Editorial for the IARTEM e-journal, July 2020

The year 2020 will surely be remembered, for some time, as a horrible year. The current terrifying COVID-19 pandemic has in effect a strong disruptive power in most sectors of human activity and, in particular, in education.

For the first time, distance learning is no longer just an option in formal educational systems, but, on the contrary, something imposed on everybody without much preparation in a context of global physical avoidance of close contact with others. And online resources, which had been hitherto important in non-formal environments, have come to the forefront in formal education.

This will doubtless have multiple and long-ranging consequences, which it would be imprudent to predict now since the crisis is still unfolding. It appears possible, however, that the place of the traditional school is going to change and perhaps diminish, fulfilling a prediction published as early as 1971 by Ivan Illich, who foresaw a new role for "webs of learning" for "deschooling" societies or, more recently, by people like Christensen and his colleagues (2008), who predicted a significant disruption of formal education, with a more important role for distance education due to information technologies.

Along similar lines, Collins & Halverson underscored in a 2010 paper a series of *tensions* between the school and information technologies: Uniform learning vs. customization; teacher as expert vs. diverse knowledge sources; standardized assessment vs. specialization; knowledge in the head vs. reliance on outside resources; coverage vs. the knowledge explosion; learning by absorption vs. learning by doing. These tensions are good reasons why technologies have not been better integrated into well-regulated educational systems.

These authors have underscored a series of strong tendencies (transitions from testing to embedded evaluations, from authority figures to computer-mediated interaction…) and advocated the need to rethink education, taking into account what they deemed to be the current necessity: Broader horizons, more engagement, more responsibility, customization, transformed peer culture… They have also discussed potentials risks like inequity, self-segregation, local prejudice. Their general idea is that schools should better embrace the potential of information technologies (the question being how possible this would be).

What we are witnessing now is not in contradiction with these ideas, but somehow different. A disruption is occurring, but it is triggered by a blind external force: a pandemic forcing the system to adapt and people to react with makeshift solutions. The way things will evolve does not only depend upon technology, but mainly upon how stakeholders oversee how the use of technology complies with basic equity requirements.

In any case, this sheds a new light on the topic of educational resources and invites us to lead new research allowing us to problematize what is going on and to try to achieve greater efficiency and equity.

Of course, research, like any other sector, has been affected by the health crisis. Empirical works have been delayed, conferences postponed, scientific associations have had to develop new forms of online interactions. But it is proceeding and there is little doubt that issues linked with the use of educational media will keep being explored.

The e-journal, for its part, has succeeded in moving forward. The plan that was adopted in 2019 in order to relaunch the journal has been mostly accomplished. Now, the new OJS platform is up and running and we were able to migrate all papers published since 2007, restoring continuity from the journal's beginning. New efforts are currently being done to better reference the e-journal in international databases. It must be underlined that this is due to collaborative work and many thanks are due to the editorial team who have spared no efforts to achieve this development and who continue to being creative. We hope that the choices that we have made will prove to be sustainable.

Now, we think that the time has come to call on colleagues to provide analyses linked with situations of distance education related to the consequences of this terrible pandemic, with a focus on the use of educational media and resources. Any initiative along those lines is welcome!

References

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