

Education as an Opportunity

Franca Daniele, MD

Department of Medical, Oral and Biotechnological Sciences

“G. D’Annunzio” University, Chieti-Pescara

*“Studying is not a duty,
Studying is an opportunity”*

Albert Einstein

On December 10th, 2020 *The First Educational Science Conference* organized by the European Scientific Institute was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has been afflicting the whole world for some months now. Nonetheless, the world continues to live, the world continues to produce, people continue to work, researchers continue to search, teachers continue to teach. The United Nations recognized the right for education for all and has recently set some of the goals for education – Goal 4.7 states “*By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development*” (www.un.org., 2021)

Etymologically, the word ‘education’ derives from the Latin word *ēducātiō* – meaning ‘breeding, bringing up, rearing’; from *ēducō* - meaning ‘I educate, I train’ and from its homonym *ēdūcō* – meaning ‘I lead forth, I take out, I raise up, I erect’. Education is the coupled process of teaching and learning, where teaching is facilitating and providing learning, while learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Education can be either formal or informal and any experience that has a formative aim may be considered educational. Formal learning is a program of learning recognized by a qualification or certificate, which is different from non-formal learning that is not usually recognized. Formal education occurs in structured environments like schools with classrooms and multiple students, and it is classically divided into multiple stages: preschool or kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and then college, university. Instead, informal learning is any learning resulting from daily activities and experiences, and it occurs in a variety of places, such as at home, work, and through daily interactions and shared relationships among members of society.

Education takes place in conditions ranging from a one room, rural classroom with one teacher instructing students in many grades to single

students who are into distance learning and are able to reach the world, and degrees, credentials, and certifications measure formal education. Currently, education is not necessarily accompanied by credits earned to obtain degrees or credentials, but it represents a lifelong learning experience for both individuals and organizations. Increasingly, innovation, and creative productive capital demand a multidisciplinary approach, not specialization. Therefore, education should be beyond borders, it should be considered as a fundamental public good, it should be inclusive not exclusive and it should be accessible to all (Lott and Bennett, 2010).

Two viewpoints seem to exist that place competency against modularization. The essence competency is that the content of courses should be based on occupational standards, and competency has been the centerpiece of reforms in many countries. Competency education should equip individuals with the ability to perform a set of tasks that are useful in the labor market. Another approach views competence in terms of desirable attributes, but many of these (e.g., problem-solving) are highly context-dependent. A third approach that seems to aggregate the previous ones views competence in terms of knowledge, abilities, skills, and attitudes in the context of a set of realistic occupational tasks. Competency is counteracted by the modularization viewpoint, in which modules are thought of as a group of competencies and can be built into whole qualifications. Modular structures have the advantage that they can be more rapidly updated because they are smaller than complete course and that they provide individuals with flexibility in skill building. Unfortunately, both models of education yield an enormous number of drop-outs, and the main reasons for noncompletion are institutional factors such as quality of teaching, support for students, flexibility, and monitoring and the student specific condition like family background, financial position, intentions, previous educational experience, work situation, motivation, and so on (Karmel, 2010).

From an educational perspective life-span development can be described as a continuous and active process of coping with developmental tasks. Life-span development is as a process of personal growth and it is closely connected to a concept of education that implies two meanings: the process of being engaged in educational activities (person educating himself) and the result of this engagement (the educated person). Education does not only lead to the establishment of differentiated knowledge systems, but also facilitates a broader understanding of own and others experiences and actions (Kruse and Shmitt, 2001).

In philosophical literature, education is known as a teleological concept that implies a *telos*, which is, an aim or purpose. In other words, education is not an activity carried out just for its own sake, but always because something is achieved. So, what is education? Education can be better

approached discussing its functions, and especially formal education has the function of qualification. This implies that children, young people and adults should be provided with the knowledge, skills, and understandings that allow them to ‘do something’, which ranges from the very specific vocational or professional to a more general education. Education has also the function of socialization, involving all those modes through which we become part of existing social, cultural, political, professional, or religious communities, practices, and traditions. However, education not only contributes to qualification and socialization but it always also impacts on the human person. Thus, “education performs the function of subjectification, that is, of becoming a subject of action and responsibility rather than remaining an object of the demands and directions of others” (Biesta, 2015).

