

Necesidades educativas actuales de los jóvenes y enfoques innovadores en la enseñanza

Present youngsters' educational needs and innovative approaches in teaching

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Resumen

La educación vive y experimenta, en la actualidad, un momento histórico importante: existen amplias distancias entre las posiciones de los que afirman la necesidad de reconsiderar sus categorías pedagógicas de referencia y las posiciones de los que piden con urgencia una renovada atención a cuestiones concretas, reales, didácticas – a veces técnicas –. Y, por consiguiente, un debate significativo, dentro de los campos de la psicología de la educación y de la pedagogía, se centra en problemas específicos: el impacto de los cambios en las interacciones educativas y estilos de vida sociales, la eficacia en la enseñanza, los actuales procesos cognitivos y de aprendizaje de los jóvenes, sus actuales necesidades educativas. Al mismo tiempo, datos registrados en toda Europa, por asociaciones, profesores, expertos e investigadores, muestran una creciente atención a problemas específicos que pueden influir negativamente en las futuras oportunidades cognitivas y de aprendizaje de los jóvenes.

Palabras clave: educabilidad, eficacia docente, estrategias y procesos de aprendizaje.

Abstract

Education lives and experiences, at present, a significant historical moment: wide distances exist between the positions of scholars who state the need of reconsidering its reference pedagogical categories and the positions of scholars who urgently ask a renewed attention to concrete, actual, didactical – sometimes technical – matters. And, accordingly, a significant debate, within the fields of psychology of education and of pedagogy, focuses on specific related problems: the impact of changes on educational interactions and social lifestyles, the efficacy in teaching, the present learning and cognitive processes of youngsters, their present educational needs. At the same time, data and information reported, all over Europe, by associations, teachers, experts, researchers, demonstrate a growing attention to specific problems that can negatively impact on youngsters' learning and cognitive future opportunities.

Keywords: educability, efficacy in teaching y learning strategies and processes.

Preliminary concrete issues

If we pay attention to the voice of the European Dyslexia Association, the last decade shows significantly growing numbers of dyslexic, dyspraxic, with attention deficit, hyperactive, children and adolescents, all over Europe. 50 million people are dyslexic (10% of total population) and run the risk of having very limited access to knowledge, education, labour markets. And most of them run the risk of comorbidity: 50% of persons with dyslexia are dyspraxic as well; 40% of persons with dyspraxia are either dyslexic or have differences in attention; 85% of persons with dysphasia are dyslexic as well; 20% of persons with dyslexia are having differences in attention with or without hyperactivity; 50% of hyperactive children are dyslexic.

And if we consider the data collected in some of the researches implemented in kindergartens, teachers' perception of dyslexia, hyperactivity, attention deficit, dyspraxia seems to be connected with significantly growing numbers. A research which selected, in the years 2013-15, 10 kindergartens of the town of Rome and more than 400 children, reports that their teachers perceive a population widely interested by dyslexia, with figures higher than the one reported by EDA: 16% of children should be dyslexic. Further-

more, 14.5% of them should have problems with social interactions, 20% with communicational problems produced by divorced parents (De Cicco, 2016). And an additional investigation on teacher's perceptions of the presence of autistic and hyperactive children, still ongoing within the same context, seems to report far higher numbers than statistics do.

In short, either we are, today, far better technically able to identify the presence of the mentioned problems or we must think that all educational roles are not behaving / working properly, professionally, ethically. I think that both hypotheses are correct and that we need to both reconsider reference pedagogical categories and urgently ask a renewed attention to concrete, actual, didactical – sometimes technical – matters.

Nevertheless, some very generic considerations are necessary. First, our students live, belong to, participate, communicate, interact within traditional educational settings, whose social, communicational, linguistic, formal, non-formal, informal messages are coherent with adults' competences and knowledge, models and lifestyles. Second, knowledge cannot be considered a deliverable and transmissible product anymore; and educational roles cannot be considered as technical, never. This does not depend on pedagogical reasons; this depends on

a different reason: the human need of perceiving future as a promise and not as a threat. Third, the variety of adults' reference values and principles can span from trustfulness to shallowness, from social responsibility to individual extreme competitiveness.

