Schools and territory between network and community
Scuola e territorio tra network e comunità

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Abstract
Educational agencies are going through a difficult transition period that is having important consequences in terms of de-legitimation of the social mandate historically assigned to school. The reason of this widespread uneasiness is due to the fact that today we are living in a complex system where traditional school cannot live in an isolation anymore.
The following contribution arises within this problematic framework with the aim of outlining the most important changing patterns that have been affecting education agencies in the last fifteen years, paying attention to the new institutional and legislative Italian framework that redefined the whole educational structure in coherence to supranational agreements such as the Bologna Process (EHEA,1999).

The objective of this essay is to contribute to the development of a new vision of the education system. Starting from the challenges of a global and complex society, we are going to reflect on the value of networking as an instrument to cultivate the responsible participation of the educating community and the necessity to adequate internal competences and coordinating mechanisms.

Key words: School, Autonomy, sociology, education system, network, educating community

Introduction

In the past, traditional community socialization and education processes were typically carried out in the immediate family context. Nevertheless, with the transition towards modern society, these functions have been progressively absorbed by the growing role played by school. This balance between school and society remained unaffected until the '70s when both the Big crisis and a critical revision of the society showed the deep inequalities and the contraddictory effects limiting the education system. The sociology explained the importance of education in the individual and social improvement with the meritocratic theories and human capital (Schultz, 1961) whilst many others demonstrated their perverse effects (Collins, 1979), the inequality in access (Bourdieu, 1970; Bernestein, 1971), the selective role of school, caused by discrimination (Althusser, 1970) and the control of mass media (Adorno, Horkheimer, 1947). There are few doubts that the aim of education agencies is fundamental for the society, by accompanying persons in their search for their own spot in the community, also through the interiorization of norms and values (Durkheim, 1987; Parsons, 1951) as well as the acquisition of knowledge and skills (OECD, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012/a, 2012/b) expendable in social and working life. But, with the advent of a postmodern society entailing a complex, global system, education agencies are facing great challenges in the effort of managing a new transition in a very fragmented context, thus resulting jeopardized by centrifugal forces, able to transform schools in isolated atoms inside a social system that does not recognize their value anymore. We are witnessing a transition from a situation in which school was a specialized and determined subsystem of the society, delivering its duties in a typical top-down approach, to a new scenario where school appears more like an open and active part of a dynamic network where interactions must consequently be re-built. For this reason, it is advisable to re-think and invent different organizational models for the XXI century school, built on the necessity to recompose an educating community in which school could interacts with many other actors.

The aim of this essay is to describe and analyze the emerging education organization model based on the value of networks. In this connection, I present the Italian case study related to the education policies developed over the last 15 years in the Country to respond to this social complexity. The study focuses on:

a) the important role played by networks as an instrument allowing a re-shaping process for local education communities and create new effective relationships to overcome school isolation;

b) the internal organizational change that is expected to support evolutions in external configuration, towards a redefinition of coordination mechanisms and new core competences for teaching.

The essay presents a brief summary on the basis of results emerged from an extensive research (qualitative and quantitative), training and consultations carried out in schools, and for schools, over the past fifteen years, converged in publications[1] and research reports[2] that I referred to study empirical data in depth. (In this text, we expressly report the most relevant considerations, in line with the aim of this reflection). To achieve this objective, the essay is developed as follows: a brief presentation of the scenario of such evolution, in order to highlight the challenge behind the search for new inter-organizational configuration (§ 1); the European perspective concerning the network issue (§ 2); the most important reform applied in Italy in recent years promoting school networks (§ 3). The evaluation is ultimately completed with a note about the internal organizational coordinating mechanisms (Mintenberg, 1983) that should support this pressing and urgent challenge (§ 3.1). The essay ends with a brief reflection about the role of the educating community that may be expressed thorugh effective networks based on the value of trust and social capital.

1. The changing scenario

We are dealing with an extraordinary social change. For many years the idea of a continuous progress accompanied and sustained the Western culture. Since the oil shock of the 70s this concept has been put in serious crisis and today we are facing a social and economic crisis that seems to have no end (OECD, 2013) and which is insinuating doubts about the validity and sustainability of a completely liberal and consumerist economic model[3], along with the decline of communist ideology.