Franca Daniele opened the session dedicated to *Teaching Specialized English* and her work assesses the different educational English language needs of medical students, and a survey was carried out using the Internet to see what each Italian university offers in terms of English language teaching. English courses in Italian medical schools as they appear today from the present survey seem to be useless. They cannot in any way fulfill the specific needs of medical school students and even less of medical doctors. A unified program is necessary for all Italian medical schools, and English should be taught with specific pathways for each individual student. **Tatiana Canziani** addressed the problems faced by teachers when designing an English course in Nursing School: 1) the identification of students needs which are technical and specific; 2) the development of a syllabus that considers the heterogeneous level of students who are quite often English native speakers. She designed a syllabus for students attending Nursing School entirely taught in English at the University of Palermo, which is based on different communicative teaching strategies and techniques employed in order to help students to communicate more effectively in a clinical setting. **Barbara Cappuzzo** showed the results of a study obtained by using parallel corpora in scientific English classes in Italian sports sciences study courses where the bio-medical component of the curriculum is predominant. Students became gradually familiar with the discourse patterns of medical English and showed a better control in the correct use of scientific vocabulary. Most importantly, they developed awareness of the fact that producing a text in a specialized field in a language other than one’s own is an activity that demands rigorous compliance with the rules and conventions of a given linguacultural domain. **Stefania Cicillini** reported her preliminary findings obtained through an online questionnaire sent to a group of first-year students, which show that the participants have a good command of the English language at the beginning of the term. She clearly addresses the issue that internationalization of education at tertiary level has led several academic institutions in non-English

speaking countries to adopt English as the medium of instruction, becoming the language of teaching and learning. **Antonella Giacosa** spoke about Emergency Remote Education, which has provided an effective response to the educational emergency determined by the coronavirus outbreak. Teachers, lecturers and students have experienced new teaching and learning strategies. Her study contributed to the discussion about short- and medium-term impact and it provides insight into challenges and best practices revealed during Emergency Remote Education classes, but at the same time could contribute to enhancing academic teaching in online and in-person courses concerning ways of interacting and meaning-making in an instructional context.

The second session dealt with *Meeting Needs in Rural Schools* and was opened by **Mary Ann Hollingsworth** who through 74 students conducted action research via interviews with volunteers across childhood and adult lifespan stages to ascertain impact and response the pandemic experience with a special focus on the role of school in that experience. Volunteers were interviewed on reactions to the pandemic experience, positive and negative life experiences both before and during the pandemic. Interview responses aligned with research already published on student experience with the pandemic. Then, **Tanika Lankford Mitchell** carried out an examination of existing literature uncovering favorable academic outcomes associated with integrating social emotional learning in the educational infrastructure. She reported the following strategies that were found to facilitate social emotional learning in rural schools: (1) an evidenced based social emotional learning curriculum, (2) a methodical process to train staff, (3) an intentional partnership with parents and (3) a coalition with wrap around teams. She concluded that social emotional learning assists children with developing personal and emotional skills.

The third session included *Undergraduate Nursing Education with Transition to Nursing* and **Melissa Wholeben, Sarah Yvonne Jimenez** and **Carla Ellis** reported on the important issue of community health care. They discuss the evolution of a community health care nursing course from didactic coursework to building inter-professional education collaborations. Inter-professional collaborations with students of other health care disciplines are crucial and hosting round table discussions, co-sponsor health care projects and community events are means that empower citizens to become active participants in improving their own health and well-being. **Melissa Wholeben** continued reporting on her study that evaluated the effect of a Simulated Hospital Day on the awareness and competency of pre-licensing nursing students regarding specific nursing interventions and critical thinking performed throughout the Simulated Hospital Day. Her findings showed a substantial rise in both core awareness and perceived skill competency, and she proposed that these findings may extend to SHD activities modified in

response to COVID-19 guidelines. Then, *Sarah Yvonne Jimenez* spoke about nurse residencies transition programs and their disparities, which have made it difficult to compare outcomes and identify specific elements that contribute to overall effectiveness. Her aim was to propose a common nomenclature of nurse residencies to promote standardization across programs and to provide guidelines to assist staff development educators to create and implement comprehensive, cost-effective, evidence-based programs.

The last session of the Conference was on *Education* and was opened by *Don Martin* and *Magy Martin*. They carried out a research project that examined the unfair treatment and disciplinary actions for African-American female students in an urban school district. They studied students in grades nine through 12 in both an early college high school and a traditional high school. Results indicated that African-American female students were often treated as older than they were and sexually more mature than female Caucasian students. In addition, the suspension and disciplinary rates were abnormally high in our African American population. *Oleg Stiopca, Robert Cobb* and *Paula E. Faulkner* reported on the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on educational systems, and on how best to move from face-to-face to online teaching and learning. Moldova policymakers and educators are meeting to address existing educational policies needed to continue educating its student population. The authors concluded that students would benefit best from online resources and adequate teacher feedback for online homework. They recommended that a collaborative approach should be employed to address the needs of students, their teachers, and parents to navigate the learning experiences during this time of uncertainty. Finally, *Syafiq B. Assegaff, Hadi Sutopo, Sri Dhuny Atas Asri* and *Enrico Adhitya Rinaldi* performed a research to develop a mobile multimedia-based learning on avoiding those imprecise Covid-19 patients. They presented a tutorial for a campaign on how to make patients and their families fearless to become stigmatized by the community. Subjects of the research were experts in education, medical, communication science and information technology and the preliminary findings show that this multimedia-based learning system is the most feasible model to be implemented.

Thanks to the organizers and the presenters, the mood in this successful Conference was lively and full of friendship feelings, and all attenders surely lived a professionally fruitful and enriching experience.

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