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Social Network and the Expansion of the Civitas Educationis. Between Formal and Informal in School and University[1]

Maria Rosaria Strollo, Alessandra Romano[2]

Abstract

The paper aims to explore how the social networks work as sort of cooperative learning instrument to bring the non-formal and the informal into the formal educational contexts, both the school and university. Starting from an historical analysis of the conceptual origins of the social networks, the Authors offer a review of the main theories about the development of the cyber platforms, inquiring into their educational potential within social contexts. Specifically, it is examined the case study of Facebook, which is the most world widespread social network, and which can be conceived as a platform for a virtual community of research, where it is possible to build shared knowledge. Lastly, three different research approach and design are described and explored, to show empirically how it is possible to work with the virtual working contexts of the social networks and how it is possible to develop the pedagogical research in those environments.

Keywords: *social network, education, citizenship, formal contexts.*

Riassunto

Il saggio intende esplorare la funzione dei social network come strumento di apprendimento collaborativo finalizzato ad aprire al non formale e all'informale i contesti educativi formali, sia in riferimento alla scuola che all'università. Partendo da un'analisi storica delle origini concettuali dei social network, le Autrici propongono una review delle principali teorie sullo sviluppo delle piattaforme cibernetiche dei social network, indagando la loro potenzialità educativa all'interno dei contesti sociali. In particolare, viene studiato il caso di Facebook, il social network più diffuso al mondo, che si presta ad essere piattaforma per una sorta di comunità di ricerca virtuale in cui costruire sapere condiviso. Infine, sono descritti e argomentati tre diversi approcci e disegni di ricerca, al fine di mostrare empiricamente

1 The paper, and all the research described in it, are the outcome of the joint work of the two authors. Specifically, Maria Rosaria Strollo, the Director of the Laboratory of Epistemology and Educational Practice, is the Author of the paragraphs number 1, 2, 3, 7, while Alessandra Romano is the Author of the paragraph number 4, 5, and 6 and of the References section.

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come si può lavorare con i contesti educativi virtuali offerti dai social network e come sviluppare la ricerca pedagogica in tali ambienti.

Parole-chiave: *reti sociali, educazione, cittadinanza, contesti formali.*

1. Collaborative Learning in education: to overcome the gap between school and university and informal contexts

Learning processes are produced in particular settings, whose characteristics play an essential role in the processes themselves. The assumption is that all cognitive processes should be understood as contextually situated, deeply determined by time constraints, distributed because they are co-determined by factors, environmental resources and tools. Their products in terms of (tangible and intangible) support resources, are deposited in external environments, in order to use them to support further cognitive processes. The need for an identification with a more complex and responsible citizenship highlights the gap between formal and informal contexts: that means that there is still now a separation between school and university, the formal educational environments, and the non-formal and informal educational agencies. This kind of gap should be overcome to create an educational network, which surrounds the subjects and allows them to link and to connect their experiences with learned contents and with their (actual or future) work. The challenge of the new Postmodern era is to construct a multifaceted identity for the intercultural society in which we live, and the citizenship education begins from the creation of multimodal educational contexts. Moreover, it should be considered that new generations are subject to a massive stimulation that may be an educational stimulus for an active citizenship if it is mediated and conveyed towards socially useful ways. Most of the failures in education and school depend on separation created when individuals have to face with two separate worlds; a world in which they dominate inconsistency and conflict, and a world (the school) which is made artificially consistent. All this ruins people's training, that becomes unbalanced, insecure; and it destroys culture, because when it is not a junk of information, its originality lies in addressing the most problematic issues of the existence. The cultural flattening and linearity go along with education set according theoretically consistent setting (see Fornaca, 1991: 169). As educator, we should question the dynamics underlying the learning processes in formal contexts and ask ourselves how these processes are part of general skills that covers a set of multiple and complex functions (see Frauenfelder, 2007). Learning mobilizes many levels of mental organization, which should be strictly taken into account in the organization of practical training models, in order to put the 'background knowledge' under investigation, including everything that is given uncritically for granted in the problem analysis. Our knowledge consists of a huge amount of provisions, expectations and theories of which only a small part can be objectified consciously in front of us at a particular

time (see Popper, 1996). In fact, at any particular time it will be before us only a theory selected for critical purposes, only a theory subject to our research. But a huge amount of knowledge, knowledge in all kinds of levels of importance, is used, so largely unconscious, in the course of the investigation of any theory: it is the background knowledge (*Ibidem*). It is used in the course of the investigation, so it is accepted uncritically, or taken for granted. By building links between formal, non-formal and informal knowledge, subjects' experience is refined in its descriptive quality so that by increasing their competence, the subjects contribute to stabilize their experience, they acquire this ability by taking hold more firmly on different facets and sequences of their experience, as well as establishing more rigorous analysis; they pay attention to the most acute variability of internal states, inter- and intra-individual, which are now to be considered not as a kind of background noise but as a constituent part of their experience (see Depraz, 2006). According to all this background it draws out the proposed use of social networks in school (see Strollo *et al.,* 2014), which on one hand, favors the construction of an integrated training system that generates an enlargement of the civitas educationis, for the other one, supports collaborative learning processes that are basis for promoting a "cognitive democracy" (see Schettini, 2010; Strollo, 2014). Schettini (see Strollo, 2014) desires to invite everyone to give priority to the issue of commitment to promote a cognitive democracy, the construction of which involves everyone who would like to be citizen and not subject of the prodromal of tyranny ignorance. He believes that if the school that works well is dangerous as much as justice, as a 'healthcare market' that works with the rules of democracy, it's necessary to promote and realize a school which is not emptily rhetorical, but substantial, and that goes to the essence of the things. It is evident, therefore, that the power of access to knowledge is not politically neutral and irrelevant and that knowledge itself is a condition of a substantial democracy (see Schettini, 2010: 16).

Schettini believes that in the Knowledge Society, where the globalization brought a planetary communication and increased the range of usable simple and articulated concepts, the school system has not been able to control and organize these powerful communication tools. At the same time, it need to be careful for what may be considered as a sort of technological totalitarism (Ibid.: 13), which prefers quantity to quality of the contents, and undergoes to a time logic which doesn't fit with a reflection and a personal learning. Following this line of thinking, the Author claims the importance of an "education to an active citizenship" (Schettini, 2006: 63), whose principles may be:

- the integration of the politics with the social dimension;
- a humanistic culture and approach to the relationship between education and citizenship, also to identify the model and the ideal of man to pursue;
- the centrality of the man in educational processes;
- the power of the thought, and the ability of critical thinking;

- a shared feeling of belonging;
- a principle of interdependence in everything and worldwide.

The name 'citizenship' is a of substantive of collective gender, because people are not citizen alone, but in the relationship with the others (see Romano, 2015). The citizenship is, from one hand, "to feel part of", and from the other hand, 'care of being part of'. An active citizenship refers to the esthetic dimension of the feeling and of the care in being in the world, because it requires attention, interest, motivation, involvement (physically and emotionally), solidarity.

Sarracino (2014), assuming that the continuous digital technology is rapidly transforming the organization and the social supports of our time, considers important the inescapable promotion of a digital citizenship, that leads people to reconsider how everyone is interconnected with the sphere of information in all the global world.

In a democratic society, where there's the space for a democratic cognition and a cognitive democracy, the role of the educator has some priorities, such as the acquisition of the ability to meet the other without prejudices and considering the other as the co-existent subject (Schettini, 1998: 27). The same process of education is not a linear route, but is transformation, change, organization and re-organization, interpretation and attribution of meaning to the experiences. The educator seems to be him/herself a person continuously changing, forever evolving. More than searching a widespread knowledge, it could be useful searching a cognitive democracy and a democratic cognition, in which sciences and knowledge are interdependent and each type of knowledge answers to a search of meaning at a planetary level.

The planetary identity, proposed by Schettini (2010), is an achievement of human conscientization, and the awareness is one of the most fundamental characteristics of an active citizenship (see Romano, 2015).