And three short considerations more profound and meaningful are necessary as well, on what is labelled as "transmission of knowledge":

- as never before in human history, younger generations, at present, have a kind of knowledge, the technological one, about which the adult generations are not unique and total holders. Adult generations don't know and can't transfer its contents, instructions for use, usability and reusability, meanings, cognitive strategies involved in managing it, communicational codes and channels, specific languages.
- younger generations, at present, have at their disposal a kind of knowledge, the technological one, which gives an additional instrumental potentiality. Its use allows, as never before in human history, the pure access to any other knowledge without the necessary physical presence of adult generations. It doesn't matter if it is a deeper or a more superficial knowledge, as its quality depends on the user's approach and on the motivation to learn. By these two facts, several

extremely significant consequences have been produced: the perceived usability of knowledge, the perception of its updatability, the way of memorizing, processing, giving a meaning, the way cognitive strategies are used;

- as never before in human history, younger generations have the opportunity of weakening the perception of the distances between tangible and intangible, material and immaterial, as the presence of virtual environments provides them with additional settings where to interact, socialize, communicate, learn, study, access to knowledge;
- as never before in human history, younger generations have the opportunity of recording undeletable traces of their past (Schmidt & Cohen, 2013); therefore, they have the opportunity of perceiving and knowing more widely and deeply their physical identity, their personal past, their microsocial and macrosocial cultural contexts.

What I mean is, so far, is: educational professions and roles cannot ignore the impact produced by social phenomena and by the pure presence of tools that have been modifying lifestyles and learning styles, anymore. They must have a specific competence: reading and understanding why, how, for whom, with whom the pers-

pective of the access to knowledge and of the experimentation of critical thinking are, at present, totally different.

Social phenomena and their impact on learning styles

My analysis will focus on some, of course, social phenomena; what is actually important is not the number of information that can be given here, but the approach to the interpretation of social phenomena and the approach to its translation in educational problems. My scientific references are, therefore, psychologists of education, pedagogists and sociologists who demonstrated their attention to the concerned problems. We have to look for, at least, the answers to the following questions, that are listed following a thematic sequence:

- Are the present generations of our students ready to understand the meaning of knowledge and of its usability?
- Is knowledge widely perceived as solid or liquid? Is there a link between scientific knowledge and social knowledge? Do scientific knowledge and social knowledge support each other? Are scientific knowledge and social knowledge perceived as solid or liquid?
- Are the present generations ready to understand the sense of didactics as supporting human growth, social growth, common growth?

The scientific voices can be different, there are pessimistic and optimistic options; the problem with them is not the depth of their analyses, but the absence of present youngsters in the discourses about youngsters.

Absences

My reflections will be focused here on the category of distance: among generations, in the perceptions of reality, in thinking styles and lifestyles, in personal orientations, in participation, in relationships. About these specific issues, some voices seem very interesting and representative of different intellectual directions: Umberto Galimberti, Zygmunt Bauman, Miguel Benasayag and Ulrich Beck, whose viewpoints and approaches are clearly phenomenological and whose style is clear, effective and accurate.

As regards our discourse, Galimberti's analysis is always clear, explicit, rigorous, undoubtedly deep and coherent. He focuses on two important aspects. He firstly considers the new generations' emotional and lexical illiteracy as a widespread condition. Then he describes the horizons where new generations are living: young people turn to the world and to consumerism with their confused thoughts and faint passions, without families and schools, in order to avoid the anguish, the lack of sense, solitude and depression (Galimberti, 2007).

Who does Galimberti ascribe the responsibility to? According to him, science and technique are responsible of the above mentioned youth's horizon of sense or, rather, of the foolish horizon of the young people's condition. Sciences, as they logically explain and describe the world with new stories, as they transfer their own supremacy in the universe from the earth to the sun, as they catch the relations among things, as they define the logic of the relationships between man and nature, would also have caused the lack of orientation and stability, changed the perception of the universe as machine to be studied, deprived man of its reference points, emptied reality and experience of their meaning and essence, deprived spirituality and divinity of any chance of surviving. Sciences destroyed any men's attempt of claiming their own humanity and central position in history, simply teaching them that everything is relative and does not survive. In this context, the technique imposed artificiality to humanity, increased the sense of absence and annihilation, hid the soul under a thick cloud of nihilism, permeated all behaviours and all social interactions with the total absence of values and principles.

