

REPORT ON MENTORING COURSE

8th May 2015

LECTURER: Professor Carmelo Danisi

Dott. James Foschi introduces the project and asks the attendees to introduce themselves in turn.

Prof. Danisi introduces the lesson after highlighting that his approach will try to combine his contents to the context in which the attendees work.

Aim of the educational speech submitted to the attendees: starting from the European anti-discrimination law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, the aim of the speech is to analyse the idea of discrimination from a legal perspective. The purpose is to achieve a greater defense and a wider range of movement and possibilities thanks to a further knowledge and clarity. The importance of the “role” played by the law in the fight against discrimination will be pointed out.

Topics discussed:

- **The European anti-discrimination law:** some of the key concepts on which the anti-discrimination defense is based
- Relevant concepts which constitute a starting point in determining the existence of factual discrimination
- **Direct and indirect discrimination**
- **What is discrimination according to the law**
- **Non-discriminatory** defense
- Analysis of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, Amsterdam Treaty
- Examples of **gender discrimination** and how the European anti-discrimination law guarantees individual defense

Reaction from the attendees: The attendees show their interest and motivation in learning the notions introduced.

From time to time, there are interruptions of the lecturer speech, due to interventions aimed to challengingly highlight that law-related aspects may be purely theoretical sometimes. On the contrary, in fact, practical work daily deals with cases of strong discrimination, coming precisely from the public service and institution world and against which nothing can be actually done.

More than once, the lecturer needs to redirect the attendees to the topic discussed, trying to adjust it to the context and, mostly, legitimating the importance of knowing and examining in depth these legal aspects. It is important for the lecturer to do so because sometimes his public “gets stuck” on the description of anti-discrimination law unsuccessful attempts and cases of failure, openly showing their feeling of resignation and helplessness.

Atmosphere among the attendees: the atmosphere is sometimes slightly tense, because the topics are felt as too distant and rarely applied to the reality in which the attendees operate in their daily life.

Group dynamics: it is worth noticing how the course offers the possibility of experiencing how vague and confuse the notion of discrimination could be. Throughout the analysis of a case introduced by the lecturer, the attendees experience, with different degrees of awareness, how different the representation of what is or is not discriminatory could be, even among them.

9th May 2015

LECTURER: Professor Roberto Rizza
Economic Sociology and Labour Studies – University of Bologna

Topics discussed:

- Labour market policies and regulations
- Support schemes favouring unemployed people or who have their job lost in Italy, with the aim of promoting their insertion in the labour market.
- **Employment policies and gender identity**
- Conciliation policies
- Today's female and young employment rate: the weakness of the policies adopted promotes discriminations in the working world
- Throughout the analysis of the unemployment rate and the state of the art of the labour market, discriminatory processes will be highlighted. To do so, **the major theme discussed will be discrimination related to gender identity, economic status and age (young people).**
- Employment policies in the status of unemployment with reference to women and young people positions
- **Past and present welfare status: repercussions on the discriminatory processes in the working world**
- Welfare in Italy and abroad: repercussions on the discriminatory processes in the working world
- **Development of the communitary sector and down turn in productivity: the increase in inequality**

Atmosphere and participation among the attendees

The lecture is purely frontal. However, when the attendees are asked any questions, they do not show any participation in the way they answer. On the contrary, towards the end of the lecture, when themes related to job hunting and new forms of contracts are discussed, a more active

participation is shown, through questions directly related to the attendees' (or their family members') job positions.

As far as discrimination is concerned, the lecturer primarily focuses his attention on aspects related to gender identity and young people, while ethnic or geographical discrimination is only superficially discussed.

15th May 2015

LECTURER: Professor Giovanna Guerzoni

Introduction and aims of the educational meeting

- To arrange workshops, for a deeper knowledge and reflection upon discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origins and gender
- To put forward different points of view
- To reconstruct cases involving the theme of ethnic and gender discrimination at the workplace, starting from actual situations in which discrimination is clear or perceived, although not clearly defined.

After a brief presentation of the attendees, the lecturer introduces the aim of the teamwork and participants are asked to divide themselves in two groups for about an hour. People belonging to the same association are placed in different groups, to guarantee heterogeneity.