An environment that allows interactive dynamics between the group members, which contribute to increase knowledge for everyone, promotes a collaborative learning process in the sense that it is based on shared experiences, identifying traded practices and mutual help.

Collaborative learning is substantially a teamwork to reach a common goal and can be seen as overcoming the behaviorist view according to which learning is an individual activity. Collaborative learning moves from the traditional model of the information transmission, to that learning means to be able to gain knowledge and objectively measurable skills, to a communicative-dialogical model of learning, for which social and cultural learning is focused more on the subjective will to follow a customized knowledge route and to engage oneself in paths of creation and joint development of meanings. Vygotskij (1978) argues that cognitive development is a social process and increases the ability to reason in the interaction with peers and with more experienced people. The conversation, confrontation, debate and discussion among students, peers, colleagues, experts or professors allow a significant learning, a deep understanding and help to develop

problem solving strategies, to consider different opinions, explaining to others own his/her in order to build knowledge together. Collaborative learning strengthens the cognitive-metacognitive process, motivation, self-esteem, and supports the presence of multiple zones of proximal development that enrich the community.

Collaboration is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respect the abilities and contributions of their peers.

Cooperation is a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific end product or goal through people working together in groups.

Collaborative learning (CL) is a personal philosophy, not just a classroom technique. In all situations where people come together in groups, it suggests a way of dealing with people which respects and highlights individual group members' abilities and contributions. There is a sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility among group members for the groups actions. The underlying premise of collaborative learning is based upon consensus building through cooperation by group members, in contrast to competition in which individuals best other group members. CL practitioners apply this philosophy in the classroom, at committee meetings, with community groups, within their families and generally as a way of living with and dealing with other people.

Cooperative learning, otherwise, is defined by a set of processes which help people interact together in order to accomplish a specific goal or develop an end product which is usually content specific. It is more directive than a collaborative system of governance and closely controlled by the teacher. While there are many mechanisms for group analysis and introspection the fundamental approach is teacher centered whereas collaborative learning is more student centered. The structural approach to cooperative learning is based on the creation, analysis and systematic application of structures, or content-free ways of organizing social interaction in the classroom. Structures usually involve a series of steps, with proscribed behavior at each step.

The dictionary definitions of 'collaboration', derived from its Latin root, focus on the process of working together. Collaborative learning has British roots, based on the work of English teachers exploring ways to help students respond to literature by taking a more active role in their own learning. The collaborative tradition (see Brody, 1995; Brody & Davidson, 1998) takes a more qualitative approach, analyzing student talk in response to a piece of literature or a primary source in history. Supporters of co-operative learning tend to be more teacher-centered, for example when forming heterogeneous groups, structuring positive inter-dependence, and teaching co-operative skills. Collaborative learning advocates distrust structure and allow students more say if forming friendship and interest groups. Student talk is stressed as a means for working things out. Discovery and contextual approaches are used to teach interpersonal skills. Such differences can lead to disagreements. Beliefs as to what should happen in

the schools can be viewed as a continuum of orientations toward curriculum from 'transmission' to 'transaction' to 'transmission'. At one end is the transmission position. As the name suggests, the aim of this orientation is to transmit knowledge to students in the form of facts, skills and values.

The transformation position at the other end of the continuum stresses personal and social change in which the person is said to be interrelated with the environment rather than having control over it. The aim of this orientation is self-actualization, personal or organizational change.

The group setting facilitates the process of cooperative learning (see Bruffee, 1995; Brody, 1995; Brody & Davidson, 1998), impacting it in different ways:

- Promoting personal growth;
- Meeting each other;
- Verifying the expectations;
- Justifying the risk acceptance;
- Learning from comparison;
- Becoming aware of the dynamics;
- Integrating cognitive models;
- Experimenting Self-expression;
- Scheduling the expression of learning content.

In practice, collaborative work, depending on the needs and problems, alternate moments of close and intense collaboration with moments of self-employment. The process of collaborative learning is divided into four steps:

STEPS	EMOTIONAL COMPONENT	LOGIC COMPONENT
Common interest	Alarm reaction	Search for adaptability
Participation	Interpersonal fitting	Compromise for fitting
Cooperation	Frustration from conflicts	Interpersonal understanding
Integration	Isolation, elimination	Synthesis of collective ideas

Table 1: The steps of Collaborative Learning.

The collaborative learning (see Strollo, 1997) facilitates group cohesion, through:

- meeting;
- verifying expectations;
- learning from comparison;
- development of awareness of the dynamics;
- competitiveness;
- cooperation;
- planning the application of learning contents.

Experts divided the teaching strategies in three specific categories: parallel strategy, sequential strategy and strategy of reciprocity. These strategies are not mutually exclusive, but usually alternate depending on the circumstances or the requirements in group activities.

The parallel strategy requires each member of the group works independently on a specific part of the total product.

In the sequential strategy each member of the group, in turn, acts at the same time making its own contribution. The total work is divided into activities which take place in stages linked together; each stage completed is the starting point or the resource input for next stage.

By adopting the strategy of reciprocity team members work under the strong interdependence of each part of the total product.

The achievement of the most productive phases of group work, which could be called for cooperation and integration, is subject, however, to overcome the most disorganized phases (*Ibidem*), those of common interest and participation, during which the aims of the group may be hampered or facilitated by affective and emotional components that are closely connected to conservative instance. The common interest of completing a task is, in fact, often clashed with another boost as strong self-protection and defense of their own beliefs that hinder the processes of socialization and learning within the group. What may happen during the group growing up?

- First of all members can be competitive, unable to show positive inter-dependance;
- Members seek to exploit the others' resources without sharing their own. It establishes an interdependence of resources without interdependence of objectives;
- Members resist: refuse to take responsibility for the others' learning. It establishes the interdependence of objectives;
- Members begin to take an interest. It adds the interdependence of resources, roles and achievements;
- Some people laze and let others work for them. This is the failure to establish individual responsibility;
- Everyone plays his part of work. It establishes individual responsibility;
- Members shall not become familiar, there is personal commitment to the group, nor constructive interaction;
- Members encourage, assist and support each other; develop friendly relations. It requires constructive direct interactions;
- Group work is neglected; members coordinate badly their efforts. They lack interpersonal and small group skills;
- Members coordinate their efforts to work effectively in groups. They learn interpersonal and small group skills;
- Group members do not learn from their mistakes: the groups do not evaluate their efficiency;
- Students appreciate the teamwork and make programs to improve. The groups evaluate the effectiveness of teamwork;

- The group and the taylored-task work functions. The members will do best. Develop positive relationships and a better psychological well-being (*Ibidem*).

1.1 *The role of the trainer*

The trainer, as educator, should decide about how to intervene in the group, whether only in case of absolute necessity or not, if with eye contact. He should make sure that the whole group will pay attention, and should criticize the action, not the members (*Ibidem*). He is the facilitator to solve problems for members, assuming possible risks and often interfering to solve problems.

To foster cooperative component, the teacher usually has to take on the role of moderator, i.e. being able to stimulate discussion with questions that provide an open-ended answers and that induce students to think creatively.

The risks that he runs are to have an attitude of excessive detachment from members, to embarrass or to offend a member criticizing, to tell members what to do.

Questions teachers ask from a collaborative perspective:

1. What is the purpose of the activity?
2. What is the importance of talk in learning?
3. To what extant is getting off topic a valuable learning experience?
4. How can we empower children to become autonomous learners?
5. What is the difference between using language to learn and learning to use language?
6. How can we negotiate relevant learning experiences with children?
7. How do we interact with students in such a way that we ask only real questions rather than those for which we already know the answers?
8. How can we use our awareness of the social nature of learning to create effective small group learning environments?

The collaborative learning can be promoted not only in physical spaces, but also in virtual spaces. Social media can be considered as contexts of situated learning, in a constructivist matrix, and represent many aspects of the actual theories on learning and teaching, through the relevance given to the community dimension of learning, and to the conception of a multimodal and network intelligence (see Selwyn, 2012).

