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Social Communication between
Traditional and the New Mass-Media

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Abstract: The means of communication, from the most simple and natural ones – such as gestures and voice, to the most complex and developed ones – such as the new electronic media, have constantly brought changes to the society, their own transformation being due to the social environment that generated them. Nowadays, the new media – being in a rapid development unprecedented in the past – is giving new insights of communication and learning to the younger generations which, unlike those formed by elder people, manage to quickly assimilate the changes that occur. The purpose of this article is to provide a framework for public institutions for a better interaction with citizens. It shows the literature that focuses on social media statistics. At the end of our study, it is necessary to refer again to the needs of the organizations in which social communication has its origins, to exit the logic of politics and the media and to completely redefine the relationship between them and the social communication itself. We have treated the terms of the relationship between media and social communication, but it is the case to reiterate the importance of this point. In this context, we have identified the social nature still in embryo of a new relationship between media and educational sector; the more fragile the more difficult it is to overcome the stereotype of the "recreational" media.

Keywords: social communication; new mass-media; education

1. Introduction

The means of communication, from the most simple and natural ones – such as gestures and voice, to the most complex and developed ones – such as the new electronic media, have constantly brought changes to the society, their own transformation being due to the social environment that generated them. Nowadays, the new media – being in a rapid development unprecedented in the past – is giving new insights of communication and learning to the younger generations which, unlike those formed by elder people, manage to quickly assimilate the changes that occur. Some researchers say, however, that this type of media that enhances our perception on the present (it seems that the surrounding reality may appear "live" on our TV screen) and reduces the amount of memory and history, makes us more and more unable to plan our collective future. Indeed, this design comes from the awareness of a common identity, having its origins in the historical memory and the power to turn it consciously. Today, therefore, society and human nature itself are transformed with increasing speed, but not primarily because of a collective movement or individual interactions between ordinary citizens (as it would be expected in liberal democracies), but especially at the initiative of a small group of

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entrepreneurs and politicians who finance and direct the work of an elite group composed of scientists and engineers in order to develop new types of media.

For this reason, to try to appropriate history so that we become its protagonists deserves also to ask ourselves what influence did the means of communication had on the transformation of past civilizations and the formation of the present society. These means were sometimes release tools and other times instruments of social control, but they always represented the "vehicle" of the scientific and technological progress, due to their capacity of storage and transmission of information.

2. Training and Reflective Practice in Schools: Reflections on the Edge of a Culture of Change

The development of the Internet – and its widespread penetration – has dramatically changed every dimension of our public and private life, from work (Accornero, 1997; Bertagna, 2011), learning practices (Sennett, 2008), communication and training (Alessandrini, 2005; Carocci, 2013), to our perception of time and space.

Accompanied by the development of modern communication technologies and the process of hybridization technology that ensued, the network has resulted in both a radical change in socio-communicative process laying the foundation for new forms of relationships and different ways of "community" through techno-social environment where social and technological dimensions are increasingly interdependent in both modes of production and management of knowledge through tools more versatile and able to access and manage increasing amounts of information and knowledge. (Pignalberi, 2013, p. 23)

The debate on adult learning is, therefore, infiltrated into every channel of the society. A responsive training to the configuration assumed by modern and globalized society is faced with a multitude of problems; among them, that of its relationship with the World Wide Web. (Beck, Gidddens & Lash, 1999; Morin, 1999 *apud* Pignalberi, 2013, pp. 23-24)

The increase in the performance of individuals (Castells, 2002 apud Pignalberi, 2013, p. 24), organizations and territories no longer depends on the availability of a specific knowledge base, nor on the ability to access information as such, but on the actual capacity of the creation, management and development of knowledge, especially tacit knowledge. The material capital loses its original importance, as a strategic lever for growth and competitiveness lies on the intangibility of human capital understood as the set of knowledge, skills, abilities and emotions acquired during the life of the subject and aimed at achieving social and economic goals, but also individual and collective ones. It is thus reaffirmed the value of the person at the center of a continuous process of formation and structuring of the person's skills and knowledge, but also his/her personality. The personal characteristics are the basis for a training program able to develop the potential of the subject and, at the same time, to be the engine of change and innovation for competitiveness in the international arena. If knowledge is innovation and innovation means competitiveness, then the training throughout the life span (lifelong learning) becomes the strategy that each nation must take in order to be able to emerge outside its borders and increase the well-being of its subjects. (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1997 apud Pignalberi, 2013, p. 24)

