ICT AND THE LEARNING SOCIETY

Confronting with the educational emergences defined—in the white paper presented in 1995 by the European commission with the title “Teaching and Learning. Towards a Society of Knowledge”—the Commission identifies three main factors of upheaval: information society, internationalization and the world market, scientific and technological knowledge. These factors involve a modification of the systems of knowledge and work, and, as a consequence, also of educational politics which must promote a personal development of citizens through the development of the necessary competences in dealing with these factors.

The consequences that emerge are the reported in the next section. First of all, the society of knowledge is linked with a condition of uncertainty and risk of social exclusion, which determines a great disorientation for the individual. The individua is exposed to infinite cognitive potentialities on one side, but also to a cognitive weakening on the other side. Among these risks, the first is a disorganized and confused fruition of the knowledge resources offered by the symbolic world in which the individual is plunged in. He/she is irreparably depressed when plunged in an infinite net of knowledge which the individual can not reach in a critical way, being also bombarded by persuasive—usually persuasive—information of mass-media pushing him/her toward homologation.

Another risk is linked with the traditional school curriculum: the individual stores up a static series of set portions of knowledge, transmitted usually by outdated strategies, but the individual is not stimulated to “learn to learn”, which is what is needed to be able to face and actively take part in the post-modern society.

The indications provided by the white paper are clear: in order to be able to confront with a quantitative increase of information and forms of knowledge, as well as an increase of complex, fluid (Bauman, 2000) and changing situations, what is needed is a formative planning which aims at fostering knowledge and general culture on one side, that is, spread in a capillary way the ability to catch the meaning of things, understand, be able to act, choose, create, adapt to the present complex social condition; on the other side at developing an aptitude at occupation, that is to say encouraging—through an access to lifelong learning, e-learning and promoting ICT—the social mobility of citizens (workers, students, adults, young people).

At a careful analysis it is clear that the current “society of knowledge” is tied to a culture that regards education only as a function of market needs, thus penalizing a knowledge considered unnecessary and favouring a reproductive idea of competence against a critical, constructive and transformative competence.

It is therefore arguable that the most important part of what we define “understanding” is actually linked with the activation and structuring of feeling. The dimension of feeling helps everybody to “become him/herself”, to grow up, or, vice versa, leads to a missed existence when this only chance fails (De Monticelli, 2003).

The European Commission, finally, suggests five general objectives in order to create a “learning society”: encourage the acquisition of new knowledge, that is, raise the general level of knowledge, implementing new systems that recognize technical and professional competences beyond what is stated in diplomas; bring school and the business sector closer together, that is, develop a professional training system that keeps up with new conditions in production and with the needs of the world of work, also with the promotion of apprenticeship/trainee schemes at European level; combat exclusion, that is, offer a second opportunity to all the categories of population left by the wayside (young people with no qualification, older workers, long-term unemployed, women) to improve their social status. This can be achieved through an adequate training offer, complementary funding, consultation and part-
nership with firms—for example a firm could support
school offering working opportunities to the people
who successfully complete the vocational course; de-
velop proficiency in three European languages, treat
capital investment and investment an training on an
equal basis, that is, encouraging by positive measures
firms and public authorities which pay education par-
ticular attention.

However it would be the case to face the problemati-
zation with a thorough consideration on training politics,
as the knowledge of the contemporary age requires the
rethinking of the entire scholastic knowledge.

This is in line with a complex cognitive system
directed towards the flexibility of knowledge, the fading
of disciplinary boundaries and the extending of
interconnections among cognitive worlds (although
formative institutions are still anchored to abstract forms
of knowledge and to reproductive teaching/learning
strategies, which are not easily capable of managing the
complex evolution of the cognitive knowledge).
Difficulties of the educational system in confronting
with the new requirements in competences arising
from the “society of learning” highlight how urgent
it is to rethink a possible new conjugation between
“symbolic-reconstructive” teaching/learning forms and
experiential teaching/learning forms using ICT.

The education of the mind is not a problem of pure
application, but it is both a research and education
program and a program concerning the living model
of organization of the production processes and per-
sonalization of knowledge and experiences, which we
generally call learning.

Living in the “global village”, that is to say in an
enormous and pervasive hypertext, even in their con-
tribution to the development of this metaspace the new
generations conform their learning styles, their lives,
and briefly, their minds to this specific environment.

As Pierre Lévy argues (1996), the cyberspace is the
support of intellectual technologies which amplify, ex-
teriorize and modify several human cognitive functions
such as memory (e.g., hyperdocuments), imagination
(for ex. simulations), perception (for ex. virtual real-
ities), reasoning (e.g., modeling of complex phenomena).
Moreover such intellectual technologies promote new
forms of access to information (e.g., surfing the Net,
knowbots), new reasoning and cognitive styles such as
simulation: a real industrialization of thinking practices
which does not depend either on logical deduction or
induction from experience.

ICT AND LEARNING PROCESSES

The attention given by the constructivist approach—by
the culturalism approach (Bruner) as well as neo-
piagetian and neo-vygotskian studies—to the intrinsic
constructivity of thought and its rooting in the inter-
actions of the individual with the world in which the
individual realizes the experiences, become real in the
enhancement of the individual dimension in the learn-
ing/teaching processes on one side; and it is based on
the enhancement of its social dimension on the other
side. Starting from these preliminary remarks it is pos-
sible to sketch an effective educational and training
frame for the learning society, since the association
of the individual dimension of every single student’s
building processes of his/her cognitive identity to the
inter-subjective and cultural dimension allows the
establishment and maintenance of a link between the
self-constructed autonomy—defining the meaning on
the free explanation of the training path of every indi-
vidual—and the coconstructed dependence—defining,
on the other side, the indissoluble/relentless rooting
in a net of relations inside a community: in a system
of shared responsibilities and mutual commitments
(Rivoltella, 2003; Wenger, 1988; Varisco, 2002).

The culturalist approach, as well as a “culture of
education”—linked with the achievement of mass
education, didactic planning, and life-long learning of-
fers—based on knowledge and competences confirmed
the emancipating function of education (knowledge and
competence are considered as the basic propelling ele-
ment for individual and social progress) without omit-
ting the contradictions and unsolved problems (referring
to the Italian context) such as the high percentages of
school drop-out, demotivation, waste of intelligences,
new-illiteracy (Frabboni, 2004, 2005; Frabboni, Pinto,

In this frame, with a raising cultural and social com-
plexity—where the changing request, the recur-
sion and the connection refer to the plurality and the
problematic nature of reality, experience and thought
itself—education is going towards specific knowl-
dge and competences. It is about knowledge and
competences able to support multidimensional, open
and problematic view of the individual on reality and
knowledge itself (complex, uncertain, and plural). This
can be achieved through an educational planning that
trains the thought to organize connections even between
things that seem far and disconnected, that knows how
Related Content

Internet Users’ Privacy Concerns and Beliefs About Government Surveillance: An Exploratory Study of Differences Between Italy and the United States
www.igi-global.com/chapter/internet-users-privacy-concerns-beliefs/20623?camid=4v1a

Software Vendor's Business Model Dynamics Case: TradeSys
www.igi-global.com/article/software-vendor-business-model-dynamics/44563?camid=4v1a

Findings for Ontology in IS and Discussion
Ahlam F. Sawsaa and Joan Lu (2017). Ontologies and Big Data Considerations for Effective Intelligence (pp. 566-584).
www.igi-global.com/chapter/findings-for-ontology-in-is-and-discussion/177403?camid=4v1a

www.igi-global.com/chapter/knowledge-management-systems-diffusion-chinese/54548?camid=4v1a