Every day we observe classes of schools and universities[4] composed by a multicultural mixture of students where horizontal (between students) and vertical (teacher-student) dynamics can be very difficult, not only for language constraints but also because of cultural, religious and gender differences that may impact differently, depending on the culture, which has to be addressed.

Unlike in the past, in the third millennium the education system can't count on protective boundaries anymore because it is lodged into a global world where, through Internet (Castells,

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[1] Capogna, 2002; 2004/a; 2004/b; 2006; 2007/a; 2007/b; 2008/a; 2008/b; 2008/c; 2009/a, 2009/b; 2010; 2011/a; 2011/b; 2014/a; 2014/b.

[2] We refer to the reports made by the Observatory on autonomy school regarding "Autonomy of research and evaluation" (Osservatorio sulla scuola dell'autonomia, 2004); "Educational institutions and training systems at regional and local levels" (De Martin, Cocozza, Porrotto, 2008); "Educational institutions and autonomy: from regional frameworks to a national perspective" (Osservatorio sulla scuola dell'autonomia, 2010).

[3] See for example the critique of the neo-liberal model Tony Judt (2011).

[4] On the changes that have interested the University in recent years, see also: Capogna 2008, 2009/a, 2009/b, 2011/a; 2011/b

2001, 2004, 2006, 2009), everyone can compare him/herself directly with the world, without any mediation. In the last fifty years the web revolution has radically altered our cultural and social structures, redesigning, completely the framework of relations that moves within the space-time continuum where "time is timeless". All this expanded more and more our way to communicate, acquire information and be in contact with others, changing anthropologically our way "being" in the world (Heidegger, 1927). Anybody could experiment this stage of unease in the over-communication society offered by the evolution of Information Communication Technology (ICT). Even without a detailed reconstruction of all the occurred changes, we can affirm with no doubt that the development of ICT has completely modified the telecommunications landscape.

This situation led to an important consequence: education agencies have to deal with other, often more attractive, socialization agencies (peer group, media, music, fashion, *Internet* etc.) in a "network-centric" education process. Inevitably, this new ecosystem represents a challenge for educative agencies founded on the priority of the 'high culture' (Gellner, 1983). Finally, very often in our contemporary society we observe a variety of different kind of families[5], where the young people risk to grow up in the absence of significant family figures, in a condition of isolation and with no adults able to listen and to educate them to a planetary identity (Morin, 1999).

It is understandable that, in this complex scenario, here only briefly sketched, educational agencies are struggling to rethink their social mandate. It is more and more evident the difficulties they have to achieve a new organization shape for the school of the third millennium, able to respond to this complex challenge with new pedagogical, didactic, communicative and relational solutions.

For this reason, some authors refer to this period as the "crisis of the myth of education" (Dubet, 2002).

We live in a social system that considers the information, the knowledge (Foray, 2006), the self-affirmation (Touraine, 1997, 2003) and social relationships developed in contemporary society[6], in a very different way if compared to fifteen years ago. Actually, according to traditional views, "the social scenario is over" (Touraine, 2012). But we cannot imagine any real change if this doesn't start from the inside, and if we do not take into account specific and targeted problems; or, in other words, if we do not assume a situated, proximal and incremental perspective. This is particularly true for school, formed by a disarticulated, disjointed, composite and internally differentiated institutions, in terms of resources, visions, people and expertise. The reason why Granovetter speaks of "weak ties" (1983).

Educational agencies may positively face and survive these changes only if they will be efficiently integrated in their social context, with the intent to "surf" this tidal wave that sweeps away every previous balance. To accompany the change, in this perspective, means to develop a

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[5] On the transformation of family units in post-modern society see, among others, Chambres (2012).

