last decade (where the network usage is essentially centered on social networks and use of videos for teenagers). However, our research does not confirm such a data. May it be that the use of internet focuses only on certain interests? In fact, the user himself uses different modalities to acquire information about his interests. This aspect is worthy it of note,

because it sees social networks, radio and internet as weaker communication channels to acquire information about labor unions. Today, as for the advent of internet, on line and off line relationships are many and varied, but, despite that, one part of the examined sample does not know anyone who has had contacts with a labor union (26,6%), while it is still high the percentage (73,4%) of people that have had such contacts. From answers emerges that the family plays an important role in the knowledge of labor unions (47%); another useful channel to acquire information consists of professors (19%) and acquaintances (19%). It results very small the figure relating to personal contact with a specific labor union (4%). However, this is understandable because the chosen sample has not yet entered the world of work. To the question 'how did you get to know somebody who has had contact with labor unions?', a good portion of the sample responded stating that this happened through work procedures (retirement, layoffs, mobility, accident) (35%). The percentages of those who contact labor unions to fill the 730/740 form, are equal to 17%; for issues with the employer (10%), information related to the employment relationship (21%) or for meetings and assemblies (15%). Adopting a methodology of polarized data reading (negative answers versus positive answers), to the provocative question/assertion (with the Likert scale) 'if you think that labor unions essentially promote strikes as a tool of dissent with respect to work's politics', nearly 53% responded negatively to the affirmation, while 44,9% responded positively. Based on percentages, very close between them, we can affirm that the sample appears divided into two parts about this issue. All following questions have been formulated as question/assertion with the Likert scale.

To the question/assertion whether labor unions express the desire of some political parties, 62,5% responded negatively, confirming the idea of neutrality of labor unions with respect to political parties; 40,2% responded positively, indicating a close relationship between labor unions and politics. In the current climate of anti-politics due to the waste of state resources for political parties, we wanted to test what the sample thinks about the fact that labor unions are financed by public taxes. The sample responded negatively in 63,5% of cases, while the rest, 36,5%, positively. Therefore, a significant part of the sample still thinks that labor unions should not receive funds through the present system of taxation of citizens. To the question/assertion whether labor unions are associations that defend the rights of all workers, the sample responded positively in 71,3% of cases: a clear signal of how more than 2/3 of students see a labor union as an organization that moves, fights and fully defends the rights of all workers. This figure is based on the perception of the phenomenon that the sample perceived through media news. Only 28,7% responded negatively. Another question/assertion wanted to understand the level of agreement of the sample compared to the fact that the labor union is an association that mainly handles bureaucratic paperwork. 53,5% responded positively and 46,7% negatively. Substantially, the sample appears divided into two parts. Then, we asked them whether labor unions provide for free help to those who have problems relates to the work: 48,9% responded positively while 51,1% negatively. Once again, the sample appears divided into two parts. Another provocative question/assertion (based on the common feeling conveyed by the media in relation to specific topics) was whether labor unions actually are more concerned about the interests of entrepreneurs. Only 18,1% agreed with this; the other 81,9% responded negatively. This shows how certain adver-

tisement about conflict of interests of labor unions' representatives is not a widespread vision among students.

We then tried to understand the students' curiosity about the labor unions' world, asking them whether they wanted to receive information or not during the upper secondary school about functions performed by the labor union. 73,6 % of the sample responded positively, which is a sign of how the school should give more information on the reality of labor unions, their history and functions. Only 26,4% is not in agreement with this. We should analyze this data very carefully. It shows how students strongly desire to have possibilities to meet and study in order to better understand such organizations. We then asked the students whether they wanted to be more involved in labor unions with specific initiatives: 76,6 % of the sample responded positively; only 23,4 % responded negatively. Another question/assertion was about the desire to know where are located the offices of labor unions in their cities of residency. 66% responded positively and 34 % negatively. A considerable part of the sample points out that, to date, this kind of information is far from them because not effectively advertised through the communication channels mostly used by young students. For 77,2 % of the sample labor unions are not an obsolete organ; only 22,8 % say the opposite.

Labor unions have had and still have an important role in the construction and defense of democracy in our country

Strongly agree	47,4%
Slightly agree	25,8%
Totally agree	18,8%
Strongly disagree	8%

66,2 % of the sample responded positively (aggregate positive data versus aggregate negative data); 33,8 % responded negatively. Therefore, a considerable part of our young students is confident about the role of labor unions in the construction and defense of democracy in our country, also referring to the history of these movements and civil fights that they have continued in recent decades. We used the Atlas Ti software as the methodology to analyze open answers (used sometimes to receive more information than what is expressed in a close-ended question). The software has worked on frequencies that recurred more often in answers, by grouping them into hermeneutic units. As for the first close-ended question that was asked ("do you think that labor unions defend the rights of all the workers?), the linked open question "if yes, why, if not, why" showed that 36% of the students affirm that labor unions defend the rights of all workers, followed by 27% of those who believe that they protect parasitic interests, 21% that do not know what labor unions deal with and 16% who affirms that not all workers are fully protected. We also asked students to comment the following answer to the close-ended question: "labor unions had their usefulness in the past, but today they result to be obsolete". From this second open answer we found that almost half of students have responded that labor unions are not obsolete, but "they still raise their voice". 18% say that labor unions in the past had more weight in defending the rights of workers, followed by

15% of students who say that labor unions need more support by political institutions; 11% of students think that labor unions are obsolete and a little 9 % state that labor unions were useless in the past and are useless today.