I cannot deny that Galimberti's analyses are always detailed and ask to think at interesting, significant problems; however, too often, his analy-

ses forget the central problem of his discourse: man. Overall, however, Galimberti's discourse, we must say, is rather generic; we can neither do the same mistake nor use some generic issues with the pure aim of stressing a positive idea of present times and present youngsters – at least because we have the significant referent voices that already analysed the concerned problems, at least, Morin, Maffesoli, Baudrillard, Goleman, Goffman, Gardner. Here's the synthesis of the reasons why our positions are distant:

- for him, technique works, uniforms and deletes man; for me, it brings people together and multiplies the opportunities for meeting each other. What does it mean? That our being professionals or experts or researches, with human ideas and values, also produces technical knowledge; technical instruments are tools and not aims; technique, in other words, is made by men for men and women.
- for him, present changes produce eradication, create perplexity, lack of recognition, destruction of what is human, automation; for me, all changes ask for modifying or thinking at additional values, asks for new certainties. What does it mean? That we have the ethical and professional duty of explaining changes, with the aim of reducing risks and support certainties. If pro-

fs, parents, adults do not have the educational role of supporting thinking, who could do it in their place? If profs, parents, adults do not have the educational role of supporting a human identity wherever and whenever, who could do it in their place? If expert researchers do not explain to young researchers the meaning of research, who could explain the distance existing between having a human aim and having a technical aim?

- for him, the concepts of individual, identity, freedom, truth, meaning, purpose, nature, ethics, politics, religion and history have lost their original meaning and either should be deleted or drastically rebuilt. For me, the same concepts need to be repropounded by new narrations and with a new language, by innovated codes able to communicate additional, recognized and shared meanings. What does it mean? That, for example, we must fight standardisation, and first of all from lexical standardisation. The loss of the meaning of words impacts on the recognisable availability of meanings. The less one perceives and denominates specific details, the less he will be able to read and deeply recognise narrations about identity, freedom, truth, meaning, purpose, nature, ethics, politics, religion and history. Narrations

bring people closer, strengthen culture and disseminate contents and meanings.

- for him, the social, cultural, communicational, expressive, emotional, illiteracy of youngsters is undeniable. I think that we do not know youngsters and we rarely meet them; I think that they are already building their own sociocultural styles, their own communicational styles, as they are already aware of their own learning styles.
- for him, consumerism has been disseminating horrible social values. I think that we have to update reference categories. What does it mean? That, for example, as we have to pay attention to the characteristics of social styles, we must denominate those characteristics. The human needs of supporting stability and of facing intensity are two concrete examples.

Miguel Benasayag and Gérard Schmit, supported by their psychoanalytical professional experience, seem to confirm the implications of Galimberti's analyses: all of us have lost our overlooking sense which let us foresee a better future and have switched to pessimism, unavoidable pain, vanishing passions and ideals.

Remo Bodei, on his part, has a partially different idea, since he states that a very tight link exists among the per-

ception of future, the mobility of social processes, the birth of desires. According to him, the greater is the possibility that individual wishes are felt and thought, the greater are the presence of dynamic processes within a community and the aim of projecting a clear and visible future. Bodei states that, without wishes, relationships would be static and future wouldn't appear as a promise (Bodei, 1994). Benasayag, Schmit and Galimberti argue that loneliness, individualism, pessimism and sad passions confirm the lack of desires, expectations and dynamism in present individual horizons of sense. They all confirm a daring social direction towards the desire of possession. On his side, however, Bodei includes an important issue to stress the existence of individual ethics able to remove desires from reason, concreteness and pure consumerism. The four experts share their pessimism but their specific descriptions of the concerned processes are actually different. In this untrustworthy social context, the philosopher Bodei sees the proliferation of social troubles, while the two psychiatrists and Galimberti prefer to see a weakening of human qualities. Indeed, a new interesting idea becomes clear and important for the pedagogical viewpoint: the perception of future as a promise and the perception of future as a threat.

Benasayag and Schmit stress the

change of an optimistic attitude (future will always give new opportunities to the almighty man) into a pessimistic one (life is uncertain for a powerless man). They study the reasons why the new generations risk to be seen as the illiterate selfish individuals defined by Galimberti, but ignore the idea of attributing all responsibilities to technology. Their discussion is interesting. It focuses on those behaviours of adult generations that have been producing the effect of both modifying the youth's perception of reality and giving significantly up their educational role. The two French researchers finally acknowledge that our innovative and culturally experienced world paradoxically produces ignorance and attention to appearance. As to Galimberti's idea on destructive technology, they moreover point out that all past generations owned their own technologies but all of them always understood and controlled its logic. Disasters have been caused by the current use of technology. Adults don't know its mechanisms, effects, features, sense, meaning and reasons, so they live a superficial attitude that makes them feel almighty and aim at destructive and lucrative results (Benasayag, Schmit, 2003).