[6] The scientific literature offers an important debate regarding the contemporary society, defined post-modern society (Tourain, 2006), reflexive society (Beck, Giddens, Lash, 1999, Archer, 2006) and risk society (Beck, 2000).

new vision for the educational mission, closer to the vocational skills of people (Capogna, 2011/a), immersed in an open and turbulent environment, more careful to outcomes of emerging events and deeply rooted in the territory the school share resources and legitimacy with. A school like this, therefore, cannot be a centralized bureaucracy apparatus but it needs to be integrated in its specific socio-cultural context[7]. This means, as clearly highlighted by several research reports (Centre for the autonomy school, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2010, 2012) to develop new organizational and professional competencies, at all levels and roles, for those who work in the educational institutions and administrative apparatuses connected to it (Capogna, 2007/a). For this reason, in the last few years, with regard to the processes of evaluation of the overall performance of the school system, the Finnish system is considered as a best practice in all OECD surveys. This particular educational model highlights four key factors for the success of educative agencies: the relevance of a "glocal" vision, accompanied by the enhancement of local autonomy; the interpretation and responsibilities of all actors related to the evaluation of results; the synergic interaction of these factors helps to create a conductive environment which spreads the social capital (Putnam, 2001), that is essential to the development of community and human capital. Last but not least, we have to consider the development of the Internet and its widespread penetration, that has deeply changed every dimension of public and private life, time and space perception. Everything has changed, Drucker says (1978), except the way to think and realize the school. Despite significant attention to this issue[8] in recent years, educational agencies make a great effort to incorporate opportunities offered by new technologies into ordinary daily practices. With the advent of the Internet the way to produce and manage knowledge has changed, thanks to an extraordinary technological development. The opportunity to access, share and communicate via the network is characterized by high socio-relational density interaction, laying the foundations for new areas of progress in the digital environment. The relevance of media technology requires the school to develop *media literacy* (Horton, 2007) and *digital literacy* (Gilster, 1997). This mutation requires a more active role of students, teachers and schools within a renewed educational paradigm. In coherence with this priority, the *National Digital School Plan* (*NDSP*) started a process of digitalization to improve the learning environment and provide educational systems with technological equipment, providing the basis for rethinking the organizational and educational processes, investing and valuing above all on territorial communities through the promotion of local networks.

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[7] On the important leadership role of the institution of local implementation to promote the social and economic development refer to Capogna (2007/a, 2012).

[8] In Italy we remember L. 53/2003; L. 240/2010; L. 107/2015 and two *Digital School Plans* that tried to define a different educational model. The first one (2008) focused on four lines of action: the adoption of the Multimedia Interactive Whiteboards in the classroom; the promotion of Class 2.0; Digital Publishing and the School 2.0: the second one (2016) focused on infrastructure; training for teachers; content and skills for students and accompaniment.

2. The European Perspective

The European Community roadmap regarding the education sector, in respect of national policies, is based on the subsidiary principle and promotes cooperation between Member States, in coherence with the responsibility of the Union. The Lisbon European Council in 2000 opened a new evolution phase characterized by a greater political awareness about the centrality of education policies and training as part of a wider strategy aimed at ensuring the development of sustainable economic growth and a greater social cohesion. The enthusiasm demonstrated in Lisbon seems to run aground in 2010 putting into question the prospect of a resumption of cooperation.

International experiences show that even in other European countries, there is a wide-ranging debate about networks. Here, in recent decades it has been observed a reform process aimed at enhancing the principle of school autonomy. These reforms started in the eighties and accelerated in the nineties. The involved European states (i.e. United Kingdom, Sweden, Spain, France) adopted different tools to adhere to the regulatory instruments: the outlined autonomy degree; the jurisdiction and the role of stakeholders etc. Despite these differences, we can recognize some common trends. The first one refers to an increased democratic participation, directly related to the request for more public management efficiency and the necessity to improve the quality of the school system as well. The second one concerns the high initiative and planning capacity expressed by several schools that, thanks to the new autonomy, showed significant ability in cooperation through networks or other forms of association, to reach common goals like better resource management, experimentations and a training offer closer to the territory needs. The third one is the absence of a detailed regulation about networks' phenomenon and different kind of partnerships between educational institutions (with the exception of Spanish regional legislation). Despite the important spread of these forms of association, generally, the regulation is assigned to the school autonomy itself. Last but not least, another common trait is the strategic importance of horizontal cooperation tools between schools. A phenomenon that spreads across borders as the result of Community policies which encourage international school networks.

