

Marino Regini



Marino Regini is Vice-Rector of the University of Milan and Professor in this University, where he teaches courses in Economic Sociology, Political Economy and Comparative Industrial Relations. He studied Sociology at Columbia University and the University of California, Berkeley, and has been visiting professor in several US and European universities. He is the past-president of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics. Among his several writings, the following volumes have been published in English: *Why De-Regulate Labour Markets?* (2000), *Uncertain Boundaries. The Social and Political Construction of European Economies* (paperback edition 2006), *The Future of Labour Movements* (1992) and *State, Market and Social Regulation* (1989, with P. Lange). Professor Regini's main thematic and geographic area of interest is changing relationships between higher education and the economic system in Western Europe.

In your view, what is the most probable or desirable future scenario regarding labour market changes and higher education?

As far as Continental Europe is concerned, reform of the "European social model" has been on the political agenda for some time now. Whether it will go towards further de-regulation as in Anglo-American economies or towards the Nordic model of "flexi-curity", European labour markets will become more flexible, as well as more polarized between a low-skill and an increasingly important knowledge-intensive sector. Higher education institutions will be required to provide the future "knowledge worker" with not just technical and specific skills but also a broader, multi-disciplinary basis as well as social skills.

In your opinion, what is or should be the most important objective for higher education in the future? Why?

To keep providing leading-edge, innovative, basic research, as well as highly-skilled "knowledge workers" even in excess of actual labour demand, in order to make it more convenient for companies to follow a "high road" to competitiveness

What do you consider to be the main future challenge(s) for higher education systems? Why?

The main future challenge from the point of view of relationships with the labour market will be for higher education institutions to become very sensitive to the employability of their graduates, but at the same time capable to anticipate the range and type of skills needed by innovative economies without depending on short-term demands from employers

In your opinion, what would be the worst, but possible, way to tackle these future challenges? Why?

The worst way to tackle this future challenge would be for higher education systems to simply look at the past records of graduates' employment and strictly adjust their curricula, teaching methods,

research objects, to such records. In this way they would succeed in avoiding major mismatches between the supply of graduates and current demand, but would amplify the problem of adjusting to rapid obsolescence of technologies and skills. Where a market ideology permeates higher education systems and is not counterbalanced by a more forward-looking strategy of development, this scenario is likely to take place

What do you consider to be the best possible way to tackle the above mentioned future challenges? Why?

The best possible way would be providing students with a mix of specific professional skills highly demanded by the labour market, a broad multi-disciplinary training that allows graduates more easily to adjust to variable and rapidly changing work contexts, as well as social skills that are highly appreciated by employers. The risks of this scenario are of course the possibility for graduates to lack in-depth specialization in specific fields while not fully acquiring the ability to keep learning as well as a positive attitude towards flexibility.