

EDITORIAL

Building possible futures

The end of one school year and the start of another are times for reflection and asking questions. At various levels, adults with educational responsibilities find this to be a valuable opportunity to revisit those questions that do not allow for definitive answers. These are 'unanswerable' questions that we must continuously reconsider, as the responses must engage with reality and the life paths and development of individuals.

What is indispensable, not just useful, for a person to grow and develop their own life plan?

How can the ongoing work of constructing one's identity become a resource for others?

What is the purpose of school?

What is the purpose of educational research and the work done in universities?

What is my role as a teacher, and how can I support my students' life journeys?

These are some of the questions—many more could be added—that urgently need answers for us to act. Yet, at the same time, these answers remain open, provisional, and constantly evolving through dialogue with reality.

Happiness and future

At the heart of these questions lies the search for a quality and fullness of life that we commonly call happiness. However, there is often a risk of distorting this research into something individualistic and self-centered, forgetting what social sciences and civil economics recall as the pillars of life satisfaction: a meaningful sense of living, quality relationships, and opportunities for a generative life (Becchetti, 2024)¹.

Only from this perspective the word "future" avoid taking on dark tones and instead becomes both possible and desirable.

Reflecting on the current situation and trying to guide governments, UNESCO, in its latest report, highlighted how the ability to reimagine our "possible futures together"² can only begin

1. In recent years, the works of Leonardo Becchetti, Stefano Zamagni, and Giancarlo Bruni have highlighted the valuable contribution of civil economics in promoting a sustainable and inclusive development of society, also offering interesting perspectives for educational work.

2. UNESCO, *Reimagining our futures together. A new social contract for education*. In https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707_locale=en. This report was presented on November 10, 2021. Back in the 1990s, UNESCO published a significant report edited by Jacques Delors, *Learning: The Treasure Within* (1996), which reflected on the role of schools in the new millennium. Following this, in 2015, UNESCO released another noteworthy report titled *Rethinking education: towards a global common good?* available here <https://unevoc.unesco.org/e-forum/RethinkingEducation.pdf>.

with a new social contract for education. It is through the awareness of positive interdependence that connects all of humanity that we will be able to build a future capable of addressing the climate crisis, pandemics, poverty, and injustices. However, this change necessarily requires a vision of reality, a culture that can only emerge from a renewed commitment to developing an education that fosters a revitalized humanism.

The positive interdependence of resources and people, constantly reminded to us by the recent pandemic and ongoing wars, demands that educational efforts be framed within a perspective of sustainability³ and inclusion.

The school as a common good

Education is the key to building possible futures that promote opportunities for happiness and development for everyone, without exception. It is a demanding task that, when observing reality, may seem unrealistic. However, giving up or failing to recognize the importance of maintaining this goal as a guiding principle for educational action means abandoning hope for a future that includes everyone.

In this context, the school plays a decisive role: it can serve as a stronghold for fostering educational commitment within the social fabric. Its widespread presence in communities, along with its significant and long-lasting influence on people's lives, makes the school a particularly valuable common good⁴. Of course, this is not something to be taken for granted.

School can only be considered a common good that contributes to promoting an education capable of generating the future if it:

- promotes education through instruction;
- cares for individuals within a well-being-oriented environment;
- encourages thinking, not just knowledge acquisition;
- motivates engagement with reality and action within it;
- supports the development of identities open to encountering diversity;
- fosters positive relationships...

... it would certainly be interesting to complement this vision of school with practical actions implemented in daily life.

3. In recent years, it is particularly interesting to note how the term sustainability has broadened from being purely related to environmental concerns to encompassing the entirety of social experiences. One important document in this regard is the GreenComp report, which outlines the European sustainability competence framework. (G. Bianchi, U. Pisiotis, M. Cabrera) GreenComp – The European sustainability competence framework, M. Bacigalupo, Y. Punie (eds.), EUR 30955 IT, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022; ISBN 978-92-76-53202-6, doi:10.2760/172626, JRC128040). A review of this can be found in the December 2023 issue of *RicercaAzione* (Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 273-276), accessible here (<https://ricercaazione.iprase.tn.it/article/view/372/311>).

4. Re-Reading Lettera a una professoressa by Don Milani, or pages by Mario Lodi or Alberto Manzi, just to mention a few, as well as listening to the many significant school experiences of today, helps us fully grasp the value of education for people's lives and the contribution it can make to the quality of communal living.

Equally important is ensuring that this responsibility doesn't rest solely on individual teachers, principals, or groups of educators, but is supported by:

- serious professional training;
- incentives and recognition for professional development;
- adequate resources and infrastructure...

... in this case, the list could be expanded by those who, at the political level, truly view education and schools as real priorities.