Schools, more and more, are called to handle complex phenomena, i.e. globalization and multiculturalism. For these reasons European and international school networks appear like a source of new knowledge and innovative technologies. The issue of school networks is one of the most interesting development dimension for education policies because:

- on one hand school networks promote the spread of initiatives created from below and,
- on the other hand, they reduce the fragmentation of parties, giving greater responsibility to regions and, in general, to the decentralized levels.

In other words, networks not only produce confidence and responsibility between the participating schools or between different networks and the territory, but they are also able to create positive connections with local institutions (the productive, social and professional world), contributing to the development of horizontal and vertical subsidiary actions. This trend, based on an increasing cooperation among schools and other stakeholders, outlines the centrality of

education as a key tool for the development of the European citizenship and a common space for the European education and work. After all, the European Employment Strategy (EES), integral part of the Europe 2020 growth strategy, is based on the exchange of practices considered as instruments for reciprocal learning and for an open method of coordination approach.

In line with this proposition, during the last 15 years Italy has been implementing an important step by step reform process that aims at introducing the value of network as an opportunity to solve complex problems that school, enclosed in its boundaries, cannot face on its own anymore.

3. Reshaping the Italian Education system

The school of the third millennium is, and above all needs to be, an integrated system (Capogna, 2006; 2007/b; 2008/b; 2009/a) in constant and positive inter-relationship with training, work and guidance services, in a virtuous circle that is self-perpetuating without end, where each element can't be separated from the other. This is best known as lifelong learning, which aims at recognizing and appreciate every experience of formal, non-formal and informal learning, where people grow and shape themselves, developing vocations, knowledge, abilities and skills. All of this is useful to build an identification process (Touraine, 2003) and form a "tête bien fait" (Morin, 1999), to move independently and critically in a complex society. For this reason, career guidance is crucial to educate emotional skills (Goleman, 2011), so important today to move in a turbulent environment of high relational and communicative density and a significant emotional stress level. In the new framework of institutional rules, school autonomy has meaning and value only if it is tightly coupled to a system of local self-government. It has to be embedded, by network, actually incorporated in the local territory, to answer adaptively to training needs stemming from the productive world, and creatively to trends and emerging lines of development that are expression to socio-cultural context. School cannot be taken out of this framework and above all it cannot be left alone, abandoned because of the indifference of other institutional actors that together contribute to the development and growth of the community. It can express its independence from government only within a framework of equal virtuous relations with all social actors it interacts with, where all of them fulfills their responsible institutional and social role. This observation introduces another important issue that is the necessity to always operate following a partnership approach. The complex system we are in is a "no one wins alone" situation. For this reason, over the last years Italy started a reforming process aimed at reshaping the entire education system and its interactions with all other actors of the educational governance space. Thanks to these important Reforms in the field of Education, today we can observe noticeable mutations in the way the country promotes the value of the network and that we are going to briefly summarize.

The first Government delegation regarding Education is dated 1995 nevertheless the proper decentralization process emerged with the Law 59/1997 and the Constitutional Law 3/2001 that started a decentralization process from the central Ministry to the local Institutions. This process

underwent to its first systematization with D. Lgs. 275/1999 that signed the kick start of the autonomy for Italian schools based on four main guidelines:

- didactic autonomy;
- organizational autonomy;
- financial autonomy;
- research and experimentation autonomy.

One of the most important elements introduced by this Law refers to the network of schools (article 7) that authorizes them to have networks, associations and cooperation agreements. Following reforms stressed the opportunity of networking, focusing on specific aspects of the educational process which need to develop positive interaction with the external system: i.e. the stages (L. 53/2003); the orientation (D. Lgs 76; 77/2005). The transition from the school of curricula, expression of a centralized system, to the customization of the curricula school, expression of a system of autonomous schools, is based on specific keywords adopted directly from Europe: centrality of student, customized learning, plans tutorship, certification of credits, portfolio, skills, transition from school to training-job, orientation, life long learning, digital competences etc. The Law 107/2015 and the new National Plan Digital School (2016) reinforce the role of network outlining the strategic role of local institutions creating territorial networks and their focus, such as:

- criteria and procedures for the management of teachers in the network, as well as assistance and social integration of people with disabilities; orientation, placement etc.;
- the introduction of elective specialist courses with a coordination role, to offer more educational training to network institutions through a three-years plan;
- training plans for school personnel;
- joint management of functions and administrative activities, etc..