The challenge that new technologies pose is to "outline a training strategy as to be able to combine the available communication tools against set targets in order to make the school a community of practice to a high degree of reflexive valence". (Alessandrini & Pignalberi, 2012)

3. Some Problems and Social Needs of the Hyper-Technological Postmodernity

Postmodernity determines the fall of the frameworks of traditional societies. The "nuclear" family takes the place of the patriarchal family and loses time and opportunity for dialogue and reflection. The structure undergoes continual downsizing of values and what clearly was felt until the late '50s, now has soft edges and ambiguous looks. The speed of information undergoes a significant and progressive acceleration, initially with traditional media – radio and television, and then with the Internet. The methods, data transmission and computer transmission of the message make it so that this becomes more and more concise, basic and functional. All this at the expense of communication content and interpersonal growth, at times strongly constrained by technology and the Internet.

The missing relationship that characterizes the new ways of electronic meeting – as it happens, for example, in some social networks – reduces the physical-visual and empathic-emotional aspects, which are replaced by wires and digital writing (Rega, 2010, p. 102). A new way to "meet", without the difficulty of seeing a face, and being behind a screen, able not only to enrich the vocabulary of new lemmas (tag, post, etc.), but also to distort the semantics of some important words. Think of the word "friendship", much used in social networks – in the past it was understood as a time-tested bond capable of opening to the constraints of the relationship, also independent relationships and working relationships, backed by affinity of different personalities; a relationship to be constructed, day after day, giving space and time each other need to accept the nuances of their personality and vice versa. It existed, therefore, the awareness of the need to invest time and energy to get close to a person, trying to understand that person in its existential coordinates, in the event of giving him/her more or less our friendship or trying to win his/hers. Now, however, in the digital environment, friendship must be requested, not obtained, and the whole thing can start with just one click. In this sense, the word "friendship" has become, of course, the chance to begin to interact with a third party that can, more or less intrigued by our profile, accept or reject the request. It all depends, of course, on each one's self presentation, from the outer self. In this new way of contracting "friendship", there is really little or nothing beyond the exterior and you lose the deep contents of the personality of the other at the base of the authenticity of the real friendship constraints[1]. In this form of absence in a live report, moreover, begin far too many false friendships as well as shown on a lot of daily news[2]. In the absence of social control, well hidden behind a profile that is little correspondent to the personal reality, there can hide shady people and psychos who, taking advantage of the many opportunities the Internet offers for concealing the truth, they often come to affect the personal life of vulnerable children. Among this last, within the peer group, it is also spreading the phenomenon of "cyber-bullying" which extends to after-school activities, through the Internet, the harassment persisted in the school environment. It is not difficult, therefore, to imagine why some teenagers prefer an avatar to their own self by taking refuge in a simulated virtual reality, able to compensate for any deficiencies in the development of their personality. In relation to the absence, in fact, one can achieve a low awareness of themselves which, of course, also depends on the relationship and the real encounter with the other, fact that contributes to the formation of the ego. (Stein, 2012, p. 228)

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[1] It is not surprising, then, that: *"[...] our desire to sustain and develop online friendships is realized on the expense of availability for the family, for neighbors and for those who meet in the reality of each day, at work, at school, in their free time. When, in fact, the desire for virtual connection becomes obsessive, the consequence is that the individuals isolate themselves, interrupting the real social interaction. This also ends up disturbing patterns of rest, silence and reflection that are necessary for a healthy human development"* (Petti, 2011, pp. 167-168).

[2] For more information, visit the website Corriere della Sera, retrieved from http://brescia.corriere.it/brescia/notizie/cronaca, date: 14.03.2014.

The loss of shared horizons of meaning also shifts the focus from formation of the person, for the first prerogative pedagogy, performativity of learning, especially in science and technology, and is therefore required: "[...] *the awareness of the dangers of dehumanization of a human being that technology, as always, and now more than ever, carries in its DNA. It considers the human being as a product and thus prevents the distinction of what is essential to the education and what, however, can be manipulated and constructed*". (Pagano, p. 36)

For these and other reasons, it is necessary to continue to talk about putting the human being at the center of the whole training process, as well as the only practice of teaching, as a guarantee of freedom of expression and especially of their *rationali nature*[1]. A rationality that must be recovered in its overall significance as a species-specific characteristic of the human able to identify both the laws of the physical world and the rules of the moral one. Rationality as a comprehensive synthesis of the different human knowledge that does not end with the objective investigation or with the techniques of an experimental verification, but is open to what it is reasonably argued acknowledging a transcendent law and an universal order. (Rega, 2010, p. 96)