Educate or repress?

School represents a common good and contributes to building it when it effectively supports the growth of students through an inclusive approach.

A provocative reflection on this came recently from Carla Garlatti, the Italian authority for children and adolescents, in her annual report to Parliament⁵. In the report, she highlighted issues

frequently covered by the media—youth gangs, aggressive and violent adolescents, bullying, cyberbullying, and challenges in welcoming unaccompanied foreign minors. However, Garlatti also issued a strong call not to succumb to a negative narrative about the younger generation, which doesn't align with reality and wrongly influences adult actions⁶.

'In today's Italy, young people express anger over decisions made above their heads. It's as if they have been relegated to a separate world from adults, Garlatti observes. More broadly, a cultural, social, and political shift is needed to break down the barrier separating adults from minors. Children and young people must be considered direct recipients of political decisions. Unfortunately, today they don't even appear in the background: this is evident from the fact that young people do everything to make their voices heard, yet they are still not truly listened to'.

Garlatti's intervention emphasized the need for policymakers to focus not on repression but on prevention and, above all, education when addressing youth-related issues.

The explicit message of the report, directed not only at the political world but at all adults in their respective roles, is to understand childhood and adolescence by breaking away from clichés, truly listening to young people, and taking them seriously. Otherwise, the risk is the implosion or explosion of an entire generation.

Education is the path to pursue, even though it may be a steep one.

5. The 2023 Report to Parliament by the Authority for Children and Adolescents, Rome, April 2024, was presented by Dr. Carla Garlatti to Parliament on June 20, 2024 (<https://www.garanteinfanzia.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/relazione-parlamento-2023-web.pdf>). The AGIA (Authority for Children and Adolescents) is an independent body that promotes research and actions in favor of minors. Is also interesting Dr. Garlatti's message for the start of the school year: School as a Building Block of Citizenship (<https://www.garanteinfanzia.org/carla-garlatti-la-scuola-come-costruzione-di-cittadinanza-anche-gli-stranieri>).

6 'The reality is different:—said Garlatti—for example, crimes committed by 14-17-year-olds dropped by 4.15% between 2022 and 2023. On the other hand, the response from the adult world has been to tighten measures, which so far has not produced deterrent effects. In fact, the increase in the number of presences in the 17 juvenile detention centers (lpm) risks causing overcrowding of the facilities and overloading the staff, with repercussions on the effectiveness of rehabilitation and recovery programs'. According to data from the Ministry of Justice, 'in one year, from May 2023 to May 2024, the number of minors in lpm went from 210 to 339: 129 more, an increase of 61.4%'.



The contributions from the sections “Experiences and Reflections” and “Reviews” in this volume are linked to the reflections expressed in the editorial and also focus on additional, interesting aspects of the world of schools and education. We also highlight the richness and depth of the scientific articles present in the “Research” section, briefly presented below.

Roberto Ricci focuses in his contribution on a deep issue: territorial disparities in education in Italy, demonstrating the need to delve deeper, through data, into less visible dynamics that could potentially compromise the social cohesion of a territory.

The contribution by Chiara Giunti and Michela Schenetti presents the results of an exploratory investigation conducted in 240 schools belonging to three networks characterized by a shared outdoor pedagogical vision and committed to promoting the reflective and professional development of teachers and the innovation of the school system.

Sara Germani explores in her study the role of satisfying the basic psychological needs of teachers on their motivation and job satisfaction, using the theoretical framework of *Self-Determination Theory*, through a quantitative survey conducted on a sample of 155 secondary school curriculum teachers.

Lino Rossi *et al.* present in their contribution the results of a qualitative investigation aimed at obtaining information regarding students' opinions on their own and adults' digital skills and habits.

Laura Carlotta Foschi's article explores a peer evaluation experience within the framework of continuous professional development for teachers: the study investigates their perceptions of giving and receiving evaluations on learning challenges they designed, through a survey with open and closed questions, analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Alessia Bevilacqua and Camilla Pirrello present in their contribution an educational research on the value of mistakes, conducted in a primary school as part of the *Service Learning* pathway, and initiated from the educational project “Wandering with the mind,” which involved students in an imaginary journey to discover the various aspects that mistakes bring with them.

The contribution by Antonio Marzano and Marta De Angelis is part of a pilot study conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Reading Comprehension-Reciprocal Teaching Program* aimed at primary school students, within which the *Summarizing Test III* was developed to estimate the effects of the program.

Finally, Silvia Zanazzi presents and analyses in her article the results of the project “*Shaping the inclusion: Self-assessment paths to improve inclusivity and the quality of specialist assistance in secondary schools*”, providing useful insights for those involved in the design, organization, and/or provision of specialist assistance services.