In this way the network becomes the main road to replenish the educating community that the traditional standardization of education process, together with the isolation from the other social spheres, placed in the background, losing the strategic importance of the context. For this reason, it is interesting to understand the solution adopted to guide this modernization through the interorganizational relationship among schools and others actors. Network becomes a new inter-organizational space in which the educational agency acts in. A new way to observe how networks (Sorokin, 1975) can shape locally their balance, structure, intensity, direction, etc.

4. The case of study: The Italian school through the network

A research conducted by the Observatory on autonomy school (2002, 2003, 2004, 2009-2011) shows extensively the variety of experiences that could be considered following a network approach, and the complexity of interactions and processes that could be triggered by them. Therefore, the education system is required to act as a complex organization within multiple frameworks of inter-organizational relationships. It is necessary for the education system to

know how networking should be done, through networking as such and through policies that could lead to a positive 'sum-game': adding value to the development of the community and being a resources multiplier by ensuring the sharing of goods, services, infrastructures and skills. The ability to act and plan in a network logic amplifies the possibilities to improve the entire system only if it would be able to follow the path commonly defined as "glocal". In other words, by having a vision triggering a new perspective on a global scale, to be applied, rooted, developed and implemented through local opportunities that, in a globalized society, are on the web and in the world.

Maturing new perspectives and skills to move towards this network logic is also important to overcome another crucial problem we currently have to deal with: the gradual and inexorable reduction of resources and the end of indiscriminate funding, seen as separated from any form of evaluation and reporting ex post, and consequently deviating towards forms of "project-oriented" funding. Decades of bureaucratic and administrative traditions based on a centralized and top-down logic, have deprived the educational agencies of an accountability and a social responsibility spirit. That's why it is required to evolve, rethinking new and more polyvalent skills for those working, in different positions, in educational institutions. We move now as people, organizations and institutions within a multi-faceted and complicated system that requires to develop complex skills, consequently making traditional organization and education models no longer adequate.

In particular, the research we refer in this essay (2009-2011) has been realized in two phases carried out in the 2009-2010 biennium and in the first half of 2011. The first phase involved around 5000 schools and 2000 networks. Data and information collected enabled the construction of a database of school networks across the country. The second phase was based on a qualitative research approach and involved 18 *focus groups* realized with the beneficial involvement of local territory. A total of 166 key actors have participated in focus groups.

As previously mentioned, the research studied the orientation and purposes of schools networks, to observe respective motivations that guided their actions, and to better know the different organization structures. Regarding to the first dimension (orientation and purposes), the analysis seems to confirm, once again, a trend largely self-referential, showing a predominance of actions directed to the staff, i.e. the upgrading of teaching staff or emergency management and short term actions. Concerning the motivations, results from this research show that L. 275/99[9] had the opportunity to spread networks of schools and new ways to cooperate, especially with the Article no. 7, specifically emphasizing the value of networking. The mentioned research, carried out within the Observatory on school autonomy, made it possible to observe the dynamics developed in this new regulatory and institutional framework. For the great part they appear as networks of self-support and solidarity with short-term purposes, aimed at acquiring human resources or to

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[9] Law no. 59 of 15 March 1997 and following Decree no. 275 of 8 March 1999 have provided schools with didactic, organizational and research autonomy, starting from school year 2000/2001.

fulfil specific needs. Broader alliances with different stakeholders appear less widespread and mainly showing the presence of public and institutional actors.

Regarding organizational and managerial processes, we observe a low relationships structuring and decision-making actions. This issue has an ambivalent interpretation: it is true that helps to maintain the organization agile and flexible but we cannot ignore the risk of an excess of fluidity, i.e. the instability and lack of organizational vision and shared strategies.