2. The origin of social network

The 'places' of learning (see Striano, 1999) can not be considered only physical locations, but should be also virtual spaces: the adjective virtual refers to the mind as an extended place of learning, and to formal, non-formal and informal educational settings. However, cyberspace offers new directions for virtual learning, according to which virtual learning turns into the categories of online-offline, technological and computer-mediated, e-learning

and social networks. In the era of the cyber-culture, widespread during the first decade of the twenty-first century, there was a multifaceted extension of the human mind, thanks to *chips* and networks systems. Billion people have gained power to have in their pockets centers of multimedia production, and in the ether, global computer networks. It could be possible to think to a pedagogical communication that is set in virtual learning environments, and intertwines the media with every moment of life: this pedagogical communication has to prepare adequate knowledge and adequate skills, and has to improve the educational programs to include training for these life-skills.

The interest of the Authors is to go deeply in the discover of the origin of the social networks. The framework approach which undergoes the social network is the theory of the collaborative learning and, of course, Moreno's sociograms.

The sociogram is an effective investigative tool to learn about the complex and dynamic relationships within the class: the sociometric test designs a detailed map of relationships and to identify the social status of the individual entities within the group. The goal is closely linked to the aspect of group life that someone wants to investigate. The identification of the policy will facilitate the exact wording of the questions that will be presented to those members of the group during the administration of the test. In Moreno's sociogram they are considered:

- the affective-relational aspect, whose frame of reference is the common life or being together (examples: those who want or do not want as a companion of trip, room, school, holidays, etc..);
- the aspect of the hierarchical organization of the group, which aims to have information on who can play leading or management role (examples: who you want or do not want as class president, foreman, chief of team, etc..);
- the aspect related to the organization of the group aimed at achieving a common goal (examples: those who want or do not want as a companion in a study group or in your work).

The Questionnaire is structured as following:

1. How would you spend an afternoon with your companion study?
2. How would you spend a leisurely afternoon with your companion?

Why social networks? The network model of Moreno's sociogram is the basis from which to start to explore the transition from school to Gentile's mass model. The social networks, considered in a pedagogical way, allow to reduce the gap between 'inside' and 'outside' school. The social networks represent virtual scenarios in which there is always a fluctuation between nearness and distance. Furthermore social media generate a strong sense of closeness of space and time due to very high speed of transmission of the communication (until everyone may have a written synchronous chat rooms). Koch (1993), proposes a plan that specifies the transition

from writing to a new digital orality: in this model, the e-mail and chat are configured as a graphic gesture (from the viewpoint of the medium), and as an oscillation between distance and immediacy (the conceptual viewpoint), due to the presence of the laptop stands as a crucial tool of this movement.

Writing and relationships in the network are much more similar to a dialogue as it is the medium that makes a difference by intervening as an amplifier instrument and power unit.

3. Pedagogical research, teaching and social network

The most popular social network is Facebook. In the current formative and academic paths, technology has become commonplace in and out of the classroom. Distance and online education programs are growing quickly, while traditionally academic courses are finding new and innovative ways to incorporate technology and social media into teaching methodology (see Joosten, 2012). Social networks, as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, can be considered as a form of remote teaching, that incorporates different social media into instructional interaction with students. Research suggests that the utilization of Facebook group and accounts allow students to participate in sustained and augmented conversation (see George & Dellasega, 2011), emphasizing the dimensions of active learning, of interest and creativity, and of the creation of a community virtual space. Virtual communities (see Rheingold, 1999) emerged from a surprising intersection of humanity and technology. They represent a new communication medium, which derives from the combination of the ubiquity of the world telecommunications network, with the information-structuring and storing capabilities of computers. Computers, modems and communication networks furnish the technological infrastructure of Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC); cyberspace is the conceptual space where words and human relationships, data and wealth and power are manifested by people using CMC technology; virtual communities are cultural aggregations that emerge when enough people bump into each other in cyberspace.

According to social constructivist theory, knowledge is co-constructed in the environment (interpsychologically) with others (Vygotsky, 1978). The ability to learn through dialogue and interaction with others is central to knowledge generation. The benefit of using social media such as Facebook is that these technologies connect with students where they spend much of their time, thus creating virtual communities of practice and a virtual public sphere for discussion (see Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger *et al.*, 2009). Since each student brings a unique set of experiences to the classroom, the participatory nature of social media allows them the opportunity to take ownership of their scholarship by becoming active in the knowledge-creation process.

For those used to a more traditional classroom, this may be quite a change. When using social media, the role of the instructor is not solely to disseminate information, but rather to moderate the trajectory of user-generated content and community knowledge-sharing (Wenger *et al.*, 2009).

Just as the classroom needs its teacher, social media spaces require a skilled moderator for effective learning to occur during the collaborative knowledge creation process. With a mediator to keep discussion on track, the community of practice takes a sense of ownership over its own knowledge, while at the same time working within the framework of the instructor's course objectives. Yet, the question of the students' relationship to technology is central to developing best pedagogical practices.

Potential classroom applications of these technologies—so ubiquitous in the non-academic lives of students—are many, but the larger challenge for the development of a pedagogy for social media integration is to encourage research, conversations, and collaboration regarding best practices for classroom use. It also means soliciting student feedback to determine what does and doesn't work.

Of course, the asymmetric relationship between educator and students is changed by new configurations that social networks imply: the teacher seems more approachable, can be added to the list of friends, and can be contacted also towards email and instantaneous messaging. This does not mean that it has been lost his/her educative role, but means that educator will be able to integrate social networks as new formative tools and to use them as an instrument of exchange and involvement of alumni.

Communicative interactions within online platforms certainly cannot be entrusted to naïve improvisation by those who coordinate these experiences; they need a careful planning and evaluation. Social networking websites, in fact, offer users many different ways to communicate interpersonally: through words, photographs, and a thumb up as an indication of 'liking' to name only a few. The network has the possibility of bringing the classroom home and making education more accessible for working professionals, students with disabilities, and those with children who cannot afford child care. Students who are typically quiet in a traditional classroom setting tend to 'speak up' in a virtual classroom setting more than they normally would. Conversely, those who tend to dominate the discussion in a traditional classroom environment are a bit more reserved and constructive, allowing for other voices. One can utilize these online groups in order to encourage students to participate in an online discussion. Virtual groups engage those students who usually remain silent in in-class discussion, but they can also have an effect on student motivation and learning: they give voice to the silent, to the unknown and to the secret. Thanks to the Social Network, students are no longer passive consumers of contents, but active co-producers of knowledge.

Going on Facebook is more than just saying turning on the PC and surfing the Internet. It is to bring themselves in a place, in a square where you have a date of birth, identity, a circle of friends. Going on Facebook is like saying to go into an extension of their own lives.

The label of social class can be divided into five rules:

1. First, using Facebook and other social networks respecting the rules of privacy;
2. Promoting the culture of participation involving all;
3. Sharing something artistic and trying those who have your passions;
4. (for adults) Using Facebook it as learning opportunities;
5. Letting the class can express its group dynamics.

So, Facebook can also be used during the lessons. With the use of Facebook groups, there's a co-construction of knowledge in which educators and people to educate are together authors of the production of new meanings and practices.

3.1 *An overview on Facebook*

Facebook, launched in 2004, was initially created for students attending Harvard University, and was eventually expanded to everyone with a university email address. Finally, in 2006, Facebook became what is recognized today as the most widely used social networking website, available to anyone with an email address in nearly every country. Anyone can join in and participate in the fun, and Facebook is available in 70 different languages worldwide. Facebook's mission is to make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them.

Facebook is a synthesis of many Internet based communication tools previously in wide but disconnected use. It integrates static personal profiles, synchronous instant messages and asynchronous chats (with wall posts), picture uploading, group formation, event hosting, Web development tools, dynamic searches, RSS feeds, web logs, mass and individual messaging, and e-mail, plus two unique qualities: networks and friends. These last two functions give users a one-of-a-kind online socialization experience, allowing them to limit the visibility of their content based on school affiliation, region, and friends. Facebook's keen focus on the user experience remains clear. It defines itself as a company in tune with its customers' experiences, and when it makes mistakes, it apologizes and quickly remedies the situation.

