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When the elevator is not there

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Does school have as its goal the preservation of existing social relationships or inclusion and access to knowledge to "work out" full citizenship?

School, with all its flaws, is one of the last occasions for social aggregation: the obligation to attend until the age of 16 does not allow families to exercise the choice not to have their children study. Sending a child to school has a cost for families, but is an investment that is made, sometimes with great sacrifice, to give children more opportunities than those that the parents have had: having a qualification is necessary to access quality and well-paid jobs, and consequently a better social position. Unfortunately, in most cases this does not happen and school is put on trial, an apparatus modeled to meet the needs of the agricultural and industrial society that no longer exists, Norberto Bottani wrote in 2013.

But has this social elevator ever really worked? Or rather, does school have as its goal the preservation of existing social relationships, limiting itself to being a tool for assimilation of norms for the purposes of controlling the population?

In his book “La Maestra e la Camorrista” (The teacher and the Camorrist), Federico Fubini tells us another version of the story: starting from a research study conducted by the Bank of Italy that shows how in six centuries, the distribution of income in Florence has not changed, and they come to the conclusion that “when the social elevator freezes in a semi-permanent ice age – eople stop believing in it.” And people stop believing in others, they lose trust, because the game ialways adds to zero: every advancement is always at the expense of another. Fubini tells us that he interviewed dozens of teenagers from the south and north of Italy, asking how much they were willing to “trust others” and came to the conclusion that “success nourishes trust and the ability to trust nourishes success” and that “The lack of trust in what surrounds us turns into a subtle poison that helps paralyze the social elevator in Italy. ” He then continues his account on how he tried to undermine this distrust by making students of the Mondragone in Caserta school meet people who, having started from diffivult situations, have had excellent results.

“I learned about school being the last barrier to degradation at the conference organized by the European Parents Association whose theme was inclusion: I had the opportunity to meet Eugenia Carfora, the Principal of the Morano School at Caivano, a town located 10 km from Naples. She told of her failures and her successes in being able to give a clean and equipped school to her students, and how every day is like living in the trenches, struggling even with mothers who come to physical threats: her story is told in this video. There was also Sara Ferraioli of Maestri di Strada (Street Teachers), who explained how their work lies in creating relationships, with the kids, with

the teachers and with the “social parents”, volunteers who play the role of parents without being such.

Inclusion also entails access to digital technologies, provided that they are not used superficially, but stimulate critical thinking and passion for discovery and learning. GIn the discussion on the digital divide with parents across Europe it seems that the issues are common: little infrastructure and little use in the classroom, and if someone believes that the Government should not promote the use of smartphones in the classroom, others consider it now the equivalent of the pen and the notebook.

Inclusive growth requires the advancement of science and technology to be directed by a purpose, to avoid the risk of widening injustice, social fragmentation and depletion of resources: this aim is individual and collective well-being. The OECD agenda indicates, as the goal of education, providing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values ??to make people able to contribute and to enjoy an inclusive and sustainable future. To achieve this goal, three new “transformative skills” have been identified, defined as the creation of new value, reconciliation of tensions and dilemmas, and assumption of responsibility. Translating the “transformative skills” into the curriculum requires the participation of the entire educational ecosystem: students, teachers, principals, parents, decision makers, researchers, trade unions, social and commercial actors are involved in a co-creation process to define the guidelines of new educational systems.

New educational systems that allow us to face the uncertainty and unpredictability of the future, but where hope and trust in others seem even more indispensable.

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