
PRESENTATION

There is a growing consensus in professional and social media that educational reforms have reached their limits and the much desired “transformation” of educational systems is not happening. This seminar aims at shifting the focus of the debate to the underrated and the most conserved, fundamental unit of educational paradigms: curriculum.

In general, the curriculum tries to answer questions such as: what and when to teach, how to teach, and what, how and when to assess. The curriculum designs and plans the academic organization and activities that will take place in a given time and context.

Our vision of the world determines philosophical foundations of the curriculum and closely correlates with a particular model of the society desired or envisioned and the purpose of education for it. Educational activities then get specified in learning objectives, skills and competences – both major-specific and higher-level learning outcomes. The content and learning materials, a set of teaching methods appropriate for achieving desired outcomes, as well as assessment criteria and practices consistent with them.

Given that nowadays it is very difficult to envisage how our society will evolve and which will be the people’s future learning needs, we could consider that a modern curriculum should educate for dealing with this systemic lifelong uncertainty.

The very nature of knowledge is changing, too: it is becoming more fragmented and distributed; most of it is being constructed through collaborative contributions in open source scenarios. Thus, it is becoming more and more difficult to merely transmit it as content. If accepted that content is not the same than knowledge, and that some kind of mediation is needed to transform information or content into new knowledge, then content cannot be anymore the central point of the curriculum. This calls for a balance between the current practice of early specialization and a consideration of the growing role for general education – an emerging trend resonant with liberal art college education.

In this changing learning environment, pedagogical methodologies are in particular need for innovation – so much that some people call for “disruptive pedagogies”: a buzzword that is worth of good debate.

As for the current general assessment methods, they have a grading purpose, so testing is the most utilized assessment technique. With a resonance to the growing PISA tensions, there is an intensive search for new quantitative indicators that could advance schools to a more prestigious position. In this context, formative assessment is clearly undervalued and deserves a thoughtful discussion about its role the new curriculum.