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TEACHING ENHANCED LEARNING FOR ENGAGING

AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING

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EDITORIAL

This publication is part of the first intellectual output of the BE-COMS ERASMUS + project "Building Competences at School", an Erasmus+ Small Call partnership in school education - project no. 2021-2-IT02-KA210-SCH-000050392. The project intended to promote European citizenship, digital culture, and competences for teaching and learning in the digital era.

The Covid emergency has strongly impacted education systems, teaching and learning. In addition, it is important to underline the difference between 'emergency remote teaching' and 'online learning', which impacts curricula and methodology. Some research (Capogna *et al.*, 2021) realised during the Covid pandemia has shown that, despite the difficulties of the emergency, educational institutions of all levels and fields have been able to be resilient, responsibly ensuring operational continuity, albeit with the awareness of existing limits. This continuity has made it possible to support students and families in their growth path, proving to be the last bastion for normality and individual and social well-being. Adapting educational agencies to the digital challenge depends on a significant review of the processes and organisational and educational systems and on the awareness that digital innovation is, first and foremost, an issue of policy that cannot be trivially returned to the teacher's responsibility or technological issues. The emergency showed the

relevance of School Leaders and the centrality of their management and empowering leadership skills to manage the emergency. New approaches to Teacher Professional Development (TPD) have highlighted the need to focus on a set of key components to provide effective TPD at scale, such as professional learning support, collaboration and reflection with peers, a variety of formats and platforms to make content available for different contexts, peer evaluation or a career-oriented strategy for professional learning (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2017, TPD@Coalition for the Global South, 2021). For this reason, the special issue launched under the BE-COMS project aimed to open a field of discussion around these crucial topics for the future of the education system.

"Teaching Enhanced Learning Through Media Usage in Educational Context" belongs to a field of research and study that has long been present in the scientific and academic debate from an interdisciplinary perspective.

This area has become part of the public and political debate in the Social Sciences since communication technologies have been 'domesticated' (Silverstone, 1995) in the everyday practices of citizens, modifying not only actions, behaviours, habits and social relations but also perceptual processes of reality, readings and interpretations of contemporary social and cultural phenomena, changing socialisation processes. Reflection on this issue becomes central in the 'Platform society' (Van Dijck, 2013) to the extent that new social relations are built in the virtual architectures of online environments, and knowledge is contaminated. Data and information, including personal data and information, are shared, which can be used for ethical purposes, predominantly commercial or utilitarian purposes.

In the educational sphere, access to media in teachers' and students' everyday practices ushers in research on the formative and learning opportunities that can be derived from the use of

technologies among teaching tools and methods in educational contexts, delving into the benefits (or risks) on learning that such use can bring, as well as the methodological and strategic challenges in terms of innovating teaching practices in an ecological vision of media (Granata, 2015). Scientific reflection in this study has often flowed into interdisciplinary research fields such as *Media Education* and *Media Literacy*. However, it has only sometimes been reflected in practical and systematic integration in different educational contexts, such as schools or universities. However, in recent decades, academic reflection in this field has been accompanied and supported by the maturation of an international political sensibility, which has intervened through a progressive legal and institutional legitimisation of Media Literacy and Media Education. The European recommendations starting from the Lisbon Goals of 2000, also oriented on the investment in digital competence, up to the UN 2030 Agenda, have over time provided political and normative support for the investment in digital capital (Ragnedda, 2018) in education, both concerning its material dimension, through the legitimisation of investments on the technological, infrastructural endowments of formal educational contexts, and to its immaterial dimension, oriented on the implementation of digital competences. However, it is only as a result of the obligation to use technology on a sustained basis in a period of not only a global health crisis, such as the one experienced due to COVID-19 in 2020, that digital has been integrated into the daily practices of teachers, students and other staff to ensure continuity with the daily work and study activities undertaken. This aspect is emphasised in the essay 'The pandemic evolution and its Impact on the Italian School" by Bianchi Matè and Emanuele Toscano. The coexistence induced by digital technology, even in the educational sphere, has highlighted and, in some cases, amplified economic, social and cultural gaps, both

family and school, which have profoundly contributed to intensifying inequalities or learning disparities among students. At the same time, it has offered new opportunities to improve the management of educational organisations, teaching and learning assessment processes, contributing to the production of data and information that can be used to reduce gaps or inequalities and improve the quality and effectiveness of the educational services offered. In this regard, an in-depth study of the issue is offered in the essay "Application of Learning Analytics in European General Education Schools: Theoretical Review" by Aleksandra Batuchina and Julija Melnikova. In a very short time, technology has gone from a tool of social and cultural opportunities to a medium of educational and digital poverty. The nature of the social and cultural context where it has been embedded and used has determined its role and social value as a factor in enhancing or reducing learning processes. An equally decisive role in defining the positive or negative orientation of technology in the educational context has been played by the cultural and human capital of teachers and school staff in grasping the opportunities offered by the new digital services and experiencing them directly in the management of daily, administrative or teaching practices.

