The Law Department as a choice of life: it happens in Tanzania

The story of Godfrey Mwansohe, thirty year old Director of the Department of Law of Jordan University in Morogoro, Tanzania, deserves to be told. A wonderful story. A story of helping hands in a country, Tanzania, where the first (and nearly only) form of support for individuals is the one of the group, made up of an extended network of family relationships.

It so happens that, in very large and disadvantaged families, the only person with a sure income – as in the case of Godfrey’s mother, police officer in Morogoro, with no husband and raising two sons – might also take up the responsibility of raising another four (of the many) children of two of her sisters. Godfrey thus finds himself part of a family of 6 “brothers and sisters” all living in the home in the town of Morogoro where they have moved to from their village, in order to be closer to the mother’s place of work. After graduating from school, Godfrey enrolls into University, where he obtains a Bachelor Degree in Law. He is able to pay for the University fees thanks to the help by his brother, who has left studies (university) in order to work and support the family.

In Tanzania, in fact, like in Italy, Universities require fees, and therefore they are attended mainly by children from the middle and upper class (children of functionaries of the bureaucracy, or of business class members working for large multinationals which are exploiting local resources, children of professionals, employees, teachers, shop owners, local entrepreneurs …) without involving, or only marginally involving the lower class into the development of the country.

Scholarship are also few, and they are reserved to limited categories (for example orphans); Godfrey is fortunate to have a single mother who is raising many children, so he has no access to a scholarship. Once again, the solidarity of the group softens the rigidity of law: this time it is thanks to the support by his brother’s friend, who emigrated abroad, that Godfrey is able to enrol into a Masters’ Degree course in Law at Mzumbe University in Morogoro. In autumn 2010, while he is writing his final Master’s thesis, he is awarded a fellowship enabling him to come and attend a course in Law and business in Europe at IUSE (www.iuse.it) in Turin; a Turin student whom he met while she was on an exchange programme at Mzumbe University helps him with the scholarship to attend the course.

It is thanks to the new perspectives acquired by this course – and to the trip to Europe – that Godfrey feels, as he tells us, “lightened up”, enriched with a new mind opening. Not only: the family in Turin generously hosting him decides to pay the costs for him to carry on studying, after gaining his Master’s Degree, at the Law School in Dar es Salaam, which necessarily needs to be attended in order to sit for the Bar Exam, giving access to the legal profession as well as to the judiciary (in a common law system).

Godfrey brilliantly passes his Bar Exam and once again makes a local choice, for his country, entering the judiciary as a magistrate. Feeling he can also extend to others a new and wider view of the world, a few months later he gets a position of lecturer at Jordan University in Morogoro: he teaches many subjects (from Intellectual Property to Family Law, from Commercial Law to Human Rights), being the first Law lecturer at a very new Department, which is still under construction. In summer 2014 he is appointed Director of the Department.

When asked about his projects as Head of Department for the development of the Law Department, the lecturer has no doubts: “First of all – he says - to review the program, so as to introduce, through international exchanges, a chance for all students to go abroad and get in touch with best practices”. He then adds: “University studies should also be an opportunity for acquiring a more open mentality, with
competences enabling them to pick up – maybe creating them by self employment – the most various work opportunities, for oneself and for others”.

In order to address the high unemployment rate of youth (and not only) in his country, even for graduates, the professor has in fact as main point of his programme the introduction into the curriculum also of “business oriented” subjects, enabling graduates to create small and medium enterprises, and thus developing a local production context, enhancing middle class and internal demand.

What is missing in Tanzania is indeed the capability by the middle class to promote development, and to oppose – also because of widespread corruption - the greed of those who, from abroad, only aim at getting hold of the local raw materials, without creating true opportunities for the country’s human capital.

In these days Prof. Mwanso ho is back in Turin, this time attending the IUSE course on "Europe, migration and inclusive growth: a focus on human capital", centred on the EU policies for the enhancement of human capital introduced by immigration. This time, it’s up to him to give a hand to others.