Instructions:

REPORT AND ANALYSE IN GROUP A CASE OF ETHNIC OR GENDER DISCRIMINATION, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT:

1. WHO ARE THE PEOPLE INVOLVED
2. WHAT IS THEIR STORY
3. WHAT IS THE CONTEXT
4. WHAT RESOURCES HAVE BEEN USED
5. WHAT RESOURCES WOULD BE NEEDED

PLENARY SESSION:

Group 1.

Case of a situation experienced by Jean Pierre Gamene

Case of ethnic discrimination at the workplace.

STORY AND PEOPLE INVOLVED

Adult man, 50 years old, from Burkina Faso works in a farmland under an Italian employer. He is the only coloured worker at his workplace. Since his employer sweats him, by underpaying him -to the extent that his salary does not reach the minimum threshold to have his residence permit renewed-, he turns to the Burkinabe Association for Community Action, headed by Jean Pierre Gamene. In those circumstances, another specific discriminatory aspect emerges: as a coloured worker, he is always exposed to the sun when working, while all the other workers are given the chance to take turns in the shadows. According to the employer, this is justified by the fact that coloured people are not as affected by heat and sun exposure as the others.

RESOURCES USED

The subject turns to the trade unions, who suggest to leave it. Afterwards, he turns to the Burkinabe Association for Community Action, headed by Jean Pierre Gamene.

RESOURCES NEEDED

It would have been crucial for the trade union to defend the worker.

Plenary session:

- Lecturer: a case of dual discrimination, related to both the ethnic group and the salary with repercussions on the chance of having the residence permit renewed.
- Some of the useful resources to activate: to film the accident in order to attest the case of discrimination and turn to a lawyer. In this specific case, discrimination is difficult to prove and it is seen as a side issue, while the labour protection is the main problem. In fact, the worker does not complain about not being given the possibility to take turns in the shadows while working, in the first place. He asks for assistance for his low salary, instead.
- It becomes clear how discrimination can be perceived only as a minor problem if compared to the main necessities in the poorest living circumstances. Jean Pierre highlights that in many cases workers would overlook every discrimination just to keep their job. A job provides them not only with money for a living, but also with a residence permit, a place of residence, the chance of being with their families, and it means freedom to them. Therefore, the labour protection issue appears to be the most significant one, while discrimination remains on the background.
- Lecturer: stresses the importance of working on the worker's awareness of discrimination.
- According to Jean Pierre, there are usually two kinds of people in the working world: the "wily workers" and the "good workers". The "wily workers" rise up, make problems come out, and lose their jobs; the "good workers" do not say a word, accept everything and keep working.
- Discrimination visibility at the workplace: how to make it emerge? How to attest it, and make it visible in order to prove it (same with mobbing)?



- Lecturer: need of a group dimension, which will attest the discrimination and help the discriminated subject. After all, workers who turn to an association are normally surrounded by their colleagues, who witness the discriminatory process. Educating the citizens and feeling involved, to a greater extent, in what happens around us become crucial.
- The government fails in properly carrying out examinations and regular investigations. In fact, investigations are often manipulated and not as effective as they should be (the employer is informed beforehand, for example).
- Italian and foreign people are not treated equitably by the institutions.
- Discussion focus: **ethnic discrimination becomes a side issue when coming to financial issues or problems concerning the residence permit**, it does not come to light in the first place. Although the subject knows he/she is a victim of discrimination, he/she would overlook any cost just in order to keep working.
- Lecturer: the worker is under-informed about the protection of his/her rights, the measures that can be taken, and the assistance offered in the area.
- Discrimination becomes part of a more complex system, in which the workers “would overlook everything just to have their residence permit renewed”.

Case 2

Case of a situation experienced at the workplace by Ricci Jonatha, entertainer at the “Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII” Association.

STORY AND PEOPLE INVOLVED

Rumanian girl, under-age, lives on the street with her family. They occasionally live in unoccupied houses and do not have a permanent address (not even a fake one). Her family “invests” in her and directs her towards attending a training course to specialize, find a job and try to improve the whole family’s fortune. The girl cannot enrol to the training course, though, because she is not able to provide any permanent address, which is one of the requirements they ask for to attend the course.