In your opinion, are labor unions pushing to establish a meritocratic society?

I do not know	41%
Yes, they have supported projects that enhance the merit	18,2%
No, there is no a culture of merit inside labor unions	13,2%
No, they are afraid to make enemies among certain social categories	11,6%
No, they protect parasitic interests	8,5%
Yes, they protect the interest of more capable and productive workers	7,5%

The question posed to our sample proves to be very important for two reasons: first, because it allows to detect how new generations perceive the reality and what are the perceptions of mechanisms underlying the various aspects of social life. Second, to understand the degree of confidence that they have in the other. To this question, 33,3% of students responded negatively, looking at labor unions as associations of people with no culture of merit and protecting parasitic interests. Only 25,7 % (aggregate data) responded that labor unions protect the interests of more capable and productive workers, supporting projects that enhance the merit along the years. A very important data, at the same time very disheartening, is the 41% of students that answered "I do not know"; their answers allow us to venture important questions: why new generations "do not know"? Because they do not have the right conditions to acquire information at this regard, or they "do not know" because they lack a basic curiosity in wanting to understand and participate? And, can this lack of curiosity derive from a lack of trust in politics and various forms of association?

Several studies have been conducted on the theme of the trust of new generations toward politics (Carrera, 2009). Indeed, the life of every subject is *imbued* with trust. It constitutes such a pervasive element of the daily experience of single individuals that, paradoxically, is not perceived by them. Yet, trust is both the foundation of interpersonal relationships and also the needed condition for the existence of the entire social system and its institutions. The trust can be granted, learned, exerted, disappointed and lost. It can be nourished in respect of persons and institutions, it may selectively refer to certain areas or be disseminated and extended. It can intensify with the reiteration of interactions, as well as worn out and disempowered by it. So, trust offers itself as an interesting reading key to go back to explore social *spaces* such as politics, economy and the city, which, in different forms, entertain a complex and sometimes contradictory relationship with it.

Therefore, participation thus becomes a way of thinking and acting politically, starting from oneself towards precise and concrete contexts, but open to wider hori-

zons. This because the practice of relations multiplies relationships and exchanges, and has no boundaries similar to the potential of changing the reality.

Do you think that in the future you could decide to personally commit yourself in a labor union?

No	75,6%
Yes	24,4%

From received answers emerges that 75,6 % of the sample would not undertake labor unions' activities. This seem to certify a condition of liability in relation to the theme of exercising citizenship. As the sociologist Franco Cassano says, the lack of participation in the country's democratic life and politics indicates the crushing of the sense of community in a polytheism of 'I myself' committed to achieving individual interests.

The sense of distrust toward political institutions, entities and associations is leading to a metamorphosis of the citizen: the active and thoughtful citizen gives way to the passive and superficial one, who renounces to participate and falls back in the role of a mere political consumer. He limits himself to choose among various electoral offers simply based on television information. In view of this, it is essential to identify those necessary conditions to relaunch the possibility of an active and critic citizen, willing and available to commitment and participation. To this purpose, some elements of revitalization of democracy are necessary. However, there are forces working against this and also the Web information through internet, which risk overloading the user. That's why we need to learn how to select, evaluate the reliability of sites and look for cross-feedback. Thus, the need to form new kinds of skills and mindsets is born. In parallel, it is essential to restore forms of participation that stimulate active citizenship and ensure lifelong training elements for citizens with particular attention to the younger ones (Santerini, 2010). It is therefore evident that the participation (Bertolini, 2003) or moving away from the political life of his own social context, is directly proportional to what an individual thinks about the weight that his contribution may have. The more citizens tend to believe that they count for nothing and that cannot do anything as regard of decision-making processes taking place over their heads, even more they feel to have no role in determining the outcome of processes and choices that take place elsewhere, far from people. Further, it grows even more the mistrust that can lead to the consolidation of a widespread and dangerous moving away from politics and its dynamics.

