

The Face of the School of the Future

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The need of a new kind of school

- **Education**: education takes place in specific socio-historical contexts
- **Change**: if there is change in the context, the education we offer may need to change
- **New Era**: In the past 60 years there has been drastic change in the socio-historical context in which we (most of us) live
- **New Education**: therefore, we must seek a new kind of education
- **New School**: and with it, comes a new school

The face of the new school – 1

- **Vision:** education as human development and learning as capacity building / expanding
- **Curriculum:** action-focused, competency-based (what do I need to learn to do x?)
- **Methodology:** problem-centered, project-oriented, inquiry-led, active (how best to learn it?)
- **Assessment:** personalized and anchored in observation / monitoring (have I learned it?)

The face of the new school – 2

- **Technology:** communication tool, information access tool, information sharing tool, toy à learning tool
- **Personnel:** learning facilitators, mentors and advisors, partners in learning – and in living!
- **Governance:** liberal democratic: freedom to learn within rules chosen through democratic processes

Vision: View of Education – 1

- **Why do we educate?**
 - Not for the sake of society or of the economy
 - We educate for the sake of the individual
- The human condition
 - Humans are born incompetent, dependent and incapable of responsibility
 - But they are born with two important features:
 - An open and unfinished nature that allows them to define and implement a life project
 - An incredible capacity to learn

Vision: View of Education – 2

- **Education**: process through which humans become competent, autonomous, responsible adults who can give direction to their own life, take care of it, and enjoy living it
- This process does not take place through natural growth: the act of continuing to live (surviving) demands conscious choice
- The act of defining and implementing a life project that will make personal realization (happiness) possible, even more so

Vision: View of Learning

- Education takes place through learning
- To learn is not to assimilate and accumulate information (although this may be involved)
- **To learn** is to build / expand our capacity: to become more and more capable of doing things we were not capable of doing before
- To learn is to become **competent** to live a life that we **freely chose**, for which we are fully **responsible**, and that brings us **realization**
- To learn = to learn to live effectively

Curriculum: Matrix of Competencies

- A curriculum defines **what we ought to learn**
- For what? To become **competent** to live a life that we **freely chose**, for which we are fully **responsible**, and that brings us **realization**
- A **curriculum**, therefore, is not a set of subject matters (“disciplines”) we need to assimilate, but a **matrix of competencies** we need to build
- Some competencies will be “universal”, others will depend on one’s life project: the **school’s curriculum** must allow for **personal curricula**

Methodology – 1

- A methodology defines **how to do something**
- The methodology we need, in this case, is for **learning**, that is, for developing competencies (mathematics, not didactics)
- The best way to learn is **by doing and acting**, not by listening or reading (though that may be involved)

Methodology – 2

- How do people learn?
- By actively trying:
 - to do things
 - to solve problems
 - to find answers questions
- Especially in the first case, learning may often demand continued practice and exercise
- In the other two cases, learning often requires rigorous and systematic inquiry

Methodology – 3

- We **observe** other people do things that we are not capable of doing
- We **choose** to do those things ourselves (i.e., we decide to learn how to do those things)
- We **try** to do them
- We generally **fail** or perform very poorly at first
- We often **receive help and support**
- We **try again**, and again... – until we **succeed**
- We may even decide to **become experts**

Methodology – 4

- We **come across** unsolved problems and unanswered questions
- We **choose** to look for their solution or answer
- We **imagine** a solution or an answer and **try** it
- We generally **fail** at first
- We often **receive help and support**
- We **try another solution or answer** – until we (hopefully) **succeed**
- Our solution and answer may even become **paradigmatic** in a given area or field

Assessment

- To assess is to ascertain whether, and how well, people can do something
- Written tests and exams usually assess only what information people assimilated / possess
- To assess whether, and how well, people can do something, we have to observe them doing it – sometimes continuously, over time
- The competencies the development of which we need to assess are the universal ones as well as those needed for specific life projects

Technology: The Concept

- Technology is anything that human beings invent in order to make their life easier – or, then, more pleasurable
- And technology can be tangible or intangible
- Intangible technology: methods, techniques, notations, languages...
- More importantly, technology can be either tools or toys: tools are useful, toys give us pleasure...
- Art is an important technology of the toy-kind

Technology and the End of Life

- We do not need education only to survive, to remain alive – we need education to define a life for ourselves that will bring us realization, enjoyment, happiness: that is the end of life
- The technology we use in education must not be only of the tool-kind
- Tools often help us remain alive – but toys give us a reason for wanting to go on living
- If we do not find, or lose, this reason, we often prefer to put an end to life

People

- In the School of the Future people will perform the following roles:
 - learning facilitators
 - mentors and advisors
 - partners in learning – and in living!

Governance

- Governance of the School of the Future will need to be:
 - Liberal democratic, not laissez-faire: it needs rules, but they must be limited to essentials
 - Participative: rules need to be jointly defined by those to whom they apply (“consent”)
- The learning environment must be rich in learning opportunities so the students can have real options of what and how to learn (“freedom to learn”)

Thank you!

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