RESOURCES USED

- Lawyers working in the homelessness area
- Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali (UNAR) – the Italian anti-discrimination department

RESOURCES NEEDED

- The local government should provide a (fake) permanent address

Plenary session:

- Lecturer: case of discrimination implied in the system or in the administrative procedures. As a matter of fact, this case it is not about ethnic or gender discrimination, but it is rather the wrong use of the procedures which leads to discriminatory processes.
- There is a long debate about the issue of regulations in Italy, and about their interpretation and complexity.
- Lecturer: it is extremely difficult for foreign people to cope with this huge amount of procedures.
- The group introduces many cases in which slowness and an improper use of regulations and procedures from the institutions has been a major cause of problems to the immigrants.
- Lecturer: stresses the theme of discrimination within the system, as well as the foreigner lack of knowledge about regulations and what the area has to offer to help him/her. It is not easy to cope with associations and institutions, procedures and regulations. **Within this intricate net of system procedures, discrimination is even stronger.**

Challenging question

The lecturer tries to broaden the theme, including gender discrimination as well. She asks the attendees whether they know anything about this specific issue, or have experienced it, got in contact with it, either directly or indirectly through their work experience.

(The attendees appear not to have any case to report. Hence, the lecturer introduces the theme of caregiving jobs and discrimination in that particular field.)

A Rumanian operator, who works with caregivers, (*I cannot remember her name at the moment*) speaks. She reports a series of cases of ethnic and gender discrimination in the caregiving world (request for women coming from Eastern Europe, preferred to those coming from the Arabic or African world), where prejudices are deep-rooted.

The lecturer highlights the dual vulnerability which emerges in the caregiving world: on the one hand there is the poor visibility of what happens within the home (thus discrimination becomes likely to happen); on the other hand there is the scant acknowledgement given to the professional competence in the caregiving work, related to the female world. A parallelism between this situation and the past representation of the role of educators, not regarded to as a proper profession and exclusively reserved to women, is carried out. Both worlds appear to be regulated by the same dynamics.

The lack of professional acknowledgement gives an opening to discrimination

Labour acknowledgement and salary as a function of the gender identity are other two themes touched on: examples of discriminations.

In conclusion

There are discriminations originating from the “system holes” and the complexity of the system itself. It becomes, thus, crucial for the individual to know his/her rights and duties, to know more in-depth the territorial jurisdiction and the services offered.

Atmosphere and participation among the attendees

The attendees take part to the debate, even though not all of them manage to actively fit in the discussions. There is the predominance of intervention of two or three people, who used “to be in the limelight” even in the previous two meetings. Bratti Edera (in charge at the Fiorini personnel office) appears to be “distant” and does not participate actively to the plenary session.

One of the reasons is likely to be that the group has not been given enough (initial) space to “feel like a group”, to be “bonded” from a motivational point of view through a more explicit educational deal, for this has been their first non-frontal lecture.

22nd May 2015

Lecturer: Professor Alessandro Martelli

Attending the meeting: Fiorella Rodella and Francesca Crivellaro

Introduction and aims of the educational meeting

- To put forward **different points of view** through the comparison and the “identification” with those who live and experience different, although complementary, positions in the working world (mentoring and training groups).
- To put on the stage, through **a simulation**, a crucial and significant moment, such as the **job interview**, in which two realities come into contact: on the one hand there are those who look for a job; on the other hand there is the reality of those who are in charge of managing the listening and the application analysis. **How much of those factors related to the discrimination on the labour market enter this specific dynamic? How much difference do differences actually make?** The aim is to reconstruct a standard situation which will involve the issue of ethnic and gender discrimination at the workplace, starting from a specific situation, such as a job interview.
- To promote the comparison and make it easier, by reversing the roles of the participants. The training group will need to work on the representation of the employers, while the mentoring group will play the role of people looking for a job. Role inversion and role playing will make it easier for the attendee to acquire a different point of view and to reflect upon the issue.

After the introduction, the lecturer describes in details what the groups are expected to do.

Practice

Simulation of a job interview for a vacancy at a Conad supermarket, where a counter or check-out clerk is needed.

Phase 1: Reconstruct the employer and the applicant profiles following some guidelines. Division into groups. Time: 40 minutes.