Besides, Schmit and Benasayag point out a very important issue for the pedagogical viewpoint: the disappearance or the weakening of authority

as meaningful characteristic of adult generations. In the two psychiatrists' reflection, however, there are some methodological inaccuracies, always from a pedagogical point of view. The values and principles that permeate all relational codes between adult and young are simply seen as factors that are fostered by the need of dependence and protection rather than promoters of awareness and motivation. However, the two scholars have probably hit the mark when dealing with the deep change of its reference category: at present, relationships among teachers, professors and students or parents and children, have such a particular symmetry that has no previous examples in human history. This symmetry doesn't refer to the sharing of responsibility on a common ground, nor to the sharing of goals, neither to the perception of a high, equal dignity of all those who have a role inside and outside classrooms and homes, regardless of their age. It rather refers to the adult's authority through which he offers contents, lifestyles, thinking styles, readings, interpretations, significant attitudes. A symmetrical relationship cannot exist when relationships seem to be defined by different forms of contractual approaches which reduce the perception of authoritative roles and negotiation, the meaning of and attribution roles and models, the quality of the perception of youth's needs, produce the lack

of differentiation between authoritative and authoritarian.

The two scholars are dealing here with the delicate issue of the role and of the kind of contribution that a dynamic relationship needs. According to them, the lack of authority reduces freedom and strengthens arbitrariness and confusion: it is not surprising that the failure of the adult's proposals and the symmetry in their relationships with younger generations will inexorably lead to coercion and violence on both sides, because relationships without responsible and significant roles result in using force as alternative to the real efficacy of using seduction and persuasion. So, this kind of adult absence would produce several failures, at least: in proposing meanings and values, in giving strength to authority, in educating to the promotion of significances and of multiple horizons of sense. This would be the most important contradiction of our time: we would be able to promote widespread instances of emancipation and freedom, but not to adopt authoritative behaviours. Authority would remain pure and simple authority, pure and simple expression of insecurity. All relationships based on affinities, family solidarity, ideals, individual and social solidity would disappear. Whereas relations based on competition, conflict within microgroups and macrogroups, utilitarianism, individual liquidity

would appear. The universal principles of the dynamic structure of common life, even of cohabitation, would become distorted; among them, Benasayag and Schmit say, the principles governing the meaningful links between authority and seniority, the social and cultural relations between youth and preexisting generations, the perception of future as a promise.

According to Benasayag and Schmit, therefore, life schemes, everyday interactions, social and family relationships grow within an existential atmosphere; in other words, it isn't surprising that adults are no more considered as models, either positive or negative. While searching for protection, merciless beholders only perceive the total inability of changing a standardised present and a senseless future. Above all, young beholders only see the impossibility of avoiding market laws which impose jobs without granting constant welfare. Family and friends are no longer able to provide protection nor to reduce the perception of uncertainty nor to foster an atmosphere where adolescents can live and achieve necessary tools and competences. In a word, adults are responsible for homologation: they annulled roles, relationships, perspectives, alternatives, opinions, values, meanings, therefore losing authority in any context. They replaced their ideals with the ideologies of emergency, of survi-

val and of future as a threat, therefore transforming in unreliable persons. In such a context, youngsters cannot live the process of exploration, cannot elaborate their own vision of the world, cannot experience all essential rites of initiation. Furthermore, even the need of transgression lost in value, because it can be easily experienced within family and school contexts; the law remained alone in preventing, pursuing and punishing. In such contexts, adolescents perceive a world where adults are absent and only suggest the ambition of surviving, refusing, opposing and ignoring.

If Schmit and Benasayag are right, the only consequence that can arise from the perception of future as a threat is the limited value of culture and education, or, better, of schools and universities; all educational settings would only be irrelevant and unable to provide both real alternatives and significant choices. The two scholars have their own proposal: the clinic of bonds is the clinical approach aiming at gradually reducing the perception of threat, of utilitarianism, of distance and absence. In other words, the approach aims at reducing social normalisation, at deleting material purposes and modifying the meaning of social authority.