The multivariate analysis of the results obtained with the quantitative research allowed to set up a typology of three different clusters to outline the nature of the analyzed networks and their specific purposes.

The first is the *networks of purpose* (40.1%) mainly constituted to improve access to finance. These networks are created to solve generic needs and to seize different kind of opportunities. The second typology is defined *advocacy networks* (32.1%), built up to improve the interaction and communication with, and from, various local actors. These are "open networks", composed not only by schools but also different actors. This group usually maintains a strong focus on initiatives dedicated to both students and internal staff. In this cluster a significant role is played by the school administration system (provincial and regional offices) that supports the development of education systems sharing guidelines and strategies funding to promote territorial networks.

The third typology is the *mixed network* (27.8%), created to manage both the previous functions and leveraging the advanced experiences of network innovators. Here we can observe their effort to innovate, improve and try a new relocation in a polycentric education system where school can play a central role in local development. The set of data shows that, generally, these networks have difficulties in extending their links to different segments. This means that the goal to build a larger collective mechanism, able to integrate resources previously disconnected (Granovetter, 1983), is not there yet. In other words, it does not seem to successfully overcome the inter-systemic fragmentation. This criticism is further confirmed by the poor structuring of the networks, both in terms of formalization of inter-organizational relationships and in relation to the fragility and fluidity of decision-making. This weakness could result in a limit to the construction of a stable model of cooperative transactions between all parties involved. Essentially, the research shows that many efforts have been done to support and provide school system with the right tools to develop new education systems based on the network logic. Nevertheless, we still observe a varied distribution of concrete actions on the Italian landscape as well as the necessity to further help the evolution of this model through new forms of representation. The Law 107/2015 tries to overcome this limit by offering new key actions to set up new interactions. Nevertheless, the deep challenge represented by network logic requires the school system to radically change its internal organizational mechanism as described in the next paragraph.

4.1 The internal change

The external context needs to change radically its coordinating mechanisms within the educational institutions. For decades these systems have worked in a standardized professional way until now. At present, they are more and more required to turn their expertise to the mutual adaptation, better defined by Mintzberg (1983) as "adhocracy." There are specific conditions to streamline the work in this kind of organizations:

- setting up specialized working groups able to work on "projects", avoiding the "crystallization";
- emphasizing the flow of information throughout the whole structure, while ensuring respect for recipients, their culture, their needs and the results of each working group;
- empowering the role of collaborators;
- generating a "culture" of flexibility, adaptivity and transparent organizational solutions across the organization.

The "adhocratic" model shows the presence both of a close-knit core of professional teachers, specialists and consultants who have a non-formal behavior, and a new way to conceive the hierarchy within the school that pushed its boundaries within the various networks. This innovative and flexible organizational mindset encourages the exploration of new solutions and routes which were not defined beforehand, and recognizes news professional competences to move in a network model (Williamsons, 1983).

For this reason, the emotional skills, have considered as important keys for the success of individuals, groups and organizations. Anyone intentioned to work within modern educational agencies (that stands for integrated school-job-training system), at any level and in any field, requires a new vision for the educational mission. This triggers, therefore, the necessity to develop new paradigms to think and "put into practice" (Latour, 1998) education. We are in "midstream". This can lead towards a new way to imagine the whole educational didactic and teaching system at all levels. There are no simple solutions. The ways to enhance these complex skills are different and require constant efforts, patience and the desire to really "get into the game". This because such methods directly involve intimate areas addressing emotions, the uncertainty and the stress that comes from an organizational and professional system having an increasingly high density of communication and relationships, and a growing dematerialization of the organization (Sennett, 1998). This means that there is a need to change the educational goals of school and the way we put them into practice, as well as we have to modify the way we assess needs of professional and personal training for those who work in these environments (teachers, administrators, middle management etc.). Consequently, we need to revise methods and places allowing these individuals to find appropriate opportunities and training to improve/empower themselves. All this, inevitably, entails recruitment policies, re-training and career development where these skills are recognized, valued and promoted within the complex contexts they operate in. Then, the progressive adjustment of educational agencies to this huge change (school, university and vocational training) passes through a significant reinterpretation of the

traditional staffing policies. Nowadays, we need to shift the focus on a principle regarding education, in all its various forms, as a real resource for the entire system only if everyone takes his own share of responsibilities. This explains why the European Community urges member states to promote the excellence in teaching and learning (CC.EE. 2013).