- A. **Mentoring Group:** Describe the profile of the persons in charge of the personal selection, taking into account some specific guidelines:
- 50-year-old man
 - 40-year-old woman
 - Been working for Conad's in years
 - Describe their profiles by giving information about their marital and professional status (whether they have any other work experience or have always been working for Conad's...)
 - Imagine a range of requirements and factors which are crucial for the applicant recruitment (turns, accessibility, competences, etc.)
- B. **Training Group:** Describe the profile of the applicant who will be interviewed, taking into account some specific guidelines:
- 30-year-old foreign woman
 - Educational qualifications acquired abroad; not recognised in Italy
 - Migratory experience
 - Describe her profile by giving information about her marital status (married, with or without children), her origins, how recent is her migratory experience
 - Delineate her curriculum vitae (her working experiences, if any, etc.)

Phase 2 : Simulation of the job interview. Time: 10 minutes

The applicant is a 30-year-old Nigerian woman, mother of a baby boy, married to an Italian man, with an extended family, the Italian grandparents are present and collaborative.

The selecting personnel appears very "professional", welcoming and make the applicant feel comfortable.

They ask some questions about:

- Marital status
- Parenting
- Vehicle availability
- Willingness to move (within the same town)
- Relatives or friends working at Conad's
- Hobbies
- Bad habits

The applicant manages to answer to each question taking into account the interviewers' needs and providing prompt and effective solutions (grandparents helping with her child care; public transports) to what may be seen as her limits (her child, not owning a vehicle).

As far as bad habits are concerned, she manages to turn them to advantage the job position, describing herself as an even too precise and tidy person.

When talking about hobbies, she says she is a gospel singer and likes being part of a group. The applicant is immediate and positive in each or her answer, proving to be very receptive. The interviewers show a positive attitude towards her.

The attendees take the practice seriously and are highly credible in their interpretation.

Plenary session

The two groups join each other again and start reflecting together upon the dynamics regulating the job interview just simulated.

Reflections concerning the fictional characters emerge:

Applicant

- It is crucial to show willingness and competence in a job interview
- Importance of looking at their best
- Fear of not being able to continue talking during the interview
- How to manage a negative answer. How to turn limits into resources?
- Bad habits issue: is there the actual need of talking about oneself and personal issues, or should the applicant rather keep the discussion on a professional level?
- Understand the job offer in-depth and make sure to get ready for the interview beforehand. Get informed about the job profile and the company who offers it
- Showing to be a very clever person: advantage or disadvantage?
- Avoid asking too many questions about salary and days off

Employer

- Be as clear as possible about the job offered. The employer has to define in details their working conditions
- Create a nice atmosphere, make the applicants feel comfortable
- Understand the applicants and be able to listen to them
- Rather than giving answer, employers need to ask questions to understand

These are some of the points emerged from the debate during the plenary session

Dynamics

The attendees participate actively. To the mentoring group, the simulation has represented an occasion to be seen, maybe also to prove to both themselves and the others to be up to the situation. In fact, their interview simulation is noteworthy, having embodied two professional, respectful and sensitive interviewer profiles.

They are asked whether what they have represented is an exemplifying picture of their experiences or rather what they would like to experience. Someone from the mentoring group,

namely the two “actors” say that that is what they have actually lived. It is palpable, though, that there is a certain difficulty in passing “from the ideal model to reality”.

It emerges that profiles from both groups make the work somehow easier for each other. No criticality is put on the stage; the interviewers’ offer and the applicant’s requests fit perfectly into place, without striking any note. There is a feeling that groups may have feared to create a too “real” situation, as it could have been risky to go through it, through the issue of discrimination, through real obstacles.

In the practice with professor Guerzoni there was a similar situation: the cases described did not go to the key point of the issue. Likewise, the interview has been softened. Is it due to the fear of facing this particular issue together? While the interview appears to be perfect, the same perfection is in fact broken when an operator from the training group claims that, in a real world, an employer would rather hire an Italian worker than a Nigerian one. After an initial general dismay (foreign guys think she is introducing a personal experience), this “breaking point” allows a “shy” investigation into the theme of discriminations, which is always touched with due caution. This aspect emerges and is further analysed later on, during the following meeting, by the training group.

