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Reshaping professional learning in the social media landscape: theories, practices and challenges

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Editorial

Stefania Manca, Maria Ranieri***

Reshaping professional learning in the social media landscape: theories, practices and challenges

This special issue is devoted to the theme "Reshaping professional learning in the social media landscape: theories, practices and challenges". The rise of social media has been one of the most significant phenomena to emerge in recent years and concerns not only their near ubiquitous use by young people, but also their widespread adoption by adults for a range of purposes.

Social media use is also starting to transcend casual everyday life and permeate the workplace and its practices (Cook & Pachler, 2012). According to a Pew Research Center survey on social media in the workplace (Olmstead, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016), these digital platforms can potentially improve worker productivity by nurturing connections with counterparts and resources around the globe, supporting the gathering of information to help solve work-related problems and strengthening personal relationships among co-work-

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ers. Moreover, the convergence of mobile technologies and social media is drastically changing the prevalent form of digital communication: users are increasingly sharing information anywhere, anyhow, anytime, transforming bilateral interactions into mobile and networked communication among distributed individuals (Pimmer & Tulenko, 2015).

Considering the networked learning perspective, we have seen for some time how virtual communities can provide meaningful connections for individuals and yield significant benefits, such as increased satisfaction in the workplace and opportunities for social commentary. Today, social technologies offer the potential for improving and expanding traditional models of professional learning (McLoughlin, 2016). Studies of informal learning on social network platforms suggest, for instance, that participation in online communities leads to significant networking functions and contributes to social capital increase (boyd & Ellison, 2007). From this perspective, some authors have shown that participation in social networking sites has a positive impact on teachers' professional learning as it affords different types of social capital development (Ranieri, Manca, & Fini, 2012). By the same token, they have also reported challenges regarding the negotiation of personal and professional identities (Fox & Bird, 2017). Other authors have investigated the impact of social media on digital scholarship, both in terms of networked participatory scholarship (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2012) and as social scholarship that seeks to leverage social media affordances and potential values to evolve the ways in which scholarship is undertaken in academia (Greenhow & Gleason, 2014).

Despite the dynamic scenario outlined above, relatively little study has been undertaken into how and why professionals employ social media platforms to build learning networks, share professional ideas and engage in collaborative projects. In response, this special issue explores the potential of social media and associated practices for supporting informal, professional and work-based learning in a variety of professional contexts, including education, academia and healthcare.

Using the concept of professional identity work, Mona Lundin, Annika Lantz-Andersson and Thomas Hillman, in *"Teachers' reshap-*

ing of professional identity in a thematic FB-group", investigate teachers' thematic Facebook groups to uncover the norms teachers adopt to position themselves as legitimate community members and as professional teachers. The study reveals how teachers negotiate, dispute and debate their work and instructional practices in discussion threads, revealing that these activities mostly take place in threads that generate fewer likes and more comments.

In "*Educating social scholars: examining novice researchers' practices with social media*", Christine M. Greenhow, Benjamin Gleason, Holly Marich and K. Bret Staudt Willet investigate how novice researchers understand and practice social scholarship via social media, especially through the creation of spaces for research collaboration, dissemination, and evaluation of impact. The authors point out that only a few dimensions of the four-level model of scholarship (discovery, integration, teaching and application) are actually understood by young researchers, and that institutional policies need to be adopted to broaden the understanding of scholarly practices.

An investigation of social media as a broad definition that encompasses Open Educational Resources is the topic of "*Rethinking professional learning in higher education: a study on how the use of Open Educational Resources triggers the adoption of Open Educational Practice*" by Heli Kaatrakoski, Allison Littlejohn and Nina Hood. The authors find that educators who have adopted Open Educational Practice (OEP) meet challenges associated to conventional forms of education at scale with new and emerging open forms of education enabled through the implementation of OER.

In "*#any use? What do we know about how teachers and doctors learn through social media use?*", Alison Fox and Terese Bird consider recent literature in an effort to map the landscape of academic study on how teachers and doctors learn through social media. They find that although there is a growing professional interest in social media in these professions, there is a need for a broader evidence base that would allow professionals to evaluate their social media use and counter popular societal concerns about teachers and doctors using these sites.

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Editorial

Ce numéro spécial est consacré à la thématique: "Repenser l'apprentissage professionnel dans les médias sociaux: théories, pratiques et

défis". Les médias sociaux ont connu une importante ascension ces dernières années: ils ont une présence quasi omniprésente dans le quotidien des jeunes et leur prise en main s'est même généralisée aux plus âgés, et ce à des fins multiples.

Leur utilisation commence à bouleverser la vie quotidienne ainsi qu'à s'immiscer dans le monde et les pratiques professionnelles (Cook & Pachler, 2012). Selon une enquête du "Pew Research Center" se consacrant aux médias sociaux utilisés sur le lieu de travail (Olmstead, Lampe & Ellison, 2016), ces plateformes numériques peuvent potentiellement améliorer la productivité des employés: (1) en permettant le lien avec leurs paires et les ressources à travers le monde entier; (2) en facilitant la collecte d'informations permettant la résolution de problèmes liés à leurs missions professionnelles; (3) et ce, tout en renforçant les relations personnelles entre les collaborateurs. De plus, la convergence des technologies mobiles et des médias sociaux modifie radicalement la forme dominante de la communication numérique; en effet, les utilisateurs partagent de plus en plus d'informations et ce, de partout, de multiples manières, à tout moment de la journée, en transformant les interactions bilatérales en communication mobile et en réseaux reliant des individus qui interagissent à distance (Pimmer et Tulenko, 2015).