The French context observed by Benasayag and Schmit has many correspondences within European countries,

of course shows many similarities with the context observed by another French scholar, Jean Sévilla, who, from the earliest pages of his *Morale* correct, focuses on very concrete issues (Sévilla, 2007). The problem of the negotiation, as it is raised by Sévilla, hasn't been frequently considered in literature. It contains some interesting descriptors and indicators which should be analysed in depth as they are linked to the processes that widely modified the roles of mothers and fathers – and that produced the so-called phenomena of paternalization of mothers and of maternalization of fathers. Those processes, according to Sévilla, gave a strong contribution to the effect of negotiation between parents and sons / daughters: within new familiar models, parents prefer undetermined roles and pay more attention to their sons' wishes than to their educational needs.

Some pages of Sévilla's analysis focus on the lack of authority of present familiar models. However, in my opinion, he makes the same methodological mistakes as Galimberti does: the phenomenon (the gradual disappearing of a specific characteristic of a microgroup) is interesting, true, important, but it can't be observed in its simplest consequence. I mean: why, actually, identifying computers, videogames or iPod as non-human friends of sons and daughters, as the objects who are responsible of their

loneliness? Would some tin soldiers, a ball or an old doll reduce the quality or quantity of their time spent alone? In other words, the real problem is the loneliness of sons and daughters, not the kind of tools used for leisure or domestic time. Apparently, adults know tin soldiers but not computers, pretend not to remember that objects remain objects, and blame unknown objects of taking their children away from them. Actually, Sévilla stresses the additional consequence deriving from the above said phenomenon: is it possible to logically link the lack of perception of roles with the lack of attribution of roles?

Liquidity and solidity

Benasayag and Schmit's clinic of bonds is an interesting idea, since it refers to the category of distance and aims at proposing active and enduring horizons of sense. It is even more important if we observe its potential action in a context in which the *homo consumens* lives as metaphorical substitute of the *homo politicus*, as Bauman states (Bauman, 2006). Zygmunt Bauman's analysis is clear. His reflection explains and deepens the reasons of his distinction between liquid and solid modernity. Liquid is a style which is unable to move with the times, needs to constantly propose new terminable tendencies and trends, appoints a short life to behaviours and attitudes, doesn't realize that running

doesn't not necessarily imply a clear direction while moving, fears exclusion and prefers precariousness and insecurity just to find itself ready to all news, prefers speed than duration, is unable to turn results into durable, permanent and stable features, fears disabilities, doesn't aspire to durable knowledge because it learns too fast and rapidly forgets what it was unable to personalise.

Bauman suggests some indicators and descriptors of the deeply changed behaviours in the age of liquidity. They are both important for us because we have to verify the existence of some notions, categories and points of view potentially useful to define a pedagogical and didactical meaning. According to Bauman:

- links and bonds are broken. To move with the times of consumerism and not to be left behind by those who run, a liquid man doesn't accept that his links with objects, habits and people would hold or puzzle him or impose standards, stability and duration on him. Even the idea of maternity, paternity and family links changes, since children are too expensive and mortgage a difficult and long future;
- attention and concentration have new goals. The rhythm of changes asks to control directions and tendencies, but the time in hand is so short that a liquid man is only able to control and cover irrelevant and

forgettable routes. Therefore, other goals, such as physical integrity, are given attention;

- consumerism is preferred. The liquid man prefers immediate and temporary satisfaction because he always concentrates on new desires and objectives, prefers the logic of rapid accumulation to postponed pleasure, engagement, lasting, learning, thinking, deep reflection, significant relations;
- the choice of concrete perspectives is preferred. As to values, priorities change according to individual demands and modifies the approach to self-awareness and projectual attitude. The perception of a promising future and optimism disappear, as Benasayag and Schmit stress too. In other words, standardization to consumerism modifies personal / collective needs and long term plans. Such tendency even modifies the perception of an investments on human dimensions rather than on material ones;
- projectuality and human qualities are deleted. Spirituality, ethics, moralism, personal lifestyles and thinking styles, hopes, expectations, meanings, reflections, analysis, care, need too long time in such an accelerated, unforeseeable and extraneous age.

If Bauman is right, and if I were required to give up and think that change has led to such consequences, I would

only have to add that all adults should be taken away from new generations, misjudged and totally isolated. Though pessimistic, Bauman's point of view deserves attention, as it introduces ideas that can be translated into pedagogical discourses. According to him, adult generations should contribute to a strong reduction of individualisms in the name of a common interest, should increase the value of an ethic and professional satisfaction; he states the necessity of a principle of reality rather than a principle of pleasure.