In conclusion

This experience appears to be gratifying and engaging; all the attendees bring themselves into play. The role inversion makes both parts feel what either offering or looking for a job means, with all their specific related dynamics.

29th May 2015

LECTURER: Fiorella Rodella, Psychologist and Psychotherapist

With the idea of starting from the simulated interview (22/05/15), the follow-up work is organized according to these aims:

- “ex post” reconstruction of the reasons why the mentors participate to the course to understand whether and to which extent their expectations are met and to reflect upon what each one of them “bring back home” from the experience;
- Reflect upon social worker typical limits and resources, in order to identify specific tools which ease their work.

Sitting in a circle, group members –including the leader and me– introduce themselves, specifying their role within the association they work with. Generally speaking, the attendees claim to be satisfied with the course. In particular, Laura (Consorzio Solidarietà Sociale), states she acquired new skills to better cope with foreign users. Moreover, she adds that some lessons helped her “see what she had never been able to see before” (there are some discriminatory attitudes she would not have regarded at as such before). Giorgia (Pensiero e azione), on the other hand, appreciated mostly “doing something with the other group” (the training group). In addition, the

simulated interview, represented an opportunity to deal with migrants far different from the homeless, drug addicts and illegal immigrants with whom social operators normally work.

The introduction of all the members—somehow justified by my presence there for the first time—and the deliberation on “what each of us brings back home from the experience” is useful to work on those issues the operators face on a daily basis. Taking as a starting point the examples given by Rodella, the group shares criticality, frustrations and contradictoriness. Among the most common problems pointed out:

- the risk of mixing personal expectations (“to do someone good”) up with the users’ needs;
- the risk of delineating a user image compromised by an ideal representation of the “perfect user”, to be disappointed/frustrated afterwards, seeing that the expectations do not meet reality;
- the risk of being upset from the users’ main needs and the burnout risk (for example, some among the *Pensiero e Azione* operators shared a sense of helplessness when offering to migrants who live in poor conditions “only” an Italian course. Victor claimed there is a lack of support which is typical of people who daily cope with others’ suffering);
- the risk of an “extreme identification” between operator and user, caused by the lack of a clear boundary line between “us” and “them”. (i.e.: according to Laura, the simulated interview has represented an opportunity to learn a few “tricks” to deal with a job interview in the future, and it has been the same to the training course attendees; Gioia and Laura stress how some difficulties the migrants face –in looking for a job, accepting job positions beneath their expectations/qualifications, coping with the lack of networks which support the conciliation care-work- are actually the same difficulties they live.)

Starting from sharing their experiences, Rodella leads the group to reflecting upon the strategies which allow to protect themselves from the risks working in the social area involves and to better deal with the daily tasks. Among these strategies there are:

- to maintain the right distance between themselves and the users (Jean Pierre defines it as a “safety distance”) and establish some boundaries, by distinguishing between ourselves and our professional role. The debate on this particular issue is made, at least partially, more difficult by Liliana. In fact, she insists on the importance of “being there all the same” for those who may need help;
- to recognize how significant daily work actually is, instead of focusing on what we are not able (or not allowed) to do;
- to become conscious of the expectations we hold towards our work, our role and towards the users, in order to understand the influence they exercise on daily practices.

Before concluding the meeting, Rodella takes up again what happened during the simulation. The group partially admits that both groups’ *desiderata* were met during the job interview: on the one hand, the training course attendees’ desire of being recognized and treated with respect (the interviewers they represented were kind, made the applicant feel comfortable and did not do

anything to create troubles to her); on the other hand, the mentors' desire of redemption (the applicant profile represented was the one of a "winner", which rarely are the users they deal with on a daily basis).

Generally speaking, participation from the attendees has been meaningful. As Rodella explicitly states to the attendees at the very end of the meeting, though, the group has shown some difficulties in "entering" the theme of inequality as a result of diversity: the group (including me), has been continually dithering "between defense and attack" and, thus, between the recognition of discriminations ("You will never see a coloured man attending to a customer in a cafeteria"), and the need of softening the present-day situation ("It is not actually like this; something is changing").