Facebook is the primary social network for students' communication, and it seems anachronistic to refuse to grasp its didactic potentialities (see Cheung, 2010). In a recent research (see Romagnoli & Selleri, 2012), Facebook offered the possibility to administer a questionnaire to a much longer sample, than that can be reached in person. Facebook has em-

ployed as a tool for collecting data, optimizing time management and enhancing variability within the group of participants. Facebook, and the other Social Networks, can help scientific researches, because they allow to because will produce social clusters based on common interests, useful for quickly and directly entering in contact with a pool of people, potentially available to use part of their time in participating in research experimental.

Creating a Facebook group to post questions for students allows creating an atmosphere in which the informal becomes formal in a natural way, helping to bridge the gap between the world that is inside and outside educational institutions. Instructors are developing ways to bring social media into the classroom in order to engage their students, as it may encourage student participation which is a strong predictor of their eventual success in the class (see Powell & Powell, 2010).

3.2 *The pedagogical research works on Facebook*

A particularly interesting positive effect that social networking websites offer is the idea of harnessing social networking websites for educational purposes. These websites make education more accessible to students with extenuating circumstances that disallow them from participating in traditional, educational classrooms.

While until now most popular researches try to study the social network influence on young people and on their academic performances (see Helou & Rahim, 2012), to analyse the content of user profiles, and try to diversify users and nonusers, the present work aims to explore the pedagogical relevances of Facebook in the interactive laboratorial experiences carried out with graduating students.

Of course, the asymmetric relationship between educator and students is changed by new configurations that social networks imply: the teacher seems more approachable, can be added to the list of friends, and can be contacted also towards email and instantaneous messaging. This does not mean that it has been lost his/her educative role, but means that educator will be able to integrate social networks as new formative tools and to use them as an instrument of exchange and involvement of alumni.

Mazer *et al.* (2007) had participants view Facebook profiles for potential professors. The profiles varied by amount of self-disclosure (high, medium, and low). After viewing the respective Facebook profile, researchers asked the participants to rate their anticipated student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate. Results indicated that the professor in the high disclosure condition received higher levels of student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate. Students, however, were unsure as to the appropriateness of professors having Facebook profiles. Mazer found that computer mediated teacher self-disclosure via Facebook correlate with positive student learning outcomes. Students, moreover, find

teachers more credible if they engage in self-disclosure through posting personal updates and pictures on these social networking websites. Facebook users will engage in information seeking to reduce uncertainty or anxiety associated with uncertainty, so students may engage in these information seeking strategies in order to reduce uncertainty about future or current instructors.

Prior to engaging in online relationships with students, instructors should realize that there is a lack of control over one's Facebook profile. 'Friends' may post whatever they wish, and if they post something inappropriate and it is seen by students, this could have a negative impact on one's credibility. The instructor could be appropriate both in class and online, but inappropriate postings from friends could contradict the instructor's behavior, which could send a confusing message to students.

The possibility to create a closed group seems to overcome some of the difficulties associated with the didactic use of the tool, in example the necessity of 'closed' rooms, which allow registration only upon invitation by a site administrator. At the same time it should not be forgotten that commenting on the picture of a friend's party is quite different from discussing the methodological implications of a scientific discovery. So everyone has to be there, following the rules of the game, interacting, discussing, sharing, but using a hands-on experience that requires training, technical training, experience, and practice in order to allow a proper flow of information and this attention must be given to everybody: students, teachers, and technicians. Therefore, communicative interactions within online platforms certainly cannot be entrusted to 'naïve' improvisation by those who coordinate these experiences; they need a careful planning and evaluation.

The network has the possibility of bringing the classroom home and making education more accessible for working professionals, students with disabilities, and those with children who cannot afford child care. Students are made more accountable to one another because they know that their personal effort has an impact on the social culture and that this impact can be seen by all. One can utilize these online groups in order to encourage students to participate in an online discussion when they may not feel comfortable participating in an in-class discussion. Virtual groups engage those students who usually remain silent in an in-class discussion, but they can also have an effect on student motivation and learning: they give voice to the silent, to the unknown and to the secret. Thanks to the Social Network, students are no longer passive consumers of contents, but active co-producers of knowledge.

4. The Pilot Study

In the year 2012/2013 at the University of Naples "Federico II", during the teaching of Social Pedagogy, within the Master's Degree in

Dynamic, Clinical and Community Psychology, an experience of Laboratory of 'Education to the listen' was carried out (see Strollo *et al.,* 2014). Specifically, that laboratory had the aim to develop theoretical knowledge starting from the laboratorial practices activities and to produce a reflection regard it. The 58 students who took part in the workshop of education to listening assiduously were asked to join a closed group on Facebook, created specifically to foster the sharing of what lived. This need stems from the belief that the new generations have different ways of learning than more traditional reading and writing on paper, and that it should be dedicated greater attention to the places of socialization as places of formal, non-formal or informal learning. Within this group, only the teacher, from one question-stimulus, started a discussion among users on the experiences carried on and lived in the course of Social Pedagogy. About two months after the creation of the closed group on Facebook, leaders of the education to the listening laboratory thought also to develop and administer a questionnaire to the students to verify teaching relapses of gained experience in the Facebook closed group.

They have been completed 50 of the 58 questionnaires distributed.

Well, for the group of 25 first year students, and 33 in the second year, there are three teachers and a tutor with the role of 'administrators' of the group with one teacher trainer. The greatest problem lies perhaps in the complex management by the trainer of a certain amount of simultaneous messages, but, on the other hand, closed Facebook groups provide users the ability to integrate different resources, achieving a high multimedial level and thereby meeting the new generations, that are increasingly more 'multitasking' (see Borgato *et al.,* 2009). The choice of making the teacher the administrator of the Facebook groups comes from a clear pedagogical intentionality, and has been experienced also in other researches, lead with adult practitioners, like managers and teachers (see Ranieri *et al.,* 2012). In these cases, Facebook groups become a sort of virtual community of professional learning, where workers are involved in the shared generation of new professional initiatives, and in the contamination between informal and formal learning.

The creation of Facebook groups requires, therefore, the use of a special attention, in order to facilitate and support a convergence of individual needs, related to self-esteem, identity, trust and safety, and groupal needs, linked to the recognition of group as a specific entity. Facebook groups are more than the set of all the members, and their configuration is different also from the interface of the other Social Networks. Educators and teachers who administered Facebook groups must be competent in the use of computer technologies, must follow in time all the evolutions and the posts of the groups, and must promote mutual understanding, that means the sharing of common meanings inside to the groups.

4.1 *Hypothesis and research instruments*

It is assumed that an innovative digital environment can provide the framework suitable to promote further learning and/or sharing of knowledge acquired in formal courses of university teaching. Particularly we start from the intuition that the creation of a closed group of Facebook, through which students post questions, may help to create an atmosphere in which the informal becomes formalized in a natural way, helping to bridge the gap between what is outside and what is inside the educational institution.

The sample is composed of 50 students enrolled in the course in Dynamic, clinical and community psychology, who have attended the laboratory of education to the listening in the academic years 2011/2012 and 2012/2013, and took part in the musical autobiography specific experience. 98% of the students in question is represented by the female gender, of which 97% are women with an average age between 23-30 years, only 3% are women over thirty. Men account for only 2% of the sample.

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire, which consisted of 7 items made by closed questions, and which was administered through the closed group of Facebook.

4.2 *Results*

Responses to the questionnaire showed that the Facebook group plays a significant role in promoting the stabilization of friendly relationships with classmates (see fig. 1). It was also pointed out that the group acts as a support for the exchange of materials and knowledge and makes students more aware of the cognitive processes involved in learning processes. The group can also act as a container of new theoretical knowledge, can create a social/friendship network of people who can offer support in case of necessity. Students taste the so-called 'sense of connectedness' (SOC), which represents how much members of a network feel connected with other members, and how much they generally feel part of a community (see Rovai, 2002). Facebook becomes a cyberspace for new experiences and new feelings of belonging and of co-existence.