4. New Technologies: an Interpretative Paradigm of Reality

Technology, and much less IT, does not at all play a neutral role. The person is not always able to fully control its effects; especially because the new technologies introduce a change in the interpretation of the reality by truly changing the way we are living and thinking and neutralizing the old criteria of interpretation. Postman explained this change introduced by the new technologies, using an ecological similarity. In any "A" ecosystem, if you remove or add a component, you'll not have the same ecosystem more or less the component added or subtracted, but a completely different ecosystem no longer called "A": "*Technological change does not add or subtract. It is environmentally friendly, and we use this term in the sense in which it is used by the environment researchers. An important change causes a total change. If you take away the caterpillars from a given habitat, we will not have the same environment with fewer caterpillars, but a new environment in which we reconstructed the conditions for survival. If you introduce the caterpillars in an environment that was in lack of such things, the speech is the same. The ecology of the media works the same way. A new technology does not add or subtract anything, it changes everything*". (Postman, 1993, p. 24)

It must therefore be reiterated the need to rediscover an education that respects and promotes strong values, including, primarily, the enhancement of the person and thus of the social reason: understanding as a total universality in which rationality and ethics coincide. The aim is to restore the human being, with its rational nature, the head of the production process of any kind of multimedia message.

5. Social Networking and Education: the Rise of Twitter[2]

The use of social networks, especially Twitter, is becoming the primary means of communication initiatives, publications and news from major organizations and institutions. The phenomenon is global and affects all areas and sectors of the society. While abroad also the school information is becoming more "social" and it is known to be in an advanced stage of use by all the individuals

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[1] *Persona significat id quod est perfectissimus in tota natura, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura*. (Person signifies what is most perfect in all nature, a subsistent individual of a rational nature).
[2] The data discussed in terms of followers is referring to the period May-June 2013.

involved in education, in Italy, for example, there results to be some delay, even if something seems to be moving forward.

One of the most virtuous use of Twitter examples can be considered the one of the OECD which, thanks to a special profile dedicated exclusively to the Education (@OECD_Edu), every day provides the level of contributions to a public that is increasingly expanding (over 24 thousand followers)[1].

Another example of great importance is the use of social networks by the Ministries of Education: see the official profile of the Department of Education of the United States (@usedgov, 227 thousand followers) and the corresponding department of the United Kingdom (@educationgovuk, 72 thousand followers). Also in this case, the plod seems to be Italy: it is only since October 2012 the Ministry of Education has set up the account @MiurSocial: perhaps for this reason the comparison in terms of followers with profiles of the ministries of other States remains ruthless enough (in fact, it is just above the MiurSocial, 2000 followers).

UK is also making excellent efforts on the London newspaper – "The Guardian", that has a profile (@GuardianEdu) dedicated to the Education with over 70 thousand followers, as well as the BBC (@bbceducation, 95 thousand followers). Italy, however, seems to be still in its infancy due to the lack of Twitter accounts of major national newspapers, dedicated specifically to this type of news; also worth noting is the (so far) little resonance (always in terms of followers) of online magazines in the field mentioned above (@TecnicaScuola – about 550 followers, @Tuttoscuola – just under 300, while, in contrast, @orizzontescuola – 3000 followers).

6. Conclusions

At the end of our study, it is necessary to refer again to the needs of the organizations in which social communication has its origins, to exit the logic of politics and the media and to completely redefine the relationship between them and the social communication itself. We have treated the terms of the relationship between media and social communication, but it is the case to reiterate the importance of this point. We started from the premise that social communication is still a marginal event, and that the showing of the news takes precedence over the spread of collective values. In this context, we have identified the social nature still in embryo of a new relationship between media and educational sector; the more fragile the more difficult it is to overcome the stereotype of the "recreational" media.

The more evolved a society is, the more can be traced in the communication by it produced a presence of significant utility, around which are expressed various economies with respect to the issues of awareness, participation and solidarity. The delay in our culture of the potential of communication in the process of the public organization comes from the "cultural lag between economic and social priorities assumed by the enterprise system and the formal-legal priorities adopted by the institutional-bureaucratic machine" (Roland, 1998, p. 315 *apud* Pira, 2012, p. 22). Therefore, the priority of the legal function from institutions has delayed the awareness of the importance of public and social communication. It is new even the professional legitimacy of the public communicator figure, and awareness on the part of those who make social communication, to make the public opinion understand the importance of the social communication itself.

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[1] OECD work on education and skills provides policymakers with the information they need to improve the quality of education worldwide; Paris, France, retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/edu/, date: 14.03.2014.

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