

Chapter 1

Relations and Distance Schooling: When the Unexpected Bursts Into the (Recent) History of the School

Giorgio Crescenza

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6704-8314>

Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Italy

ABSTRACT

Due to the unprecedented period which has swept over educational agencies, as well as society as a whole, it is appropriate to try to learn and understand the first effects of these transformations operating on different levels: educational, formative, relational, and social. This contribution intends to develop some reflections on the different dimensions which have affected more than others the educational, formative, and scholastic experience, paying particular attention to the educational relationship and the modifications in teaching. The analysis takes as its starting point some empirical data from an exploratory study at the Università degli Studi Roma Tre. The role of the school on the path of cultural humanisation of the human being is then presented, followed by a critical discussion on how the teaching and relational changes that have inevitably been introduced this year fit into this path. Lastly, the conclusion considers how to transform the crisis which has struck schools at the heart into an opportunity for thinking about them with a wider perspective.

INTRODUCTION

The school closure due to health contingencies and other crises are unfortunately no longer unexpected. However, which changes have developed in the educational system with the Covid 19 pandemic, when school moved to the home environment with parents often sharing the work of teachers? What strategies have teachers developed to be able to communicate with students and parents living in uncertainty both in the metropolitan and provincial environments? In other words, why and how is it appropriate

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and necessary to train teachers in dimensions that will allow them to encourage greater social justice in different contexts and for differentiated and specific needs and demands?

Through these questions, to which we try to answer provisionally with the followed reflections, starting with the data from the research (*School, culture and inclusion in the time of the Coronavirus*), coordinated by Prof. Massimiliano Fiorucci from the University of “Roma Tre”, they intend to pursue the following objectives: to expose the consequences, which are developing during the Covid 19 pandemic and to contribute with some strategic evaluations to reconsider professional training.

For this purpose, we started with the recognition of the role of the pandemic, which represents a turning point in the human history, because it indicates a before and after into many systems, functions and activities.

Undoubtedly, it has been revealed with greater clarity that in the last years, the gap between resource providers (economics, socials and cultural) and those who live precariously are found to be in a worse situation. In the words of Bauman (2001) globalization has brought wealth, happiness and greater opportunities to some people whereas for other people it has been the cause of misery, sorrow and marginalisation.

The division and inequality have become even more evident in the last months, when gap is highlighted between the population who live in urban centres enjoy a good lifestyle and those living in the emarginated urban areas, suffering in poverty as the excluded category has only the sufficient resources to survive. The poorest and vulnerable children are the most affected when schools close.

These differences also show a wide disparity with the use of information and communication technologies considering that, while some of them have a strong Internet connection at home, personal computer, tablet, smar tphone and all services, many of still have no Internet, or if available, with unstable signal, computers are often for the whole family and the lack of intelligent devices and basic services including the need of appropriate study or work spaces at home.

As Baldacci (2020) and Roncaglia (2020) underlined, among others, the access to technological media promotes an extremely wide informative difference due to the Internet interaction, platforms, and search engines. For this reason, in everyday life, there is the coexistence of *different, unequal and disconnected* schoolgirls and schoolboys.

In this context, Covid 19 pandemic has arrived unexpectedly, generating fear, insecurity, uncertainty and, most of all, changes, and transformations. In the case of the educational system, there was a shift from a face to face to distance learning, modifying the role of parents, who delegated the instruction of their children to the school and now they are directly responsible of the educational processes.

However, with the Covid 19 pandemic, the school has gone away from the four walls of the halls and the formative processes and has moved into the home, which includes the strategies of teaching, learning, research, preparation of homework etc.

For a part of the student population, who is provided with technological devices and has a good lifestyle- this results in less trauma working from home, considering that their parents provide them with the necessary means for their daily routine and their education. On the contrary, for a good number of schoolgirls and schoolboys, with more specific structural deficiencies and familiar situations of the less privileged, there were less technological tools and Internet resources or could not receive help from their parents due to insufficient preparation or shortage or even absence of study space.

The Covid 19 pandemic revealed, for example, that it is not enough for teachers to simply be competent and to possess skills, knowledge, values, attitudes or to know what and how to teach, nor to have passed an assessment (Volpicella, 2020, pp. 35-50). Instead, all teachers, through their generosity,

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