

Open School and Educating Community

May 9, 2022

Together with the ecological one, we need an educational transition, centered on education for opportunities. Schools that teach to learn, more than single disciplines, connected with all those entities in the local area that care about the future of humankind.

At the center of the educating community there are schools open to the local community, which know how to offer opportunities and not only skills and knowledge. That help boys and girls emerge from the ferocity of the perception of lack of meaning, that have the aim of teaching them to learn, embedded in a network of connection and co-action with all the local entities that have the future of humankind at heart.

This is what emerged from the meeting of [EDUCA](#) on 'Open Schools and Educating Community', coordinated by the vice president of Consolida **Francesca Gennai**.

The uncertainty and rapidity that characterize the modern world make it necessary to change the educational paradigm. This said **Fondazione Bruno Kessler's** President [Francesco Profumo](#), who pointed out that the **current educational models are the result of an approach to a slowly evolving reality**, where skills were developed and knowledge was offered that would allow to operate in the world for the next forty years. *"Today, schools must above all teach how to learn – said the former Minister of Education – otherwise people, to be able to keep up with work, will have to train 6-7 times in life and that is very hard. For this reason, the job of teachers must also change; they can no longer be only bearers of knowledge and skills, but must become excellent researchers, to teach how to cope with situations that change very rapidly. We will need to say that for this country the first priority is education, one that looks far away and that knows how to integrate different networks. Networks that due to their complexity cannot be led hierarchically, but in an integrated way by a comprehensive and complex governance. Otherwise we will miss the opportunity to adequately train the new generations to the life they will have to face".*

A sense approach that would help boys and girls get out of the constant dissatisfaction they face. “We see it every morning on their faces – **Angelo Lucio Rossi**, principal of the Ada Merini Middle School in Milan, said – the war they are experiencing to understand themselves, the meaning of their lives, what they like. We see the ferocity of insignificance and senselessness as a light wind to which we get accustomed. What to do in the face of this? An analysis of the dark? No, we need to bring out the tenderness, the compassion we feel as adults to work with them and turn it into action. Open up and create alliances with the local communities, put us on the front line with humility”.

The project carried out by the Ada Merini Middle School, told by the coordinator for open schools **Rossella Viaconzi**, started in 2014 with an action that aimed at involving the local area (the marching band, sports associations, volunteer groups, families gathered in an association) to build an educational community that included everyone, even the most fragile, angry and difficult children.

Giuseppe Ellerani, a professor at the University of Salento, set the **three founding pillars that schools should embrace** within an educating community: the school should be **democratic, open and talent-oriented**. “If we want to train creative, inventive people who know how to solve the issues of today’s complexity – the professor explained – we need schools that do not have skills as their goal, but the full human development of people. A school of opportunities, where competence is acquired in learning processes and where evaluation is not numerical but descriptive, as it also is a bearer of learning”.

In this vision local communities have an important role, since they can be co-participants and co-builders of the new idea of education, as bearers of experiences and culture. “Schools can become the places for training ecosystems – Ellerani added –, where all the players involved are inventors and know how to help each other. Being networks in networks. Education is also a great network of networks, an opportunity and must be redesigned. We need an educational transition that requires human resources before instrumental ones”.

From this point of view, **research plays a critical role.** **Elisa Bortolamedi**, expert in educating communities from [Fondazione De Marchi](#) and [Appm](#), shared the results of a study that examines the community of Pergine, from which it emerges that **the concept of educating community has not yet reached full awareness in people** and that 95% of respondents (students, parents, teachers and local organizations) have once more identified schools as the core of this new educational model, followed by families and cultural associations. “Perhaps the main improvement action that we can advance is one that provides for a local liaison – Bortolamedi suggested – that is a compass for schools when they decide to open up to the local area. In order to set out on an educating community, you need people that will take care of it.”

Good practices

After the theoretical insight, EDUCA turned the spotlight on some practical experiences resulting from positive local co-designing actions, such as the one that in Trentino involved [ACS \(School Cooperatives Associations\)](#), presented by **Arianna Giuliani** of the Cooperative and Training

Culture Office of [Federazione Trentina della Cooperazione](#). ACS are a very popular tool in the Trento province with **two educational objectives: to promote cooperative culture by reproducing the structure, governance and operation of a cooperative enterprise in the classroom, and to develop soft skills in active citizenship, participatory democracy and teamwork**. “Working with the children – said Giuliani after giving the floor to three students in the second and third year of Middle School who shared with the audience the strengths of the ACS experience – gives a generative energy and makes sense of what we are doing, because the transmission of knowledge is mutual. It is a way to put into practice that intergenerational pact that is one of the founding pillars of cooperation”.

Another good practice presented was the Mentor project, of [Fondazione Trentina per il Volontariato sociale](#), described by psychologist Sandra De Carli. The project involves **children** with some kind of difficulty **spending an hour a week playing with a mentor**, i.e., a non-professional volunteer (non-educator, non-psychologist, non-teacher) to create positive relationships, interacting through games and fun. “Each encounter is a blank canvas on which to paint starting from scratch – explained **De Carli** – in which the child has the opportunity to recognize his or her inner world”.

Sports can also play a decisive role in helping kids grow up appropriately. This is also how **Giuseppe Di Marzo**, CEO of Sant’**Anastasia**, sees it: he presented an experience in the province of Naples started by a group of friends who, **thanks to sports, managed to stay away from dangerous temptations**, setting up a soccer field and opening up to the local community. “The basic rules of the project were those of the parish oratory: you can play if you train and if you go to school – Di Marzo said –. But from this spark, over time an educating community has been created that involves many associations and foundations, with the aim of guiding children in the choice of their future”.

Much attention was also paid to the [Inclusi](#) project, presented by psychotherapist **Pamela Cristalli**, which starts with third-year middle-schoolers to help them navigate future choices, with particular attention fragility situations. A program that aims to be a bridge between families and schools. And when schools cannot afford to be inclusive, here is the idea presented by **Guglielmo Apolloni**, design thinker and co-founder of the [School Raising platform](#). This instrument is used to raise funds to be used to fund school projects, offering rewards to donors (for example, the possibility of using the laboratory created or participating in a course...) and making dreams and projects, otherwise not feasible, possible.

EDUCA is promoted by the Autonomous Province of Trento, the University of Trento and the Municipality of Rovereto, organized by Consolida with the scientific support of Fondazione Bruno Kessler, Fondazione Demarchi e Iprase and the support of the Trentino Federation of Cooperation and Casse Rurali Trentine.

Credits: EDUCA Pçress release

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