Étant donnée la perspective d'apprentissage en réseau, nous avons vu depuis un certain temps comment les communautés virtuelles peuvent développer des liens significatifs entre les individus et générer d'importants bénéfices professionnels. Aujourd'hui, les technologies sociales ont le potentiel d'améliorer et d'élargir les modèles traditionnels d'apprentissage professionnel (McLoughlin, 2016). Les études sur l'apprentissage informel sur les plates-formes de réseaux sociaux suggèrent, par exemple, que la participation à des communautés en ligne entraîne des fonctions de réseautage importantes et contribue à l'augmentation du capital social (boyd & Ellison, 2007). C'est ainsi que certains auteurs ont montré que la participation aux réseaux sociaux a un impact positif sur l'apprentissage professionnel des enseignants et le développement du capital social (Ranieri, Manca & Fini, 2012). Ils ont aussi mis en évidence les défis concernant la négociation d'identités personnelles et professionnelles (Fox & Bird,

2017). D'autres chercheurs ont étudié l'impact des médias sociaux sur la "digital scholarship", que ce soit une "scholarship" de type participation aux réseaux sociaux (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2012) ou en tant que "scholarship" sociale qui cherche à tirer parti des opportunités des réseaux sociaux et des valeurs potentielles pour faire évoluer la manière dont la "scholarship" est exercée dans le milieu académique (Greenhow & Gleason, 2014).

Malgré l'effervescence autour des médias sociaux, relativement peu d'études ont été entreprises, à la fois sur la manière dont les professionnels utilisent les plateformes des médias sociaux – pour créer des réseaux d'apprentissage, partager des idées professionnelles et s'engager dans des projets collaboratifs –, et à la fois sur les raisons de ces usages. Ce numéro spécial permettra d'apporter une première réponse en explorant le potentiel des médias sociaux et des pratiques associées, notamment en ce qui concerne le développement de l'apprentissage informel, professionnel et la formation en situation de travail dans divers contextes professionnels (éducation, enseignement supérieurs et santé).

Editoriale

Questo numero è dedicato al tema "Riconfigurare l'apprendimento professionale nello spazio dei social media: teorie, pratiche e sfide". Lo sviluppo dei social media è stato uno dei fenomeni più significativi degli ultimi anni e riguarda non solo l'ampia diffusione di queste piattaforme tra i giovani, ma anche la loro crescente adozione da parte degli adulti per una varietà di scopi.

L'uso dei social media sta anche cominciando ad oltrepassare la sfera della vita quotidiana, entrando a far parte delle esperienze professionali (Cook & Pachler, 2012). Secondo un sondaggio del Pew Research Center sui social media nei luoghi di lavoro (Olmstead, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016), le piattaforme social hanno il potenziale di migliorare la produttività dei lavoratori alimentando le connessioni con partner e risorse in tutto il mondo, supportando la raccolta di informazioni per risolvere problemi legati al lavoro e rafforzando i rapporti personali tra colleghi.

Inoltre, la convergenza delle tecnologie mobili e dei social media sta cambiando radicalmente le modalità più comuni di comunicazione digitale: gli utenti tendono a condividere sempre più le informazioni ovunque e in qualsiasi momento, trasformando interazioni biunivoche in comunicazioni reticolari tra individui distribuiti (Pimmer & Tulenko, 2015).

Se la ricerca sull'apprendimento in rete ha da tempo mostrato come le comunità virtuali possano favorire lo sviluppo di connessioni significative tra le persone producendo benefici quali una maggiore soddisfazione sul posto di lavoro e maggiori opportunità di confronto, oggi le tecnologie social offrono la possibilità di migliorare e ampliare i modelli tradizionali di apprendimento professionale (McLoughlin, 2016). Gli studi sull'apprendimento informale nelle piattaforme di social network suggeriscono, ad esempio, che la partecipazione alle comunità online svolge importanti funzioni di networking e contribuisce alla crescita del capitale sociale (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Da questa prospettiva alcuni autori hanno mostrato come la partecipazione alle reti sociali abbia un impatto positivo sull'apprendimento professionale degli insegnanti in quanto supporta lo sviluppo di diverse forme di capitale sociale (Ranieri, Manca, & Fini, 2012); tuttavia, accanto ai benefici, si registrano anche importanti sfide legate alla negoziazione dell'identità personale e professionale (Fox & Bird, 2017). Altri autori hanno esplorato il modo in cui i social media stanno influenzando la digital scholarship, sia nei termini di pratiche accademiche sempre più partecipative e reticolari (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2012), sia come potenzialità dei social media per trasformare le modalità in cui la scholarship viene praticata nel mondo accademico (Greenhow & Gleason, 2014).

Nonostante la dinamicità dello scenario appena descritto, sono ancora carenti gli studi tesi ad indagare come e perché i professionisti utilizzino le piattaforme social per costruire reti di apprendimento, condividere idee relative all'esperienza professionale e collaborare a progetti comuni. Questo numero ha indagato il potenziale dei social media e delle pratiche ad essi associate per il supporto all'apprendimento informale, professionale e lavorativo in vari contesti professionali, tra cui la scuola, l'università e l'ambito medico.