His idea of the swarm is very promising for our aims. In liquid modernity, swarm's actions confirm the contemporary superficiality which forgets solidity. The swarm is not a solid group since it only selects those actions which can be considered necessary to its objectives. It has no schemes, does not like meanings, prefers what is evanescent and temporary. No leaders are identified in it, since their position could change according to all future directions. It prefers provisional alliances with extemporary people, with those who can speak about everything but can teach nothing, those who have no abilities but only a verbal appeal, those who have no notions about individual or social narrations. The swarm doesn't care about people, but about numbers: many members imply good directions, while heretics and rebels must be iso-

lated. The swarm doesn't allow durable bonds, doesn't perceive future, is unaware of the existence of memory. In such a similar context, the sense of perspective has no reasons to exist, since the sense of promise is lacking: desires should be hindered in order to encourage new ones, needs should be ephemeral, objectives should be substituted by microaims. In short, directly and indirectly, Bauman states that the liquid reality even changed the perception of the values and sense which have been characterizing the educational and the helping professions, i.e., all the professions whose aim is of taking in charge children, adolescents, young and adult people. To the swarm, knowledge is meaningless, competences are not useful, thinking is an obstacle.

Zygmunt Bauman is one of the few scholars able to read both microperspectives and macroperspectives, overviews and details. While the main feature of exclusively catastrophic theorists is pessimism, he is one of those who introduce points of view that can be significant for interdisciplinary analyses. Among those who are able to translate their analyses in working hypotheses, Edgar Morin is the bearer of one of the most interesting proposals; in his *La tête bien faite* (Morin, 1999), he uses a particularly dramatic language, but some years after publishing the above mentioned work, Mo-

rin goes back over the problems on which he had reflected from a pedagogical and educational perspective. The category of excess summarises the distances and the contradiction between, on one side, the human responsible attitude, which promotes arts and sciences and should belong to homo sapiens, and, on the other side, the attitude that defines the homo demens, a calculating, cold, egocentric, destructive barbaric person surviving in contemporary urban babel. He argues that Europe is currently living a critical moment and can only find, within its culture, history, memory of barbarism and mistakes, the antidotes and the tools for a new lasting humanism as model for the planet (Morin, 2005).

Ulrich Beck has the same opinion, since he sees a new humanism and a cosmopolitan vision as the unique choices for life, the unique models able to resist egocentrism, nationalisms and particularisms (Beck, 2004). He argues that we urgently need a cosmopolitan consciousness to create a cosmopolitan perspective, to reduce our egocentric narcissism and to free man's actions and thoughts with the aim of fostering cosmopolitan attitudes and behaviours.

From a pedagogical point of view, therefore, Beck's five sociological principles are particularly interesting, as they thoroughly are in opposition to the ideas of nationality and territorial

identity, besides aiming at defining the reasons and the sense of a cosmopolitan vision. The first principle is concerned with the crisis experience of societies, that is, with the perceived interdependence, fostered by civilization, which erases geographical and metaphorical borders. The second principle deals with the needed recognition of differences among societies, the third one with the cosmopolitan empathy and change of perspective, the fourth with the liveability in global society. The fifth is concerned with the blending of cultures and local, national, ethnic, religious and cosmopolitan traditions: cosmopolitanism without provincialism is empty, provincialism without cosmopolitanism is blind. Beck's idea is full of symbolic meanings, since he proposes a cosmopolitan vision of a glass world, in which cosmopolitanism is seen as an irreversible process from an historical and geographical point of view, as a bearer of loyalty, new recognitions, transnational life styles. It supports political and non-governmental people, which are able to promote men's and environment's protection, to reduce all forms of poverty, to speak in the name of humanity as international institutions can do today with the experiences, for example, of the International Court of Justice, FAO, World Health Organization. His idea of a cosmopolitan perspective might seem an utopia but he however

stresses that it is neither a new version of global brotherhood nor a new version of provincialism, it is rather a new form of realism.

Even Jeremy Rifkin, narrator of the access age, states the need of rethinking the fundamentals which rule human relationships: according to him, traditional institutions have lost their dynamic characteristics as they are anymore supported by traditional ideologies and commitments (Rifkin, 2000). According to him, the central factor and future ground for a positive change will be intellectual property, the unique dominant power. Ideas, concepts and images will replace things and objects as values. Since intellectual property can't be exchanged and remains forever in its owner's hands, companies and markets will have to quickly adapt to a transition from ownership to access, to modify their current operating procedures, to answer to different economic laws. The traditional economic laws and values can no longer foresee neither sellers and buyers, but suppliers and users, nor physical resources but intellectual resources. Only durable and cheaper goods will still have a market, the others will be included in a system of services.

