ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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Does the school only need digital tools? Teacher training

The funds allocated by the NRP underline that the digital challenge is imminent, even in schools.

The DAD has not been universally acknowledged as a positive experience by all insiders in the school world. This is because, admittedly, it caught us off guard, but also because it demonstrates that improving the digital infrastructure is not enough to have satisfactory digital learning experiences.

In the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)** the 'digitalisation' of Italian society and schools are identified as key objectives. The digital infrastructure is therefore strategic to educate Italian citizens in general and put our country in a competitive position on the world and European markets: in fact, according to EU indices (Digital Economy and Society Index), Italy does not have an advantage in terms of active digital citizenship. Just think that 30% of the Italian population does not use the Internet and only 22% of the population has advanced digital skills: these two figures are enough to move Italy into the segment of the digitally illiterate.

It is clear that, based on these assumptions, the school's incomplete digital infrastructure is necessary and something to work on, but it is certainly not enough.

School performance declines with DAD

During the pandemic, school performance, as measured by the OECD-PISA tests, declined. This is shown by two reports by the European Commission (The impact of Covid-19 on student learning outcomes across Europe, 2021) and the OECD (How learning continues during the Covid-19 Pandemic, 2022). It is not digital technology that is responsible for this decline, as it has had the merit of enabling the continuation of learning activities. In particular, there are five key and closely related factors:

1. reduction in teaching and learning time;
2. decrease in social contact between pupils themselves and between pupils and teachers;
3. poor capacity of teachers and pupils to adapt to digital teaching and/or learning; 3. lack of capacity of teachers and pupils to adapt to digital teaching and/or learning;
4. suboptimal ability of families to support their children during lockdowns, especially emotionally;
5. socio-economic conditions of families.

Dads: motivation to study and school achievement

Italy in 2020 saw a lockdown for half the school year. The result? Italian students performed worse on learning tests than countries (such as France and Germany) that closed their schools for a third of the year.
Moreover, the stress brought about by the decrease in social contact between students and with teachers led to a decrease in motivation to study: of course technology was fundamental in order not to stop, but informal learning in this context of social distancing was penalised.
In addition, EU and OECD research shows that the gap between the academic achievement of students from socio-economically disadvantaged and affluent families during DAD increased. During the lockdowns, those who lacked adequate digital equipment, a stable network and suitable home space were clearly penalised.
According to the Italian Society for Educational Research (Sird, 2020), in Italy, due to a lack of training and infrastructure, two-thirds of teachers gave live streaming or recorded lessons, not taking advantage of the collaborative potential offered by technology.

Digital citizenship through school

And here we are finally back to face-to-face lessons, in a more normal and emotionally serene situation for students. Going back, however, is not possible, nor does it seem to make sense in an increasingly digital and connected world: teaching can benefit from digital and teach digital; school is the only one that can put children in a position to be ready to become digital citizens.

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