This sociological reflection leads one to recognise the centrality of the social and cultural capital at the basis of socialisation agencies, such as the school or the family, in orienting and defining the role of communicative and digital artefacts concerning teaching and learning processes in different educational contexts. In the post-pandemic period, therefore, the attention of sociological research for the digital, but also international political attention (e.g. in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan of the European Parliament, Council and Commission, 2017), has progressively broadened, going beyond the in-depth examination of the technical and technological

dimensions underlying the use of media for education; the scientific attention shifted mainly to the teaching methodologies to be adopted with digital and to the evaluation strategies of the new hybrid educational experiences, which must accompany and support the use of technology in situated contexts, guaranteeing a personalised and targeted use for the specific educational needs required, while respecting the quality of the educational service proposed and the equity of the opportunities of use. Within the issue, the methodological aspect is deepened by several contributions, such as "Designing Microlearning Programmes for Centennials' Tastes" by Maria Fabiani, Patrizio Pastore and "School in distance teaching. Innovation and Equity" by Luca Torchia. In contrast, the evaluative dimension is deepened by the essays of Viviana Capozza, entitled "Self-Directed Learning Competences Assessment of Students after Covid-19 Pandemic", and Alfonsina Mastrolia, entitled "The Impact of DaD on the school environment: the role of self-evaluation".

In this sense, technology represents an environment for enhancing teaching and learning for students, provided it is placed in an educational design context where the technological support dialogues with other analogue devices in paths where the relationship and dialogue with the educator are preserved. Luca Cortinovis and Francesco Stabile's contribution, "How can software innovate Latin teaching", represents an example of this issue. The involvement of educators in this path inevitably calls into question the issue of the training of trainers concerning the conscious use of digital as a teaching methodology for the stimulation of other skills and the implementation of different knowledge. In this regard, Fulvio O. Benussi proposes a reflection within the issue entitled "The Connection between Disciplines in the Development of a Training Course".

The use of technology as didactic support in the Media education perspective calls into question various related aspects of Media literacy insofar as knowledge related to the world of communication, not exclusively technical, becomes fundamental for the conscious management of the media system. The use of platforms, educational robots connected to the web, or the entry of Artificial Intelligence also in the educational field imposes on educators a reflection on the knowledge and soft skills (digital soft skills, Cortoni, Lo Presti, 2018) that citizens and first and foremost educators must acquire and teach young people when using the media in order to encourage a self-regulated and responsible use of the media at home as well as at school. In this sense, it is possible to intervene preventively concerning certain potential risks of the web and digital media, such as Internet Addiction Disorder or Internet abuse, but also for the use of personal data on the web, the protection of copyright on one's works and respect for copyright on other shared texts. The same communicative design of communicative artefacts, for purposes related to digital literacy, can be a solution to prevent deviant behaviour and initiate civic education through the media. The Istituto Superiore della Sanità's essay "A Psychoeducational Program to Prevent Internet Abuse in Young People" on education for solidarity and the other (by Antonella Gigantesco, Debora Del Re, Isabella Cascavilla, Daniela Bonaldi and Vindice Deplano) and Save the Children's essay on risk education for middle-class students, entitled 'Feel Safe as A Means to Improve Minors' Digital Skills and Disaster Resilience' (written by Cristina Casareale, Sharon Gilio, Francesco Graziani).

A further aspect to be considered of the theme related to "Teaching Enhanced Learning Through Media Usage In Educational Context" concerns communication design, that is, the importance of initiating a design of the communication and digital artefact ad hoc for the context and for the educational needs that it

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intends to satisfy, including those relating to the weakest socio-cultural categories, who need greater attention in terms of the accessibility of the languages and contents conveyed in the various media contexts and therefore require a design process that is attentive to the theme of socio-cultural inclusion through the communication services proposed and the aesthetic, storytelling and navigation choices within the platforms. This issue is explored in the essay "The Role of ICT in Learning Processes and University Inclusion" by Carlotta Antonelli.

Reflection on design for digital education represents a new strand of research and study closely related to teaching enhanced learning through media usage in educational contexts. However, it cannot disregard social experimentation and sociological and evaluative research in order to define the effectiveness and validity of the proposal, just as it cannot disregard the involvement of educators and teachers who can make a valid contribution to initiating reflection on the characteristics of educational communication products for children to be introduced in already structured training courses within educational contexts.

Against this backdrop, the present issue presents a series of contributions aimed at broadening the issues illustrated and expanding the scientific community's debate on the subject.

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