In terms of distance, we are interested in Rifkin's world and in his historical, geographical, political, social, cultural, scientific and technological points of view. As a matter of fact, if

he is right, the distance among generations will become deeper and deeper and will produce new forms of absent or ineffective communication. The distance between those who have and those who don't have access to neither food nor technologies will go on creating larger and larger distances. But the sense of a new human identity will develop everywhere, a kind of identity engaged to enter into meaningful and intense social relationships and into significant emotional experiences.

And what kind of skills, personal and communicative styles, participations and social relations, autonomy, perception of himself and of people, objects and cultural opportunities, should have this new and protean man? Rifkin has no doubts:

- new generations will experience participation thanks to networks and their interdependence. They will feel important since they are online and engaged in answering and relating through social, cognitive and communicative processes (it is, actually, what Gardner explains as a risk in *The app generation*, 2013);
- a single self will be impossible, because different opportunities and places will require conscious and various attitudes and behaviours depending on interactors and contexts;
- a single self would only limit the

manifestation of the many voices of the ego. New generations will need to become actors to perform and meditate on several stages, within individual and collective plays;

- participation, cooperation, interdependence, teamwork will establish new ethical standards annulling competition;
- thanks to systemic thinking and parallel processing, meditation will be more fluid and rapid, the ability of reading events rather than single situations will increase;
- the perception of the value of the others' minds and the need of personal and cultural contributions from all over the world will weaken the thresholds of intolerance;
- educational models will be based on the sense of civilization and responsibility, participation and mutual support. Schools and communities will participate and integrate as networks, will support and foster creative capacities, systemic and systematic thinking. People will be extremely competent, will be able to solve problems, will live the sense of being part of communities, will breath social trust and empathy, will be aware of the role of culture for the preservation of civilization.

Rifkin's optimistic analysis is full of concrete realities and meaningful

readings, but his discourse is quite simplistic, since he carries out a too hasty observation of the dynamics between mind and brain, reality and culture, perceptions of the world and of life contexts, cognitive and identity processes, mnestic processes and conscious action, interactions and relations with a conscious self, selfconfidence and personal choices and orientations, elaboration of experiences and meaning attributions. What Rifkin in his prophetic zeal can't see, while a pedagogist and all educators should do, is the real intensity of the nevertheless meaningful implications defined by catastrophists. As we have already seen, silence characterises both the interactions adults / youngsters and the educational relationship profs / students. We could conceive here silence in the same terms: as absence of thinking, voice, mind, intimacy; as distance and separation from self and from the world of interactions and connections; as emptiness, darkness, horror vacui.

According to Paul Virilio, that silence is a kind of selective mutism of individuals swamped by audiovisual noises, unable to give sense to their words and acts, deprived of the voice of their thinking. In short, in his *La procédure silence*, he introduces the ideas of a voiceless silence and of a silence of the visible; man has no time to understand or reflect and remains in

a total silence, listening to what media incessantly say and needing greater noise and buzz to fill his empty day and brain (Virilio, 2000). The adult's silence and absence would lead to intolerably painful consequences for his sons and daughters. Solitude confirms and introduces extraneousness, disillusion, disappointment, doubt, separation, disorientation, failure of communication.

Thinking, reflecting and renewing education's reasons

The possibility of finding in virtual environments more and more space for action, the possibility of additional dialogues with individuals and groups, as well as the possibility of new languages and comparisons, increase the symbolic and cultural dimensions of the "movement through" new thresholds and new inputs, new "Hercules' columns" and routes, new forms of surprise and expectations, new rites and limits, new narrations and procedures, new behaviours and attitudes, new perceptions, as well as new obstacles and difficulties, new familiarities and unknown(s), new negotiations. Whilst, however, for the contemporary adults the new virtual territories are often no man's lands, for the new generations they are and must be the land of possibilities, to be visited to learn; the pedagogical problem is that, as always, children and adolescents

have the right to be protected during the tests that the movement to and from new thresholds and accesses, have the right to be accompanied in the making of an identity which may have the features already defined as of a border identity: they are identities that not only perceive and experience culture, knowledge, languages, vocabulary, comparisons, even the awareness that exists on both sides of a threshold, but perceive and experience the wealth of additional opportunities, habits, meanings, values, principles, curiosities. Obviously, the border identity is to be understood here as a dynamic identity that lives close to a threshold, whether it is a real geographical border or a metaphor, able to reduce "extraneousness" and to read and participate to the elaboration of great narrations.

