

GARITO (UNINETTUNO): WITH ODL THEY DID NOT USE THE RIGHT METHODOLOGIES AND LANGUAGES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ONLINE

According to a survey by Invalsi, the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Educational and Training System, which gives a snapshot of the starting conditions of Italian schools at the outbreak of the pandemic, for 6 children out of 10 remote lessons were a prohibitive test, considering that only 36% were in "acceptable" conditions to deal with them, in terms of technological equipment, a place reserved for studying and digital preparation of teachers. Numbers that rise slightly if we look at junior high schools (48%) and high schools (66%). We talk about this with **Maria Amata Garito, Rector of the International Telematic University UNINETTUNO.**

What kind of country is Italy that, in the XXI century, fails to guarantee all students a proper distance education? What mistakes have been made?

I think that the pandemic emergency caused by Covid-19 has created an unexpected storm in the world of schools and universities globally. It is not only the Italian school system that has found itself in troubles. One third of the world's students were unable to access e-learning, a storm that is pushing many governments and institutions to face new challenges. This reality has highlighted the deep inequalities of access to the Internet with significant gaps not only between different countries of the world but especially between the poor and the rich. Students who live in the poorest families do not have at home the technological resources to access e-learning. So one of the most important problems of failure of e-learning even at the Italian level is the digital divide that shows an inequality in access to the network that is increasingly the cause of a socio-economic and cultural divide. Consequently, the first initiative that should have been taken would have been to bridge the digital divide, investing in creating the necessary technological infrastructure, such as Internet via satellite. In this way, all Italian citizens could have been interconnected and the foundations could have been created on which to build different e-learning models according to students' age groups and different school levels. Finally, in our country, an agreement between TIM and Eutelsat has recently been created to use satellites in order to decrease the digital divide. Another mistake that has been made, also at a global level, is that the correct methodologies and languages have not been used to teach and learn on the Web. A great opportunity has been lost, teaching on the Web means applying new psycho-pedagogical-didactic models based on consolidated and differentiated theories according to school levels and also means using the languages of the Web, those languages that current students, the "digital natives", know and do not always use for good. To achieve this goal it would have been necessary to adequately train all teachers to use the network, not to broadcast live lessons online, but to achieve a collaborative and constructive teaching-learning process where students are placed at the center of the educational process and participate, through constant interaction with the teacher and other students, in the collaborative construction of knowledge.

What do you think of the Pope's recent call, which spoke of an "educational catastrophe" referring to ODL made for children?

I very much agree with Pope Francis. In his appeal, he asks to put at the center of every educational process the person and the ability to be in relationship with others. The proper use of the Internet can really, very quickly, facilitate the concretization of some of Pope Francis' ideas on a global level. The Internet can democratize access to knowledge and include even marginalized people. We must not forget that the Internet is the largest public space that humanity has ever had, it is the largest library in the world where, if the digital divide were abolished, all humanity could be users and distributors of knowledge. The Web can create educational spaces where everyone can access democratically, where the creative interaction between different cultures can generate new knowledge, value differences and make them live as richness and can help to bring together the different cultures of the world to create new values. But all this cannot be born from improvisation. E-learning, as it has been realized until now, with great problems of connection in the whole country, has only created enormous disparities at a social level, putting in crisis the human relationships of children and adolescents who, because of isolation and lack of an interactive pedagogical method able to make them protagonists in the learning process, have been left behind from the point of view of cognitive and social development. If, on one hand, the students know the language of the Web, on the other hand, they must be guided in the navigation on Internet through an active confrontation with teachers and parents. The Web allows to accelerate the processes of innovation, distribution and creativity, bringing together people, knowledge and skills at a global level. Just for these peculiarities, if used well, it unites and does not divide.

What can online universities do to make up for the lost lessons of these months? How can they help improve the current situation of the school?

We must first distinguish between different online universities. I can say what our model of Online University can do to contribute to improve the processes and procedures of e-learning in the different school levels. The e-learning model of our University was born from the results of many European research projects and its quality level is recognized by the international scientific community. Therefore, our online university could transfer the results of research activities that allow to: realize e-learning models that put the student at the center of the training process; implement interactive, constructive and collaborative teaching and learning processes; transfer knowledge related to the methodologies of preparation of teaching materials on the Web; transfer knowledge also related to organizational models of distance learning structures; set up together with teachers their training in the use of the Internet in teaching and learning processes; realize the training of all those technical and administrative figures of the different school levels that should acquire adequate skills to manage innovation and be of technical support to teachers and pupils. In these last years, unfortunately, a lot of funds for the research at world level have been destined to the realization of applications linked to the production of videogames and to the realization of applications on internet linked to entertainment, free time and in the last years also to health. Today, the pandemic emergency has increased the awareness that in a historical context profoundly changed compared to the past, it is necessary to create new models of social ethics and public policies more adherent to reality, that facilitate the development of new organizational models of schools, training centers and universities at local, national and international level, that integrate presence and distance. If schools and universities will be able to consider e-learning as a new opportunity to trigger an important modernization process of all the educational structures, surely the innovation process will have an impact also on all the institutions and structures that make up society. Educational institutions today must find the courage to reinvent themselves using the Internet and all its possibilities to create new models of e-learning useful to train and retrain at international level the true intangible capital of humanity, that of knowledge and skills in order to meet the complex training needs for the global labor markets and to build the man of the XXI Century.