Conclusions

School networks, identified by all recent Reforms as a resource for the territory, become a way to answer to historical questions for a new way to support the transition from education to social and working life. The network expresses the idea of school as an educational community founded on social capitalism (Putnam, 2001; Scott et. al., 2002) and trust (Schrader, 2004), capable of recognizing the value of emotions to promote positive relationships and lead individuals, groups and organizations to success (Ashkanasy, 2011). Nonetheless, we are observing great difficulties in moving from a traditional organizational school, based on the logic of functional differentiation, to a new model able to ensure services (guidance, counseling, school-work etc.), and value to the relational nature of the educational action.

We can say that the educational challenge of the XXI century is the recognition of the role and function of the "educational of the community", made up of quality relationships among education system and other actors, each one generously contributing to for the sake of each other. A community that is profoundly anchored to the education system. The responsibility of the educational community in this sense cannot be limited only to education institutions or delegated only to teachers. Everyone is called to assume a responsible role (parents, institutions, political, economic and productive system, social partners, etc.); each of them according to respective roles, because education cannot be delegated, nor derogated, but it is essential to promote people self-reliance and self-determination (regardless the age). In this sense, education is not limited to a simple and impersonal knowledge transfer, carried out by tired and disinterested teachers. At the same time, we cannot think that the challenge of knowledge only relies on a learning perspective. The drift to avoid is the abdication of adults' educational responsibility in favor of new generations, leaving on their shoulders the weight and the responsibility of learning (Biesta, 2016) (as often happens in many other areas of life). It is important to remember the original etymology of the term "e-duco" meaning "to lead out", to accompany subjects through support, exercise and discipline to cultivate and train their faculties, their inclinations, the potential of their mind, in opposition to negative inclinations and elevate the soul towards a personal and higher morality. We need to develop an ecological environment building partnership with, among and for schools and all stakeholders, to support young people and school improvement, enhancing the relational skills of a community that is recognized as such. The "educating community" is not only referred to the educational system we very often tend to blame for failures, but it includes all other relevant educational references, with their own peculiarities, missions and educational obligations. Consequently, the "educating community" is made possible only if the network is based on the recognition and appreciation of authentic relationships where the effective mutual listening, respect, personal responsibility and solidarity

among members may prevail. In other terms, relationships of trust. The educating community associates the institutional mission promoting learning with the even more important principle of "teach to be" for the sake of pursuing social justice. Such challenging goals are not easy to reach, given our social complexity, and yet no one should be neglecting them. Going through an "educating community", therefore, does not mean only to follow an educational model opened to the community and to the plethora of institutions having some kind of relation. Nonetheless, it also requires to call the entire community, in all its expressions, to recognize and be accountable for its role to support educational responsibilities. If we still believe that education is the most important way to promote active, responsible and global citizenship, as well as the main way to participate to the democratic life (Dewey, 2004), we have to accept the challenge and consider all the future changes as an opportunity. This means we have to give up on personalistic and particularistic interests, as Parsons already explained in 1937, in favour of universalistic and collective interests shared by all partners, in a real manifestation of community principles. In this respect, enhancing the local network is not simply a multiplication of nodes and connections or just inter-organizational agreements but rather implies building real social relationships, recognizable by the quality of interactions and in the sense of belonging, to create a collaborative school culture where teachers are respected and their voices are heard within a professional network able to meet external forces and resources. Research on school-community partnership shows that when school works collaboratively with external partners in a positive environment, with the aim to support student's developmental and learning needs, students tend to do better at school and to achieve academicals results (Henderson, 2011). In the end, we can say that the most important inputs the school needs in XXI century are trust, recognition and collaboration as well as an upgrading skills to promote new and qualified abilities to sustain teaching agencies and educational leadership.

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