**“Cultural-historical psychology today: research challenges & practical perspectives”**

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**Title - Present - day education at times of crisis. Aims and projects**

*Education and instruction in Italy. Some data form the last OCSE report. 2. Education as a trasformative activity at times of crisis. 3. The Historical-cultural perspective in education. 4. Our project. 5.References*

*Education and instruction in Italy. Some data form the last OCSE report.* As the OCSE 2018 report stresses, digitalization is the main factor providing seminal innovation processes. As a consequence in many fields at a time of our life new needs and demands are emerging, which researchers in education are expecially called to identify, or at least to try to do that. At the same time, the present-day pandemia has developed all over the world major attention toward the collective welfare, as it is generally commented upon in the press and the media, devising an intrinsec revolution among the learners of the school for future as well as in the general attitude toward our society. This gives the opportunity for observing that a psychological transformation of humans required by educational needs, imposed by a sovranational demand will be a new aim for today’s psychologists and pedagogists willing to change things. The overall dissemination of the Cultural- historical- and of the Activity- theory- approaches demonstrates their relevance for education and instruction. Both conceptions focus on education, in the frame of social and collective experience, as generative of higher, human, levels of psychic functioning (Vygotskij L.S. 1931/60).

2. *Education as a trasformative activity at times of crisis*. The specific nature of educational work, implying in itself a revolutionary transformation of the existing living beings, focuses the attention of researchers in the field of change and transformation.

Unfortunately the recent coronavirus pandemia gave clear evidence of the negative consequences that systematic subtracting financial support from the research in the majority of the countries, commonly referred to as civilized, has brought about. This statement is primarily referred to our country, Italy. Therefore seems the development of collectively shared education a prior way, improving social consciousness (Vygotskij L.S. 1925) of the younger generations, supposed to facilitate them to cope with the contemporary crisis.

Some positions, referring to the aforementioned approaches to education, have to be analysed also in relation to the present-day dramatic migration’s movements. Evaluating the actual state of Cultural-Historical theory and Activity Theory approach it seems important to start with the consideration that *education* is expected to have prioritarian meaning and should be *consistently identified and taken into account.* Nonetheless the same approach was formulated as a methodological background, with possible applications in various fields,such as: clinical psychology, special education, psychology, arts.  
 Leont’ev and his formalization of the concept of human activity as a *generator of conscience* underlies the latter as typical acquisition of the human psyche (Leont’ev A.N.1975). Argumenting upon the concept of teaching/ learning, as connected in its genesis with the cultural-historical traditions and at the same time with the social collective practice, our team intend to elaborate with students the opportunity to identify the springs for the successful further development of the person. The latter can in no case be thought as being cut off from social experience, and from the need to carefully considere and assess the features of the particular concrete relationships of human behavior with the surrounding social practice.

The understanding of human learning as causally related with human productive activities, as is explained by the analyzed conceptions, provide a strong potential for a successful transforming the meaning of the traditional instruction in the societal context.

*3. The Historical-cultural perspective in education.* All European countries,Italy as well, are facing a similar new trend - to understand the processes of change in human social history. The process of transforming specific conditions of life is not just an individual purpose, but becomes a general requirement aimed at bringing about changes in a more general space.

In fact, it underlines the specific nature of educational work and focuses the attention of researchers in the field of education and re-education of the yougsters from now on.

Something similar to the general frame of the position of intelligenzija in the Soviet Union after revolution of 1917, with,probably, less expectations toward the political perspectives of a new society.

The same changes in the attending school and in the organizing didactic at distance required at present by the pandemia involve the adoption of a typology for schooling bringing about different forms of interactions betweeng learners and teachers and among learners. The overall widespread attempts of inclusion implemented by educational institutions, in the collective experience of the class as a group, a community that has to cope with new, or different, or «others», nowadays always present due to the migrations characterising this era, will probably result less effective.To Davydov, as already to Vygotskij, human thought develops,starting from collective forms of interaction, interindividually, and only on the basis of these is directed towards intrasubjective ones.

From that moment on, the higher level of consciousness increases to the top of personality, becoming self-awareness with the addition of a personal meaning, or sense, corresponding to whatever social meanings. [see Leont'ev, 16]

The cognitive process identified by Davydov as “theoretical/scientific thinking", derived from a criticism of Vygotsky's conception, concerning the acquisition of generalization on the basis of training. It stems also from a close cooperation with the outstanding Russian epistemologist Il’enkov. [10].

The upper exposed conception by Davydov can be considered a concrete advancement in the explaining of the learning as a productive activity of man. This brought him to the most extended definition of learning in terms of “a general form of human life”. [5-p.74 sgg.]

Substantially, if the conception of learning proposed by historical-cultural psychology of the Activity has identified the dynamic nodes of the internalization of social forms, of their passage from outside to inside, which come to constitute consciousness [see Leont'ev, 16], this conception paradoxically explains precisely the occurence of every type of learning, of its spontaneous processes actually taking place in the social, “on the street”, without no acquisition in formal institutions but anyway antecedent and sometimes very difficult to cope with.