Finally, the most interesting result concerns the possibility, through a closed group used for educational purposes, to bring out the tacit knowledge and to mix formal with informal training. The results have been compared with the categories emerging from the analysis of students' logbooks, written during and at the end of the laboratory. From the comparison, all the results have been confirmed and the research group is actually working to the construction and the validation of another questionnaire regarding the exploration and the evaluation of Facebook training and educational potentialities.

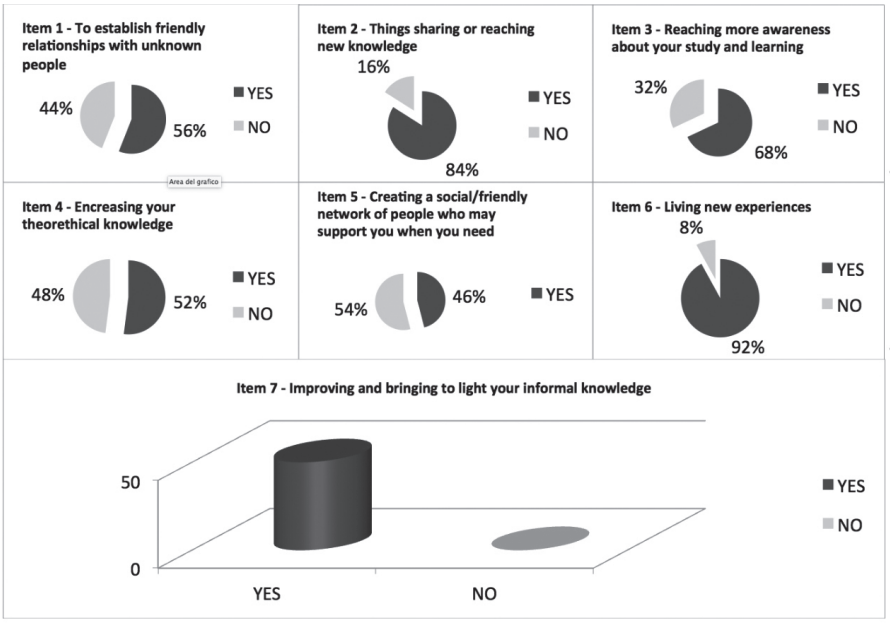


Figure 1- The results of the Pilot Study

4.3 *Conclusions*

The carried out research shows the importance of social networks in our daily lives. Also it emerges the awareness of the possibility of using SNS for the management of information and knowledge flows leveraging their immediacy, simplicity, diffusion and interactivity (see Besana, 2012). Through the exploratory experience of the Facebook group, students have also realized that externalization/construction of meaning and knowledge is not a social community act. They consider Facebook as a virtual system of affordances offered to users who are able to seize them: social network are constructivist environments that value teamwork and peer-collaboration, relying on their own abilities and accepting also very different ideas and thoughts. In this sense, it is useful to reflect also on representations of learning that have users: they have abandoned an approach to a simple transfer of knowledge, to adopt a more connectionist model of learning.

The appearance, therefore, more interesting of the experience in question is the ability for students to turn knowledge from tacit to explicit, or through the use of metaphors, analogies, and especially through reflections on experiences in common, students are able to explain and to share knowledge, which is difficult to express through purely frontal teaching methods. On the basis of these reflections let's think about the educational,

training and teaching contexts as material organizers of events that transform meaning horizons, that facilitate discoveries and make intentional change (see Antonacci, 2005).

Creating digital discussion groups on the issues addressed in the classroom helps improving right away the consequences of what has been discussed *ex-cathedra* and the emergence of new and interesting links to 'connect' formal and informal learning. Facebook, in fact, could be an instrument for formal learning, such as communicating with professors and colleagues, and asking other students about the laboratory experiences lived. The results of our research demonstrate that according to students, Facebook should be useful for educational practices, first as a platform and as an open virtual space for instructional materials and sharing narratives, second as a virtual community of research, where it's possible to co-construct knowledge and reflexion upon contents and upon themselves. Learning processes become participatory social processes, that sustain everyone's objectives and needs.

Net-learning is a way of creating personalized experiences of learning in internet and through internet. This clarification shows a fundamental aspect, namely the construction of learning experiences not based on a mere fruition of knowledge and content, but rather on the active participation in learning experiences (see Costa & Giannecchini, 2005).

As programs that reproduce the features most used by teenagers spread, here it is argued that several studies provide ample space for reflection on the direct use of the platforms that are already informally used by adolescents: it is important to begin to understand that the use of these tools should not be placed in the interpretative frameworks of the past, risking to lose chance to change and even contribute exactly to slow down and make the educational processes that one wants to improve even more cumbersome. To hope for a cultural change (and, therefore, not merely a technological one) it is necessary to involve as many actors as possible in the reflection on these issues, knowing the facts and the needs and constraints, to make sure to properly plan the future of our educational processes (see Besana, 2012).

Interactivity, collaboration, and coherence are the three guiding criteria that should qualify communicative interactions within web forums. These factors do not only facilitate the process of clarification and negotiation of meanings within the discourse community, but they stimulate afterthought within the community of users (see Cacciamani, 2002).

The need for a social environment is accentuated in the learning environments that use e-learning exclusively, as the absence of social cues can be a problem both for participants who do not have the possibility to understand and receive feedback on their own actions, and for the trainer who has poor information about the students' real participation and motivation. Sometimes, on the other hand, the use of social virtual interfaces may facilitate the achievement of levels of interpersonality more than traditional lectures (see Benigno & Chifari, 2007).

As Giuseppe Granieri (2006) observes, the debate that is often discussed on the soul of the digital society is stimulated by the peculiar grammar that networks are imposing on culture, politics, and society. The Internet works on the basis of a set of rules that human history has never seen applied before. Some key concepts of our society, designed and strengthened on the functional characteristics of the communication tools available before, have nowadays lost their meaning within these networks. The quality of cultural content, which mass society apriorily measures to filter the content to be entrusted to the mainstream media, is revealing itself for what it was: not a social need, but a device that societies and cultures have adopted to face a structural limit of the available means of communication. At the very moment in which an infrastructure can convey all the users' messages at low costs, quality ceases to be a prerogative for publication and each of us must begin to familiarize with the concept of pertinence, that is 'quality'—according to the individual.

Franca Orletti (2004) points out that in the net the vast majority of behaviors is mediated by words, by means of typed texts; therefore, the power of language in the construction of social identities is here affirmed to the maximum degree.

The results of the experiences carried out on Facebook lead us to share Geert Lovink's (2004) words, which in his *Internet is not Paradise* concludes that the global civil society, if it has ever existed, must raise and demand the Net. The case studies presented by the author point out the effort to create new communication architectures. So with thousands of 'digital immigrant' teachers, there is a growing need to neutralize a culture that is critical about Internet, which comes from a lack of familiarity with new media. A more active and aware use of social networks may, on the opposite, transform a 'problem' into a 'solution,' contributing to promote a democracy that can handle complexity (see Granieri, 2006), reducing the gap that exists between languages used 'inside' and 'outside' schools. One of the risks that we run is to widen the gap between "technologies as life-skills" useful for ordinary life and for entertainment, and "technologies as learning tools," useful to learn and to improve knowledge (see Hosein *et al.,* 2010).

There is increasing need to promote self-regulation of learning (see Delfino *et al.,* 2009) understood not so much as a mental attitude or practical ability, but rather as the ability to activate personal resources in order to tackle the problems posed by various contexts of life.

It is, in other words, a matter of promoting metacognitive skills of management and self-regulation of one's own knowledge and deutero-learning skills that cannot go through traditional languages exclusively used in formal contexts, but they need to create connections with non formal and informal languages as a vehicle and source of knowledge.

