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Special issue

The lesson learned:
What we have learned
from the pandemic
and how to innovate
schools and universities
in order to overcome it

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Editorial

The lesson learned: What we have learned from the pandemic and how to innovate schools and universities to go further

Graziano Cecchinato*, Juan González-Martínez**

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The outbreak of the pandemic abruptly interrupted typical educational activities at schools and universities, with online learning becoming the new normal. However, trying to reproduce face-to-face classroom activities on the internet was problematic from the outset. Not redesigning learning to account for new technologies undermined this emergency solution, like so many education-related digital innovations carried out over the past two decades.

Universities have been attempting to get presence and distance to coexist, but often by merely live streaming in-person lessons. It is apparent that, despite the functionality of regularly updated web conferencing environments, the goal of achieving teaching and learning that is simultaneously effective for both face-to-face and remote learning remains elusive. Further, we have seen teachers becoming even more isolated by staying behind the desk.

The root of the failure of these efforts can be found in the idea of transferring practices and methodologies typical of schools and uni-

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versities directly into the digital world without redesigning for an online environment. In fact, educational research and practice have long supported the reverse path; that is, bringing the languages and cognitive processes of the new media into the contexts of formal education.

As a result, contemporary terms such as “Distance Learning” or “Dual Learning” evoke failures to be forgotten with a view to returning to “normality” as soon as possible. This hope, however, could be an illusion, given that the adoption of technologies has also made it possible to glimpse considerable potential economic, social, environmental, organisational, and educational benefits. These benefits have been highlighted by multiple bottom-up experiences that have led to significant educational breakthroughs. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that a post-Covid world will see increasingly powerful innovations that can attune schools and universities to the changing needs of society.

In this Special Issue, we have collected several experiences that pursue this direction and can help us understand what we have learned from the pandemic and where this learning might take us in the future. Among the six articles presented, an important issue is the impact of the pandemic on higher education. For example, Zucchermaglio, Alby and Marino focus on university students’ perceptions and analyse the benefits and obstacles of the techno-pedagogical changes produced during lockdown. At this university level, the student’s perspective is also collected from an inclusive point of view. Silletti and colleagues report on the university experience of students with special educational needs, concluding that this experience depends mainly on the teaching and digital competence of their professors, as well as on the field of study. And Kloetzer, Tau, Valterio and Henein summarise and analyse how performing arts could become a tool for university education in pandemic times and what changes they had to make to move from an *in vivo* to an *in vitro* mode.

The remaining three articles in the Special Issue look at two different elements of primary education. First, Panesi, Fante and Ferlino focus on kindergarten teachers’ perspectives during the pandemic and highlight the great collaboration during the move to distance education, as well as the critical challenge of providing families with

emotional and relational support. Second, Gentile and colleagues reflect on Italian parents' perceptions of learning practices and the educational effectiveness of remote schooling during the first lockdown. Finally, Renshaw and colleagues focus on the change that confinement induced in the field of environmental education: how teachers had to focus their educational experiences on the interactions in the family backyard as a space for experimentation, mediated by technology with the help of parents.

La leçon apprise: ce que nous avons appris de la pandémie et comment innover dans les écoles et les universités pour la surmonter

Le déclenchement de la pandémie l'hiver dernier a brusquement interrompu les activités éducatives habituelles des écoles et des universités. La tentative d'utiliser les technologies numériques pour reproduire sur Internet ce qui se fait en classe a immédiatement montré ses limites. À l'origine de l'échec de cette stratégie se trouve l'idée de transférer les pratiques et les méthodologies scolaires et universitaires au monde numérique, alors que la recherche et les pratiques éducatives préconisent depuis longtemps la voie inverse, à savoir l'introduction des langages et des processus cognitifs des nouveaux médias dans les contextes de l'éducation formelle.

Le résultat est qu'aujourd'hui, des termes tels que «enseignement à distance» ou «enseignement hybride» évoquent des activités ratées dont il faut se libérer au plus vite pour revenir à la «normalité». Un espoir qui pourrait toutefois s'avérer illusoire, si l'on considère que, outre les limites évidentes que montrent les solutions mises en place, l'adoption des technologies a également permis d'entrevoir les avantages considérables que l'on peut en tirer.

Dans ce numéro spécial, nous avons rassemblé quelques expériences qui vont dans ce sens.

Une partie importante des articles sélectionnés concerne l'impact de la pandémie sur l'enseignement supérieur. Zuccheromaglio, Alby et Marino se concentrent sur la perception des étudiants univer-

sitaires. Dans le même contexte universitaire, Silletti et al étudient la perspective des étudiants d'un point de vue inclusif. Enfin, un autre article complète le changement de décor induit par la pandémie dans l'enseignement supérieur: Kloetzer et al résumet et analysent comment les arts du spectacle pourraient devenir un outil d'enseignement universitaire en période de pandémie.

Les trois autres articles du numéro spécial analysent deux éléments différents de l'enseignement primaire. Panesi, Fante et Ferlino se concentrent sur les perceptions des enseignants du préscolaire pendant la pandémie, tandis que Gentile et al analysent les perceptions des familles italiennes quant à l'efficacité de l'enseignement à distance pendant la première partie du confinement. Enfin, Renshaw et al se concentrent sur le changement que ce dernier a produit en matière d'éducation environnementale.

La lezione appresa: cosa abbiamo appreso dalla pandemia e come innovare scuola e università in vista del suo superamento

L'irrompere della pandemia durante lo scorso inverno ha bruscamente interrotto le consuete attività didattiche della scuola e dell'università. Il tentativo di utilizzare le tecnologie digitali per riprodurre specularmente nella Rete quanto si fa in aula ha mostrato fin da subito tutti i suoi limiti. Alla base dell'insuccesso di questa strategia c'è l'idea di trasferire pratiche e metodologie proprie della scuola e dell'università nel digitale, quando ricerca e prassi educative da lungo tempo sostengono il percorso inverso, portare i linguaggi e i processi conoscitivi dei nuovi media dentro i contesti dell'istruzione formale.

Il risultato è che oggi termini come "Didattica a distanza" o "Didattica duale" evocano attività fallimentari dalle quali affrancarsi quanto prima per tornare così alla "normalità". Un auspicio però che potrebbe rivelarsi illusorio, considerando che, oltre agli evidenti limiti mostrati dalle soluzioni messe in campo, l'adozione delle tecnologie ha consentito anche di intravedere i notevoli benefici che con queste si possono realizzare.

In questo Special Issue abbiamo raccolto alcune esperienze che vanno in questa direzione.

Una parte importante dei sei articoli selezionati riguarda l'impatto della pandemia sull'istruzione superiore. Zucchermaglio, Alby e Marino si concentrano sulla percezione degli studenti universitari. Nello stesso ambito universitario, Silletti e colleghi indagano la prospettiva degli studenti da un punto di vista inclusivo. Infine, un altro articolo completa il cambiamento di scenario indotto della pandemia nell'educazione superiore: Kloetzer e colleghi riassumono e analizzano come le arti dello spettacolo potrebbero diventare uno strumento di educazione universitaria in tempi di pandemia.

Gli altri tre articoli dello Special Issue analizzano due elementi diversi dell'educazione primaria. Panesi, Fante e Ferlino si concentrano sulle percezioni degli insegnanti della scuola dell'infanzia durante la pandemia, mentre Gentile e colleghi analizzano le percezioni delle famiglie italiane sull'efficacia dell'educazione a distanza durante la prima parte del lockdown. Infine, Renshaw e colleghi si concentrano sul cambiamento che il lockdown ha prodotto con riferimento all'educazione ambientale.