In 5/6 years I see myself:

With a university degree	26%
With many projects for the future	22%
Realized	16%
Happy	12,5%
Unemployed	5,5%
Poor	3,2%
Sad	1,5%
Disillusioned	1,2%
Entrepreneur	4%
Employee	6%
Other	2,1%

This question is aimed at understanding the future expectations of the sample. Most of the students see themselves with a university degree (26%), with many projects for the future (22%), realized (16%) and happy (12,5%); so, aggregating the data for positive values, emerges that 86,5% have a positive perception of themselves in the future. However, a part of students, equal to 13,5% (aggregated data for negative values) see themselves unemployed (5,5%), poor (3,2%), sad (1,5%) e disillusioned (1,2%), or other (2,1%).

To the question "what can lead you to change your opinion (if you have a negative one) about a labor union?", a good portion of students answered that they would change their opinion if labor unions would involve them more (31%), also promoting policies that encourage the access to the world of work (23%). A percentage equal to 16% would consider as positive the participation in cognitive meetings organized by labor unions with students of the fifth class of upper secondary schools. Then, a percentage equal to 13% of the sample, would consider as a good omen listening to young people in order to decide in a shared manner which are the priorities of the territory in terms of development. Therefore, as we have previously pointed out, it seems to emerge a generation that wants to be listened and understood, but less willing to give a personal contribution to the society.

4. Conclusions

At the conclusion of this research, the results are partly attributable to the social and educational contexts to which students refer. It is clear that the social-constructivist paradigm fully adopted within the research, leads to analyze the responses putting them into the frame of their original and geographical context (Southern Italy).

In this way, the education returns to be a crucial dimension of intervention to reverse the route.

What emerged from the research increasingly motivates educational agencies and families to solicit, through appropriate educational interventions, the democratic participation to the social life; in this process of cultural change, the role of labor unions will certainly have to be revised and defined.

Inevitably, also the theme of the relationship between education and citizenship follows a parallel path of epistemological and cultural evolution, because intrinsically connected with one another and depending on one another. The contribution of pedagogy is therefore fundamental, which develops between its roots into reality and an idealistic thrust. It must be realistic: losing contact with the reality involves dissolving every possibility of intervention. It must also be idealistic: without ideals to pursue it would remain only a repetitive flattening on contingent situations. Two principles, realism and idealism, effective when complementary and dangerous when separated. In this sense, education is the development and realization of such attention and openings, which gives value to a widely social commitment that becomes more consistently civil and political, helping the maturation of the individual's awareness of his personal contribution to a path of humanization.

In our time, the possession of knowledge and competences are necessary to reach new and complex equilibriums and secure space and respect for all. Knowledge and competences alone are not sufficient to find the right directions for development, but without them even the best intentions may become useless or fail (Santelli, 2003). The contemporary pedagogical research, with its worries and discoveries, intuitions and analysis and its commitment to be educational, helps to combat dangerous simplifications and support the needs related to life in its entirety. It pursues the development of knowledge and responsible commitment in action, in their mutual and vital strengthening. As appears from the findings of the research, young people are in search of values and meanings that can attribute to themselves and to the world where they live. Adult generations cannot escape from such a demand, without seriously disregarding their responsibilities and function. As emphasized in particular by the personalistic pedagogy of E. Morin, the answer, not only said but testified, finds in the individual person and in his concrete historical existence the fundamental reference that inspires and moves various possible choices.

Which are, then, the points on which pedagogy must reflect today in order to put the man in a condition to address the complexity of social reality (Callari Galli, Cambi, Ceruti, 2003), without being subjected by it, but being able to interact with it and transform it?

If the modernity has brought pedagogy to enable educational processes passively reproduced and aligned to their political-social class, the post-modernity, instead, enabled pedagogy to take charge of a more flexible educational process, critical and open, capable to find the high problematic nature of its relationship with the world, with others and with itself, in addition to criteria to make choices that give a meaningful direction to behaviors. To accomplish this step, one of the challenges that pedagogy must face today through the educational process, is to help the man to learn how to act, to realize a practice of "acts of responsibility" that are at the base of a more evolved social system.

There is no doubt that we now need a trend reversal to save us from scenarios that we do not want even to imagine, but that actually threaten us. It is evident the need to rethink the way we live and occupy the planet, too much plundered and folded by logic of profit, both personal and collective, namely of groups of power that endanger the lives of individuals. It requires to activate strategies and paths that would return independence of judgment, critical capacity, awareness of the rights and duties of each one,

which make the citizen free, in a society where everyone meets the other in a path of construction of the common welfare, free from the slavery of constraints and interests of the few. And labor unions could play an important role in this path. Will we then be able to find, as affirmed by Santelli, new synthesis between political participation and planetary citizenship? Yes, if in our time without illusions, where "the chaos will remain despite all that we can do or know and in which small orders and systems in the world are fragile" (Bauman,1996,p.5), this awareness will not become an obstacle to the work done to reduce the desert of calculated interests (Santelli, 2001), to containing forces in conflict and to increase opportunities to render our personal lives more worthy of being lived.

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