5. The Second Research

The second action-research explores the pedagogical relevance of Facebook in interactive laboratorial experiences, carried out with graduating students in the academic year 2013/2014 at University of Naples "Federico II" (see Vittoria *et al.,* 2014). We tried to implement frontal lessons with social networks technologies creating four closed groups on Facebook and adopting a questionnaire (created *ad hoc* and tested with a pilot study) to evaluate students' beliefs on educational scopes of Facebook and its usefulness for teaching learning. The surprising results of our research demonstrate that according to students, Facebook should be useful for educational practices, first as a platform and as an open virtual space for posting instructional materials and sharing narratives, second as a virtual community of research, where it's possible to co-construct knowledge and reflection upon contents and upon themselves (see Strollo, 2012; Strollo *et al.,* 2014). The research is carried out with a group of students from the MSc degree in Dynamic, clinical and community Psychology, attending the Course of Social Pedagogy, and with a group of students from the Bachelor's degree in Psychological Sciences and Techniques, attending the Course of Processes of learning Pedagogy, for a total of 36 students.

Specifically, that laboratory aimed to develop theoretical knowledge starting from the laboratorial practices activities and to produce a reflection regard it. The 80 students who took part in the workshop of LEPE (Laboratory of Epistemology and Educational Practices) assiduously were asked to join four closed groups on Facebook, created specifically to foster the sharing of what lived. This need stems from the belief that the new generations have different ways of learning than more traditional reading and writing on paper, and that it should be dedicated greater attention to the places of socialization as places of formal, non-formal or informal learning. Within these groups, only the teacher, from different question-stimulus, started a discussion among users on the experiences carried on and lived in the Lepe. Three months after the end of the activities of Lepe, the research group of the Lepe administered a semi-structured questionnaire, posting it on the wall of the closed Facebook groups, and asking students to answer to it and to send it. The questionnaire was constructed by the research group of the LEPE, and tested and validated with the laboratory groups of academic years 2011/2012 and 2012/2013.

They have been completed 36 questionnaires. Well, for each group, there are the teacher, Full Professor of the course of Social Pedagogy, and two tutors with the role of 'administrators' of the groups.

The creation of Facebook groups requires, therefore, the use of a special attention, in order to facilitate and support a convergence of individual needs, related to self-esteem, identity, trust and safety, and groupal needs, linked to the recognition of group as a specific entity. Facebook groups are more than the set of all the members, and their configuration is different also from the interface of the other Social Networks. Educators and

teachers who administered Facebook groups must be competent in the use of computer technologies, must follow in time all the evolutions and the posts of the groups, and must promote mutual understanding and sharing of common meanings inside to the groups.

5.1 *Hypothesis and research instruments*

It is assumed that an innovative digital environment can provide the framework suitable to promote further learning and/or sharing of knowledge acquired in formal courses of university teaching. Particularly we start from the intuition that the creation of closed groups of Facebook, through which students post questions, may help to create an atmosphere in which the informal becomes formalized in a natural way, helping to bridge the gap between what is outside and what is inside the educational institution. The aim is to implement the lectures and laboratory activities conducted in the presence with the technologies of Social Networks by creating four closed groups on Facebook. Four groups are created Facebook closed. Administrators of the Facebook groups are the course lecturer and two tutors. The teacher begins by starting various issues-stimulus, and it follows a discussion on the experiences of the dialogue workshops and on the reflections that these follow.

The sample consisted of 36 students enrolled among participants of the LEPE, who attended the laboratory of education to the listening in the academic year 2013/2014. The most part of students of the sample is represented by female gender, and their age range is from 20 to 30 years.

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire and which was administered through the closed groups of Facebook.

The questionnaire is divided into five sections:

1. The first section is related to the pedagogical relevance of Facebook. It consists of 12 questions that explore the use of Facebook during an academic course, the previous use of Facebook, the perception of its utility, abilities and skills that it requires, what the use of Facebook taught students, and what students would like to change or suggest to someone else.
2. The second section is dedicated to the exploration of the groupal dimension. The Facebook groups are virtual communities of learning, where the sense of belonging could be as strong as in the physical reality. The second section was made by two questions that provide multiple answers, regarding the usefulness of Facebook groups to share contents, to improve the friendships networks, to explain something which wasn't clear in university classroom and to exchange information.
3. The third section is related to the memories sphere: there are six items which investigate memories sharing and posting of autobiographical elements on the wall of the Facebook groups.
4. The fourth section explores the internet writing on Facebook groups. One of the characteristics of Facebook groups is the pro-

duction of a joint composition (composition written by many hands), which often assumes hyper-textual characteristics, a kind of brainstorming in which everyone participates through comments on shared musical texts. A kind of writing that is very close to oral communication, but is enhanced by the possibility of sharing work 'documents'. In addition, starting from the joint composition, of which a written record remains, it is possible to start a reflection and evaluation of the experience, enhancing learning and the construction of new knowledge in users of the virtual forum. One of the main differences that writing in social networks has from other types of writing is certainly its spontaneity favored by the desire to express oneself and give voice to one's inner world. Some characteristics of Facebook writing are: -the persistence of what has been written; -the replicability of what has been written (in each moment everyone can make a copy-paste of what has been posted in a social network, to share or to publish it in another social digital environment); -the searchability, that makes available and localized everyone in every time. It should be necessary a sort of "digital literacy" (see Rheingold, 2012), with the development of a technological *know-how*.

5. The fifth section is related to a personal opinion on Facebook pedagogical use. Participants are invited to expose the weaknesses of the instrument of Facebook and at the end of the questionnaire, are invited to discover a metaphor for their own personal experience of the Facebook groups.

5.2 *Results*

Responses to the questionnaire showed that Facebook groups play a significant role in promoting the stabilization of social relationships between students. It was also pointed out that the group acts as a support for the exchange of materials and knowledge and makes students more aware of the cognitive processes involved in learning processes. The group can also act as a container of new theoretical knowledge, can create a social/friendship network of people who can offer support in case of necessity. Facebook becomes a cyberspace for new experiences and new feelings of belonging and of co-existence.

Rapid development of information and communication technologies has brought changes in various pedagogical and technological applications and processes.

The results showed that Facebook tool supports educational activities by making interaction, collaboration, active participation, information and resource sharing, and critical thinking possible (see Selwyn, 2012). Students today demand more autonomy, connectivity, interaction and socio-experiential learning opportunities in their learning contexts. Because students complain about lacking opportunities for authentic communication due to

non-personalized university course content (even when alternative delivery methods are employed), providing informal learning contexts by integrating emerging social networks into existing learning practices becomes significantly important to attain more robust learning and teaching opportunities.

Characteristics which emerged from the analysis of the given answers are: fostering positive relationships among students and encompassing students' motivation and engagement; involving students in achieving the learning tasks and successful transfer of knowledge; developing a positive attitude towards learning and improving the quality of learning; developing interpersonal intelligence, as well as critical thought; developing of communications and interactions on the relationship between students and teacher outside university classroom (see Strollo *et al.,* 2014).

Further, from the analysis of the emerging categories, Facebook enables teachers to provide constructive educational outcomes in a variety of fields; practice a differential pedagogy, in the best interests of the students; integrate diagnostic formative evaluation in learning process and to calibrate didactic activities accordingly; achieve a change in strategy, mentality, attitude and behaviors by using Facebook (e.g. the transfer of knowledge remains one of the functions of teaching, but it is second to organizing and managing learning situations); establish efficient educational relations on a social network; accept the student as an interaction partner; analyze and compare ways of learning and knowledge achieved by students; develop knowledge and skills in order to perform efficient didactic activities.

In the context of a university laboratory like the one described here, our research has shown that Facebook is a possible educational tool. Furthermore, our research indicates that using social networking tools, such as Facebook, increases the productivity of students and improves their interests in educational issues, as well as increasing awareness of necessity for taking social actions and changing their cultural and social behavior patterns.

The data suggests that students would use Facebook as a good medium not only for communication but for a broader engagement in the process of learning.

The lessons learned from the research presented in this contribute highlight the pedagogical advantages of capitalizing on affordances inherent in social media technologies and pairing them with theory to create virtual communities of practice and generate positive learning outcomes.

