

Abstracts

Informal Learning: Reflections on Theory and Practice

by Marie Volpe

Much has been written about the continuously changing workplace environment and the implications for learning – not only for organizational leaders – those who manage – but for employees at all levels. Several theorists underscore that learning is strongly influenced by the workplace environment, by the context in which people work, by informal learning. The paper highlights 1) context as the driver of what employees perceive they need to learn, and 2) how employees learn through informal and incidental means in the workplace.

Toward social networks as learning tools: a research approach

by Paolo Raviolo

This article presents an overview and some early results of the research project SONNA (Social Network and New Learning). SONNA is designed as an action research in the field of education and learning and it aims to investigate how people may use on-line social media platforms to learn and to develop shared knowledge, in two different contexts: schools and organizations. The project is intended to design a set of guidelines and good practices to empower more “serious” (namely “not for entertainment”) uses of social media in learning.

We present a brief overview of the research SONNA and some early results from the recruitment questionnaire submitted to the first users involved in a field experimentation in order to understand their attitude toward a serious use of social media as learning tools.

Social networks in literature and the arts. Uses and customs in the third millennium

by Michela Mancini

This essay describes how social networks (SN) are tackled in texts dedicated to entertainment, which represent the reference corpus: movies, comics, novels, short narratives and artistic masterpieces that have circulated in Italy from 2000 to 2010.

Throughout a multidisciplinary approach, which sets its premises in literary theory and criticism, fictional texts are considered as devices able to dialogue with other cultural texts and with other communication tools, to establish relationships with the public imagery, and to connect with the general flow of activities related to signification and symbolization. Main argument is that the analysis of mentioned corpus showed how SN configure an icon documenting new behavioural models typical of certain third millennium cultures, for they represent and establish new ways of social interaction interesting for both humanities (literature, arts) specialists and everyone committed with information, communication, education.

Performative Technologies and Informal Learning. A Case Study in Higher Education

by Claudio Melacarne, Valentina Mucciarelli

This paper is focused on the impact of the technologies in workplace. The research is inspired by the perspective of activity theory and show how the technological mediation has to be supported by immaterial elements to become an learning experience. The research is a case study focused on the innovation processes started in a Department of Education with the recent reform of Italian University. Underlining the relationship between action, tasks, tools and meanings, the reform could be described as an opportunity to support the learning organization and the artefacts used to improve this reform could be interpreted as 'boundary object'.

The Experience of Creating and Using Learning Contracts in a Higher Education Blended Course: Analysis of student voices in an on-line discussion

by Monica Fedeli, Mario Giampaolo, Marcie Boucouvalas

This paper illustrates students' reflections on the experience of implementing Malcolm Knowles's 1986 model of learning contracts in an online discussion forum. The study was an attempt to improve and adapt the tool to a master's degree course at the University of Padua. Based on this qualitative inquiry three major themes come to light in our analysis : (a) Learning Contract and the learning process, (b) Characteristics of Learning Contracts and (c) Dynamics of collaboration. The findings encouraged our reflection on how to improve the contract and better involve the students in their learning process of becoming more self-directed. Finally, we can affirm that the Learning Contract can be considered an appropriate tool to elicit reflection for the learner and facilitator in higher education.

La valutazione delle pratiche riflessive nella formazione medica: esperienze, metodi e ruolo delle tecnologie

by Lucia Zannini

In this paper the evaluation of reflective practices in medical education is analyzed, paying special attention to undergraduate medical training. Firstly, some definitions of reflection are reported, showing how this practice is differently conceptualized within the field of medical education. Subsequently, some prompts, aimed at facilitating students'/professionals' reflection through writing, are reported. The importance of discussing reflective writings with peers/teachers is highlighted, and the value of receiving feedback is emphasized. The role of technologies in sharing writings and in conveying feedback is described. Finally, some tools to assess students' reflective writings are critically discussed.

Relations, communication and services. The case of disabled workers in a public organisation

by Vanna Boffo, Sabina Falconi

The article illustrates the outcome of some empirical research carried out at the University of Florence on the topic of the relations and communication of disabled people employed in the various organisational contexts of the university. The theoretical model followed is that of care in the workplace as a means and end for the formative well-being of subjects who, in a particular existential condition, may suffer the professional environment rather than live it to the full in terms of human and social resources. The survey, conducted according to a qualitative-quantitative method, tends to highlight how the educational-formative practice of everyday working life has to be built up through the highly reflective personal contribution of the subjects who work alongside and with the disabled people.

Che cosa sono i Massive Online Open Courses

by Paolo Raviolo

In this short paper we face the fast developing Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) phenomenon: college courses online, open and free of charge, which are experiencing a tumultuous development over the past two years.

We present briefly the debate about the proposed pedagogical models, the key initiatives and the MOOC challenges to the established higher education institution from the point of view of student inclusion, organization and curricula accreditation.

Riflessività e istruzione superiore: elementi per una lettura attraverso Dewey e Bateson

by Vasco d'Agnese

This article explores the relationship between critical reflection on the knowledge in Dewey's and Bateson's view and the third level of education. Both the authors, in fact, devote much attention to the conditions of knowledge as the foundation of educational process.

The intention is to show that the reflective practice is an habit of mind which must accompany each form of educational process as a primary educational and research strategy, both in theoretical research and in its practical applications.

Social Network e apprendimenti informali nei contesti scolastici

by Valentina Mucciarelli, Claudio Melacarne, Paolo Raviolo

We present here the structure and some outcomes from the Sonna project (Social Network e Nuovi Apprendimenti). The project is designed to study the impact of on-line social media (S.M.) environment on learning processes of young and adult, in schools and professional environments. The research first phase is focused on the use of S.M. in everyday life and some promising models to understand their impact on learning. In the second phase field experimentation are conducted in schools and professional environments throughtout an on-line research platform designed and developed specifically for this research. The last part of the research will be focused on the analisys of qualitative and quantitative data to validate the hypotesys and models defined in the beghinning.