30th May 2015

Lecturer: Fiorella Rodella

Introduction and aims of the educational meeting

- Resume and give a new meaning to the educational path taken, as a conclusion of it
- Reflection upon the challenging statement "The others are us"
- Reflection upon the theme of prejudices, psycho-social processes which leads to discriminations
- Resume the observations on the simulated job interview
- Suggest 5 useful tips to enter the working world. *Reflect upon cases/situations of failure or of success starting from personal experiences*
- Suggest 5 useful tips to "be protected" from discriminations in the working world. *Reflect upon cases/situations of failure or of success starting from personal experience*

Plenary session

The meeting requires active and conversational participation, and is taken in circle. Some of the topics discussed involve and stimulate the group interest and inspire a debate about theoretical and educational issues, being the attendees' personal experiences the starting point.

1. The challenging statement "the others are us" leads to reflecting upon how distances between us and the others are always not that big, and this activates defensive processes which drive to even more discriminatory processes. The attendees offer examples.
2. Considering the discrimination not only as a pyramid issue, but also as a "cross-status" issue is meaningful. One of the attendees claims in the past he has been astonished after

hearing a group of Italian homeless people discriminating other foreign homeless, regarded to as “second-class homeless”. The group offers other similar examples.

3. As a result, we are all immersed within the prejudice and sometimes, either deliberately or not, we do activate discriminatory processes. Reflection leads to stress how much some of the attendees believe there are “categories” of people towards whom prejudices and discrimination may be just round the corner (gipsy people, for example). It is interesting noticing that one of the attendees, chairman in an association which defends foreigners, who fought against discrimination in all its manifestations, admits he is actually absolutely “intolerant” towards gay couples who adopt children.

This causes the whole group amusement and it becomes crucial to destructure certain defensive patterns which may have been activated even within the group, to reflect on the fact that prejudices are often inevitable. Rather than being denied, they should be recognized and be thought over, not to make them work and turn into discrimination.

4. Another recurrent topic is the feeling of not doing much when working in the social area. An attendee relates her experience in teaching Italian to foreign guys in poor economic and living conditions. She talks about her frustration in not being able to satisfy those guys’ main needs and about her feeling of not doing enough. To this respect, it is touching and meaningful the intervention of the chairman of an association from Burkina Faso. He tells that when he was in Sicily, after working in the fields for 10 long hours, he used to take his bicycle and go to Italian classes. It took him more than an hour to go there. He tells that that bicycle, those Italian lessons, and learning Italian allowed him to be here today, to be free, to fight for both his own and other people’s rights. He reassures that girl saying that what she does is not too little: it means a lot.
5. As far as the simulation is concerned, it emerges that that interview was almost perfect. It is asked why such a choice had been made and no critically had been introduced instead. Someone says that maybe it was not easy: they did not want to run the risk of offending anyone or touching any sensitive issue.
6. There is a reflection upon some tips to enter the working world.

- It emerges that in the past it was easy to find a job even without talking Italian, and even without having any competence. Today, on the contrary, because of the economic crisis, having language competences is crucial.
- Specialize and develop expertise in a specific field, rather than dissipating competences by working in different areas.
- Look for a job through online applications or through contacts and acquaintances or other employers.
- Look for a less “beaten” niche which would be easier to enter. Different choices make you an “expert”.
- Readjust your curriculum vitae according to the application.



- Too much accessibility is a synonym of lack of professionalism. Limits and boundaries need to be drawn.
- Get informed about the company which offers job opportunities and be aware about it the day of the job interview.

7. The group takes into consideration some helpful tips to defend themselves from discriminations in the working world:

- Alternative solutions are possible. Turn limits in strong points. A mother can demonstrate there is someone who can take care of her children.
- To appeal to the Charter of Rights is a form of defense.
- Training and specialization are a form of defense. Having faith, getting informed and training make the difference.

In conclusion

The day has offered many challenges and ideas for reflection. The attendees appear to be involved. Many reflections lead the attendees to even observe themselves in their own social and relational processes. The feeling emerged is that there has been an actual chance of working on themselves, trying to destructure some of their defensive patterns, which has allowed the raising of authentic thought about discriminations and prejudices, a world in which we are the others and everyone is involved.