The reason why the great narrations deserve a great pedagogical interest today, even with the use of currently available technologies, is in the possibility of elaborating biographies, autobiographies, sociobiographies and psychobiographies. The collective narration is more than just word processing, it becomes reading and interpretation, immediate awareness within a multiprojectual seat. And of course it fosters primary skills, supports the improvement of secondary skills, at least:

- analytical: not only do they ask us to understand ourselves, our com-

petences, our limits and preferences, but also our awareness of the characteristics of the context within which our designs may be effective;

- synthetic: they require the ability to find significant relationships between the results of the analytical process and a kind of overview that can not be the sum of the identified details;
- metacognitive: they require the use of cultural, mnemonic and interpretative tools;
- orientative: they require refined skills of observation and reading of phenomena, aiming at understanding the possible direction of social and collective orientations;
- re-elaborative of values: they require sophisticated emotional skills in order to understand values and principles orientations that characterize microcontexts and macrocontexts;
- programmatic: they require skills in planning and programming a project;
- reflexive: they require sophisticated logical, representative and interpretative skills.

Introspective and retrospective thinking, perspective thinking, narrative thinking, all of them reflect upon the contents of the processes previously indicated from a point of view that argumentative or logica-

largumentative thinking might have missed, because they are all defined by characterizing specific procedures, not from mere historical reporting. In fact, the former come from a deep reconsideration, both deconstructive and reconstructive, logical and exploratory, symbolic and hypothetical, self-critical and metacognitive. This reconsideration should be achieved through procedures that require research, reasoning, intent, motivation, selective and distinctive skills, discernment and insight. In other words, it includes, at least, research, analogical reasoning, quasi paradigmatic logic.

The keywords in the pedagogic vocabulary do not change, because they still are responsibility, creativity, intentionality, choice, autonomy, participation, sense of citizenship, etc.

To renew the reasons of education means, from my point of view, to support a new idea and new forms of educability, based on different dimensions:

- accessing in order to learn,
- perceiving in order to learn,
- interacting in order to learn,
- knowing in order to learn,
- understanding in order to learn.

And it means that new categories for educability must be elaborated; at least:

- as to reasons: logical and phenomenological consistency, adequacy,

- credibility, significability, mediability, interestability, motivability;
- as to contents: logical and argumentative consistency, appropriateness, reliability, functionality related to objectives and tools, understandability, coherent modularity, flexibility, usability and reusability, customisability, contextuality, updatability, plurality of viewpoints;
- as to methodologies: logical and organizational consistency, systematic propaedeuticity, malleability, intentionality;
- as to resources and settings: logical and instrumental consistency, usability, flexibility, planning of experimental workpackages, dynamism, shareability, synchronicity.

In other words: the necessary availability to change asks for new attitudes and new approaches. It asks younger generations to be global, it asks adult educators to rethink roles and ethics. Of course, those effects fall within traditional scholastic settings and within non-scholastic educational settings or parallel school. Above all, they allow the opportunity of elaborating new educational approaches, new educational methodologies and strategies, aiming at overcoming the boundaries that still exist among different educational settings. Actually, the effects of these issues stress the necessity:

- to integrate formal, non-formal and

- informal skills,
- to strengthen the relationship between content, concepts and meanings,
- to prefer interdisciplinary choices,
- to permanently move the attention on learners,
- to network actions and collaborations.

As one can see, new necessities do not appear new at all, but their meaning and sense do. Either we accept the fact that traditional approaches and strategies cannot face new challenges or we must say that Neil Postman, quite two decades ago, was right: if schools do not change their styles, it will be better to close them and give younger generations, at least, the opportunity to be free to learn wherever better opportunities will be available.

What for us, either as educators or pedagogists or adults, should be of interest is: personal responsibility and professional ethics are forced to mature quickly and regain the true role of education, which is to foster interest, motivation, pleasure to learn and use critical thinking, because the skills and awareness(es) required, to those who like to know, are many. Second, it reaffirms the value and meaning of an adults' world reliable, credible, reachable.

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