

School and University*Human resources or men for the new work?*

Rimini, August 24, 2024 – At 9:00 PM, in the Sala Gruppo FS C2 of the Rimini Fair, the conference entitled “School and University: Human resources or men for the new work?” took place. The encounter, distinguished by a profound debate on the role of education in shaping future generations, saw the participation of prominent people in the academic and social environment: H.E. Card. Mauro Gambetti, President of the *Fratelli tutti* Foundation; Giovanna Iannantuoni, President of the CRUI (Conference of the Deans of the Italian Universities); Cesare Pozzoli, Vice President of “Fraternità di Comunione e Liberazione” and a jurist lawyer; Roberto Ricci, President of INVALSI (National Institute for the evaluation of the education and development system); and Cristiana Scelza, President of “Valore D”. The gathering was presented and moderated by Francesco Occhetto, Secretary General of the *Fratelli tutti* Foundation.

Francesco Occhetto: An introduction to the search of the essential in education

Francesco Occhetto opened the conference recalling this year’s Meeting slogan: “If we are not in search of the essential, then what is it we are looking for?” Occhetto emphasized how education needs to go beyond the classical education of human resources that are functional to the market, to become a mean to shape people capable of critical thinking, who can adapt to change and significantly contribute to society. «Education not only needs to prepare workers, but also responsible citizens, spiritually ready to face the challenges of the future», said Occhetto, inviting the speakers to answer said important question.

Giovanna Iannantuoni: The importance of shaping critical and independent students

Giovanna Iannantuoni began her intervention stating that the university’s true objective is not merely to model professionalism, but rather to shape individuals who are able to ask questions and explore the world driven by curiosity and passion. «University is revolution, it is the idea of a scientist, it is the eureka that lights up like a light bulb at night», said Iannantuoni, highlighting the importance of an interdisciplinary approach that would allow students to understand the complex interconnections between science, technology, politics and economy.

Iannantuoni then addressed the matter of investments in education, drawing attention to how Italy is among the countries that invest less in universities compared to the rest of Europe. «If we truly believe that education is the door to the future, we need to be coherent», she said, recalling the need to increase investments to allow students to fully develop their potential and contribute to the growth of the country. She ended her intervention highlighting that only an education that inspires passion and curiosity can truly prepare students to be the main characters of their own future and change the world.

Roberto Ricci: The need to face educational inequalities

Roberto Ricci brought attention to the matter of educational inequalities, stating that they represent one of the main obstacles to the realization of students' potential. «Today, a three-year-old baby with a mother holding a degree, understands double the words compared to a baby whose mother has only the 8th grade diploma», explained Ricci, pointing out how these inequalities already entrench in the early years of our lives and profoundly influence the schooling of students.

Ricci criticized the Italian educational system for its incapability to efficiently face these inequalities, stressing the need to reform the system to make it more just and inclusive. He also talked about the need of an untimely intervention, emphasizing the importance of education in the years 0 through 6 as a tool to reduce inequalities and guarantee to all students the same opportunities of success. «If we do not close this gap, we will never achieve the objective of an education that will allow all to reach their potential», concluded Ricci.

Next, he drew attention to the importance of an education that focuses on quality rather than quantity, suggesting that the Italian educational system should invest more in personalized projects that respond to the specific needs of each student. «We cannot take the liberty to apply general solutions to specific problems. We need to face each situation with a well-aimed and scientific approach», he stated, stressing that only in this way we will truly be able to offer a more just and inclusive education.

Cristiana Scelza: The importance of diversity and inclusion in the working world

Cristiana Scelza spoke about the crucial role that diversity and inclusion play in the working world, basing himself on the experience of "Valore D", an association that promotes gender balance and inclusive culture in organizations. «Companies with different teams are 35% more likely to have superior financial returns», declared Scelza, quoting studies that show the concrete benefits of diversity in company performance.

Scelza also stressed how diversity is not just an ethical matter, but rather a business necessity.

She highlighted the difficulties encountered by organizations in creating inclusive environments and she suggested that universities should play a key role in preparing students to work in diversified contexts. «University should be well-connected with the working world and it should teach students not only technical competences, but also the importance of diversity and inclusion», she stated, recommending a more hybrid education that integrates humanistic and technical knowledge.

Moreover, she brought the attention to the importance of role models in young people's development, pointing out how it is fundamental to show students concrete examples of inclusive success in the working world. «We bring managers in schools to show kids that there are no jobs only for women or only for men, but jobs done with passion and competence», she declared, indicating the importance of tearing down gender stereotypes and promote an inclusive culture of work since young age.

Cesare Pozzoli: Education as the foundation of freedom and human dignity

Cesare Pozzoli centered his speech on the intrinsic value of the person as the foundation of every educational process. He recalled the words of Don Giussani: «We are loved, this is the essential truth», emphasizing how the awareness of being loved, gives value to life and is the basis upon which to build each individual's freedom and dignity. «This infinite value of the person is the foundation of everything, even of the job, of the education, passion and love for young people», remarked Pozzoli, explaining how this principle should guide the entire educational process.

Pozzoli also talked about the need for an education that allows students to make mistakes and learn from them, accentuating how the fear of making mistakes could hinder innovation and progress. He also

highlighted the importance of passion in the work and education, stating that only through an education that gives value to the individual and its uniqueness, will it be possible to model a just and inclusive society. «When we recognize the value of a person, we can build a future of peace and fraternity», concluded Pozzoli. Furthermore, he addressed the need to see an error not as a failure, but as an opportunity for growth. «The courage to face a mistake is what allows us to constantly ameliorate», he said, narrating about how his experience as a jurist lawyer had taught him the importance of an open and constructive attitude towards mistakes. Finally, he stressed the importance of hope and confidence in the future as key elements in motivating young people to engage in education and work.

Card. Mauro Gambetti: Rediscovering the vocational dimension of education

Card. Mauro Gambetti concluded the conference with a ha concluso il convegno with a reflection on the need to rediscover the vocational dimension of education. He emphasized that human dignity does not depend on ability or achievement, but is an incontrovertible fact that precedes any action. «Dignity is expressed on the job, in artistic, literary activities, and in all aspects of life», said Gambetti, accentuating that education should help young people to discover and develop their talents to serve others.

Gambetti then talked about the importance of an education that is not limited to the mere transmission of information, but that aims at forming people who are able to think in a critical and creative way. He criticized the encyclopedic approach of Enlightenment education, suggesting that artificial intelligence will soon make this model obsolete. « We need to rethink education as a revolution of self and a communion of life», he said, calling for the construction of an educational system that enables young people to express the spark of truth and beauty within each of them.

His Eminence finally, spoke of the Church's role in promoting education that is at the service of the individual and society. He recalled how the Church has always seen education as a means to promote human freedom and dignity, and how this vision should be the basis of any educational reform. « The Church founded universities to promote the freedom and dignity of every individual. We must continue on this path, adapting to the times, but without losing sight of the essential», concluded Card. Mauro Gambetti, recalling the importance of education that is not only technical, but also spiritual and moral.

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