First, student involvement in laboratory organization, including the discussion of course concepts and material, immediately created a sense of ownership among students. In addition, the accompanying profile pictures and biographical user information associated Facebook postings allowed a human touch to be associated in students' online personae. These humanizing touches allowed students a more direct and long lasting sense of ownership to their words, and allowed the professors to incorporate more identifiable and popular in-class lessons by culling student examples. In

Vygotskian terms, these affordances also facilitated the development of a community of practices (see Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger *et al.*, 2009).

Secondly, the time and space advantage that Facebook groups offer allows instructors to extend the traditional university laboratory period beyond the synchronous meeting, allowing students to engage in asynchronous learning at times that are not only convenient to them, but to (potentially) participate more frequently and organically as ideas or questions manifest themselves. With the flexibility of Facebook groups, conversations can be initiated and maintained more easily than similar other social networks. Thus, the implementation of Facebook is not just about the 'cool' factor, but about the pedagogical relevancy of these media as active, communal learning spaces.

Third, the social benefits of implementing these media into laboratory that previously may have been taught using more traditional pedagogical techniques (i.e. lecture, discussion, group work, etc.) manifest themselves in the shared experiences, discussions and self-disclosure of the students. Students may learn from one another at their own pace in a potentially less-threatening environment and then process and digest that information on their own. Thus, an interpersonal learning environment evolves into an intrapersonal one: with Facebook groups, learning processes move from the interpersonal and social levels, to individual and internalized level.

Facebook also has proven to be a successful space for large group discussions and helpful for times when students must come to a consensus on certain material and/or issues prior to class. While we would argue that Facebook should not necessarily take the place (or space) of in-class debates, it provides an alternate forum. So discussions don't need conclude at the end of in-class lessons or workshops. Closed Facebook groups for sharing links, web pages, videos, and discussion points, allow students the ability to think about certain course materials outside of university classroom context. These communities of practice seem to police the boundaries of what is appropriately and inappropriately controversial. In any case, instructor intervention is always a valid option that directs the controversial discussions.

While hybrid or blended courses increase in popularity, the use of social media in the classroom remains somewhat new, for both instructors and students, according to students' answers.

Finally, the most interesting result concerns the possibility, through closed groups used for educational purposes, to bring out the tacit knowledge and to mix formal with informal training. The results have been compared with the categories emerging from the analysis of students' logbooks, written during and at the end of the laboratory. From the comparison, all the results have been confirmed. The appearance, therefore, more interesting is students' ability to turn knowledge from tacit to explicit. Using metaphors, analogies, and especially through reflections on experiences in common, students are able to explain and to share knowledge, which is difficult to express through purely frontal teaching methods.

Here there are some of the answers of participants:

I.1. Before the experience did you ever use Facebook as a tool for training?



I.6. What happened during the laboratory experience in the Facebook groups?

- Friendships are born and we shared a variety of information and knowledge (questionnaire 3);
- There has been collaboration and sharing among members (questionnaire 6);
- We shared mode of expression and information of various kinds and boosted communication group level (questionnaire 8);
- Facebook has done a sounding board for some issues raised in the classroom, but it was also a way to share the excitement of the experience (questionnaire 29);
- Group members and the conductors of the laboratory have interacted through sharing of experiences, memories and information, to stimulate reflection about the themes addressed at the Laboratory of Epistemology (questionnaire 14);
- The facebook group followed roughly the same stages that we followed as a group. While initially there were few contributions and shares, over time we brought all ideas, emotions to want to share (questionnaire 17);
- Everyone has shared the relevant material and we have clarified each other the tasks to be performed (questionnaire 29).

II. 1 Which role the group played in the experience workshop?

- In the construction work of the set of meanings, it allowed us to know us, to help us and compare our experiences (questionnaire 2);

- It integrated and expanded the laboratory meetings held in the classroom and perhaps also contributed to encourage and promote the "sense" of the Group ... (questionnaire 10);
- It allowed a clarification of the tasks, the reflection and the meeting of different perspectives (questionnaire 11);
- To be in the group helped us feel less alone in the face of activities to be performed and mutual support has been of great help (questionnaire 6);
- It guaranteed communication between everyone and not only between the teacher and the person who was going to ask questions in person (questionnaire 7);
- By sharing experiences, the group has consistently provided members of the inputs on which to reflect and from which to start a process of introspection. the intersubjectivity of the group, and the increasing sense of unity has enabled us to capture the most intimate aspects of the other. In addition, the group was born as an opportunity to share concerns and information; in this way, it has been facilitating the communication process (questionnaire 13);
- To have an opportunity to confront different perspectives from their own (questionnaire 22).

V.2. Use a metaphor to describe the experience workshop and the experience of belonging to groups on Facebook:

- Big family;
- Travel within himself;
- A boat bound for a special place;
- The renovation of a house or a move;
- Square where what everyone says (writes) can be heard (read) by all;
- Rain of information that washes our thirst for knowledge;
- Box multicolor and colorful.

The educational potential of Facebook:

- Create groups as communities of practice and virtual learning;
- Overcome the dichotomy between the real world and the virtual world;
- Collaborate and create connections between users;
- Discuss areas related to the subject of learning;
- Build a shared knowledge;
- Improve the relationship educator-educating, approaching the educator on-line;
- Moderate virtual interactions for learning and co-constructing knowledge.

Our research shows the importance of social networks in our daily lives. Students consider Facebook as a virtual system of affordances offered to users who are able to seize them: social networks are constructivist environments that value teamwork and peer-collaboration, relying on their own abilities and accepting also very different ideas and thoughts. In this sense, it is useful to reflect also on representations of learning that users have: Facebook groups help users to abandon an approach to a simple transfer of knowledge, to adopt a more connectionist model of learning. Precondition for being successfully overcome these stages of teamwork is also the acceptance by each member of a perspective different from their own. Taking part has a highly educational value that ensures growth of the subject, as it promotes an awareness of himself as a separate entity. It is of decisive importance in the development of co-operative Facebook group. The immediate effect of a role assumption is revealed in the control that the individual is able to exercise over his own answer. The control of the action of individual in a cooperative process can take place in his behavior and in the role of others' behavior. In this sense, also on Facebook groups all group members recognize the potential contribution of the others, looking at it through the lens of their personality (see Strollo, 1997). As emerged from the analysis, students' learning experiences in the social network activities provided them several benefits. The major ones include: the variety of activities, increased interpersonal relations, participating in small-group and whole-class discussion on-line, and the teacher's support and feedback on-line. Also, there are teaching benefits identified by the teacher participants, in terms of, increasing teaching effectiveness via creating opportunities for wider coverage of content, sharing teaching responsibilities with the students, and integration of ideas and concepts. These findings suggest that social network pedagogies enhance the ways teachers teach, and students engage with meaningful learning experiences.

A possible limitation to the generalizability of the results was the low size of the sample. Inferences made about results with a small size sample should be taken with extreme caution. Further research should incorporate larger numbers of participants. According to participants, Facebook could be useful for educational practices, primarily as a platform and virtual space to post and share material and narratives, and secondly as a virtual research community, where you can know and reflect on the content and on themselves. Educators and teachers who administer the Facebook groups must be competent in the use of computer technology, must follow the evolution and post groups, and should promote mutual understanding and sharing of common meanings in groups.

6. The third research

6.1 *Storytelling, writing itself and Social Network: why are people told on Facebook?*

The research we would like to explain in this section is a comparative study on the autobiographical devices through writing mediated by computer. The methodology consists of the creation of three contacts Facebook, which are:

- Writing oneself;
- Writing oneself-Under;
- Writing self-Over.

From these contacts are added and interviewed Facebook users.

Writing oneself-under contains 30 subjects, including 20 females and 10 males, enrolled and mostly attending high school. Writing oneself includes 50 persons, 32 females and 18 males. Almost all of the sample is registered and attending university, a small part is composed by workers. Writing oneself-over includes 50 people, 29 females and 21 males. They are all workers.

This is a complex mixed research which is made through different steps. The research method chosen for the first phase of the research is the observation.

