

Workshop 3- Social dimension and social cohesion

- a) Excellence and inequalities in higher education
- Higher education has been traditionally devoted to the elite formation, particularly to the ruling class and more particularly to the public administrators = **Meritocracy**
- This way of functioning has been challenged when systems of education have been conceived as the (best) way for **social mobility**

Excellence and inequality/2

- Stable tension between **egalitarian** drive and **competitive** procedures
- Under these circumstances, what the **school (university) role** should be?
- First of all, it is convenient that the public system of (higher) education will keep the role of training the ruling class;

Excellence and inequality/3

- Secondly, the public system of education can regulate competitive impulses through pedagogical processes rewarding performances with equity .
- **Bologna Process:** more education for all citizens=problems of quality and productivity

b) Student roles in the changing university

- There are **several kind of students** attending higher education
- Students today often have a much more **instrumental and utilitarian approach** to the university
- The introduction of the multiversity model has broken the model of the university as a community

Students role/2

- **Policy Proposals:**
- Universities should provide services differentiated according different categories of customers, in terms of (i) flexible timetable for classes; (ii) accommodation for non-residents: (iii) on-line courses for students with working activities: (iv) programs and structures for non-studying activities; (v) initiatives connecting theoretical approaches with practical experiences (stages).
- Opportunities to exercise **active roles**

Student role/3

- **Public student support** related to the different notion of **students' role in society**
- Students are regarded as *responsible citizens; as young learners; as members of their original family; as investors in their future career* = Difficulties for a European policy of student support and for students' exchange

c) Higher education in European disadvantaged areas

- In developing areas the role of the university could be the catalyst centre of a federation of institutions and organisation aiming both at cultural and economic development.
- One of the crucial needs is related to the **quality of the higher education system** which in developing areas has to be of first class in terms of combination of teaching and research facilities in order to attract academic staff of high quality and to avoid excessive brain drain.

Higher education in European disadvantaged areas/2

- Globalisation without limits can widen the gap between central and peripheral countries as between developed and underdeveloped areas inside the same country
- The shrinking of the state support to higher education and research gives room to several initiatives of commercialisation of knowledge and higher education

Higher education in European disadvantaged areas/3

- **Policy Proposals:**

Governments – especially from South and East-Central Europe - have to retain control over higher education, supported by international institutions like E.U.

- Special care should be given to underdeveloped regions in order to facilitate the creation of networks among higher education institutions with the cooperation of private and public companies.

Higher education in European disadvantaged areas/4

- Incentives should be given to peripheral areas and countries in order to introduce and reward programs aiming at the reduction of cultural and scientific gaps like the so called “digital divide”.