In an early phase of the research, which lasted approximately three months, the observation is clear: they are gathered all the shares of the subject, then the states of Facebook, music, links, photographs, without a precise systematic criterion. The purpose of this 'wild recollection of data' is to create categories to begin a systematic observation. After this first phase of collecting random, fourteen categories have been identified by observers inside and compared with those identified from the external observer to describe exhaustively the types of content that are shared on Facebook.

The main content of the sharing on Facebook are:

- Moments of crisis;
- Moral values;
- Relations with others;
- Narratives moments with others;
- Reflections on people;
- Reflections on the world;
- Times of the day (diary);
- Humor;
- Reflections on oneself;
- Political Thought;
- Passions;
- Criticism of society;
- Moments of happiness.

6.2 Results of the observation

The observation allowed to underline four types of the shared assets:

- Links to newspaper articles, web pages, photos and quotes (there are Facebook pages that produce the above link alongside a picture quotes, thoughts, phrases, jokes etc etc. creating what in the jargon is called a link);
- Links to music videos, coming mostly from *youtube*;
- Post, if you intend to post something written that you have posted and shared on your wall with the other. I mean talking about a post composed of write - only and without the release of images and video;
- Photographs and shots on personal lives, friends and relatives. The difference with the link is that in these photographs portray subjects and landscapes are not drawn from personal life of the individual.

On a total of 846 files analyzed, there are the four categories distributed as follows:

File Type	Frequencies
Post	384
Link	258
Music	89
Photos	88

Excerpts from participants' considerations about the perception of the Facebook group:

- MARIA: Facebook made me feel less alone, it was able to take away that sense of loneliness I had felt in the classroom and at home. I was together with my colleagues, even though we were in different places, almost I felt their voices, their emotions.
- CLARA: ... I felt close to my companions through the bulletin board, a bit like being in the classroom, but at the same time physically distant from them and protected in my room in order to express my emotions and feelings in solitude.
- LUCIA: At first I remember having a little difficult to concentrate ... but then when we started to post links and communicate between us the situation has changed ...
- TIZIANA: in the rarefied space of the social networks in which all were present and absent at the same time, distant yet close because the contact is not only physical but also emotional and intellectual, has begun to take shape my autobiography. Following others, sharing their emotions, their feeling and expressing, I myself got in touch with my memory ...

In the framework of Collaborative learning, blogs, social networks and personal pages are able to push to tell youself, by stimulating the writing and storytelling, push to tell yourself; to encourage reflection on your statements and on your way to relate to others; to create a collaborative learning outcome that is not the simple interaction with other users of the Network, but the sharing of resources and the production of new materials, to bring out the links between individual stories and collective history.

Davis and Danning (2000) proposed a conceptual model related to general and on-line learning. The Authors proposed a multidimensional model for learning communities:

- the social extension through which participants relate to each other,
- the kind of learning that goes from the individual to cooperative,
- the orientation to the task and the encouraging role of the trainer,
- the emotional climate, that is to say the emotional responses relating to the task and the group;
- the strategies which have been chosen for the task.

Adopting Davis and Danning's conceptual model, we can observe how also Facebook groups are e-learning communities, in which participants are interdependent with each other, and take a collaborative approach. Social network is considered as a pedagogic tool that promotes the quality of teaching and learning. We can say that they realize a Collaborative Learning thanks to two critical features, that distinguish them from other forms of small group instruction: positive interdependence and individual accountability (see Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Taresse & Giellies, 2015). A sense of individual accountability forms the basis for a significant interaction among students. The notion of interdependence is established through structuring the learning environment of the social network for all members of a collaborative learning team. This helps the group members to share mutual responsibilities for learning and develop more positive relationships. One strategy to effect this sense of mutual responsibility is through providing learning materials that must be shared among group members. Once the materials have been studied by each social and virtual team, the members return to their original (home) groups to share learning with their teammates. Finally, group cohesion can be promoted through assigning a team, a joint goal with the group being collectively rewarded for their team performances. Cooperative learning has been shown to be effective in improving the quality of learning. While less able students appear to benefit significantly from their engagement in cooperative groups, high achievers do not appear to be disadvantaged and actually benefit from the opportunity of teaching peers. Benefits can, under certain conditions, accrue to both those giving and receiving help. A multiplicity of other benefits including promoting friendships amongst students, improving self-esteem, and so forth have been highlighted. Collaborative Learning on social network not only promotes student learning but it also, helps teachers to improve their teaching (see Taresse & Giellies, 2015).

7. Writing and social network

The 'intense identity-making activity' that characterizes us during our evolution, finds its symbolic materialization in 'public' writing, apart from its storage space (see Di Fraia, 2007: 37). Web forums, which began with a strictly technological connotation, are increasingly assuming a social dimension. Thus, through Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC), socialization has not only become more accessible to everyone, but also all users can 'experiment' the dual role of beneficiaries and, at the same time, of knowledge dispensers. If the new generations have ways of learning that are divergent from traditional hard copy reading and writing, and if the places of socialization and the ways in which it manifests itself still change, pedagogy cannot ignore these new places, with the aim of making formal training increasingly more 'connected' to informal training. Virtual communications have several drawbacks in comparison to face-to-face interactions: there are filtration factors that prevent people from communicating the facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice that constitute the vital component of most face-to-face communications. Irony, sarcasm, compassion, and other subtle but at the same time, important nuances that aren't conveyed in words alone are lost when just words on a screen are seen (see Rheingold, 2012). All of these types of Computer-Mediated-Communication are creating another different type of virtual writing. One of the main differences that writing in social networks has from other types of writing is certainly its spontaneity favored by the desire to express oneself and give voice to one's inner world. In some cases, people can feel the frustration of having fallen into the 'vomit of words' that is typical of Facebook, and that may lead someone to not appreciate the richness of virtual exchanges. Some characteristics of Facebook writing are:

- the persistence of what has been written;
- the replicability of what has been written (this means also that in each moment everyone can make a copy-paste of what has been posted in a social network, to share or to publish it in another social digital environment);
- the searchability, that makes available and localized everyone in every time.

As a matter of fact, virtual forums within which users insert their own messages are actual textual units. In this case, however, it is a new modality of text, that is to say a collaborative horizontal text. Virtual writing was born from the collaboration of the different voices that animate the web and in doing so they contribute to 'weaving' a single text (see Rossi, 2000).

One of the characteristics of Facebook groups is the production of a joint composition (composition written by many hands), which often assumes hyper-textual characteristics related to hypertextual links added by the interlocutors, a kind of brainstorming in which everyone partici-

pates through comments on shared musical texts. A kind of writing that is very close to oral communication, but is enhanced by the possibility of sharing work 'documents.' In addition, starting from the joint composition, of which a written record remains, it is possible to start an a posteriori reflection and evaluation of the experience, enhancing learning and the construction of new knowledge in the users of the virtual forum.

Some research with regard to adults has shown a greater tendency to use these sites to expand its network of knowledge: what is usually called properly 'social networking', where the term 'network' denotes the tendency, more common, however, between teenagers, to interact on the Web with networks of friends and acquaintances who already have, playing so perfectly in their own virtual world real. In the social network, writing is also a means of sharing emotions ("*I meet, by writing, to an overpowering need to vent*").

The pros of course of the Social Network as instrument to bring the informal and the non-formal into the academic contexts are the ability to integrate different resources, reaching a high level of multimedia and thus meeting the new generations, more and more 'multitasking.' Furthermore, the possibility, in this case, to bring out the autobiography of a generation (plot size between non-formal and informal) and the possibility of sharing emotions and of living feelings like stupor, not yet experienced. At the same time the cons are the simultaneity of the messages, that makes difficult to manage them in real time by the trainer, and the constraints of the time. From all these researches it emerges the need for 'indoor' areas, which allows registration by invitation only by a site administrator.

The paper aimed to argue the openness of university to social network and to Facebook, for the non-fomal and informal aspects they represent. Other kind of experience with social networks created ad hoc for university didactics failed because students who took part in them didn't recognize their informal in the instrument, and for this reason it is fundamental that the instrument would be recognized as yes used tool, and as daily tool for their life.

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