From that time on, Davydov started engaging in the experimenting new forms of school learning and instruction, coming to the cooperation in the frame of the so called Davydov-Dneprov school reform .

Multiple trends in research were devised by him in a cooperation with a group of younger psychologists, mathematicians, physicists.

Concerning the concrete state of school-instruction he used to expose a personal observation, according to which in the school abitually the most disseminated form of activity is not learning, but general socialization, not intentionally activated in a formal situation.

Education for the future necessarily has to transform instruction identifying and taking into account organization of new available forms of learning, [5] able of involving general growth of personality in a collective dimension. As far as school education is concerned, among the more extended research, a couple of trends seem at the moment providing meaningful suggestions for the future organizing of compulsory instruction.

The perspective of the systematic experimental work on the collective actions in groups by Rubzov and the longitudinal experience monitored by Zuckerman and Venger. Both of them result from multiannual analysis of school didactical observations and empirical experimentations.

As promising scholar of the famous MIFI, Rubtsov [[1]](#footnote-0) started analysing the effects of the joint action in childhood in the frame of the principle of “additionality”. The seminal contribution of the latter, as he states, was the focus upon the unavoidable transformation added in whatever situation by the incoming of a new observer.

He found evidence of the dynamics in joint learning groups, generating an effective collective typology of the learning context. In the latter, specific actions take place for solving problems, based on meaningful generalization. A precise list of traits define the psychological processes activated by the learners, which become indicators of the effective strategy, or also “model” of the solving activity. These are Concreteness, systematicity, generalization. [20;21]

In sum a generalized meaning has to be prioritarian in the different models. And the entire procedure is based on the construction by every of the participant of this generalizing model, by means of discussing the model proposed by the other. This type of teaching/learning activity requires a specific care for organizing the learners in the group, providing different roles to be performed in turnover by each of the participant. Among the learners a debate is generated about the content, which abitually moves from a contradiction of the given data in comparison with the possessed knowledge. As methods for generating discussions among the learners conflicts are created.

A consideration of the advancement of the present - day research acquisitions in the frame of the historical cultural psychology at the MSUPE (Moscow State University for Psychology and Education) has to mention a research, on a design by Davydov. A longitudinal research going on for a decennial is in itself a selten event in psychology. It went on during the entire process of the primary and junior middle instruction in two classes in a school of Moscow. It gave evidence of the improving of the reflexion in the learners of the experimental classes, regularly engaged from the beginning of the instruction in activity research. The experimenting, aimed at the formation of the individual authonomy in learning was realized by the same teachers in the experimental school[[2]](#footnote-1), monitored by G. Zuckermann as psychologist.[40]

Research activity, the lacking of which in life was, to Davydov, source and symptoms of disease, is the true inclusive form of instruction, since it bypasses formal distinctions among teaching and learning persons. A research process has to be based on the discovery of new, when the available knowledge is not inough for coping with new problems.

May be the major dissemination of the collective forms of education and instruction predisposed by the evidence obtained in the frame of the Historical cultural psychology will stimulate more human resources and financial granting for expanding these activities in the school over the world.

In fact, it underlines the specific nature of educational work, in itself a revolutionary transformation of the existing living beings and focuses the attention of researchers in the field of education and re-education in the light of a general process of social transformation.

1. *Our project.* As far as our concrete activity with the students and the magister students of the programmes in Pedagogy and education of the Sapienza is concerned, at the moment our major concern is inclusion and internationalization.International agreements were stipulated to favor and increase research collaboration, pedagogical studies and joint congressual activities and led to the organizing of joint Master's Degree course, to offer young students from different academies further knowledge on common themes and research options in an international perspective and with a comparative approach. Since the master's degrees weres established, in 2010-2011 with MSUPE and 2014-2015 with NCFU, many students of these universities have completed courses and achieved a double degree in Sapienza, as some Italian students did at the prestigious University of Moscow MSUPE. On this topic we published a special anthology which appeared at the beginning this year, meant to review the positions and studies that individual teachers from the different universities involved, presented in recent years, during online courses, in the lecturing, in the meetings and to discuss their possible opportunities. The volume puts forward this programme, to spread its structure, the theoretical assumptions and the various positions. The contributions are meant to testify a keen interest in internationalization that Sapienza is carrying out. The contributions collected give the reader a chance to share a common interest in the promising approach implied by the Historical-cultural trend in Psychology and Pedagogy of the Vygotskij's thought, which seems a must in psycho-pedagogical reflections, and in organizing and evaluating school activities.

This will be the topic of the speech of my colleague of Pedagogical research Guido Benvenuto. Who will follow now.

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1. In an issue of this Journal Kudrjavzev, [13-p.106-121] carried out an interview “Sociogenesis of Joint Actionꓽ Mutual Understanding between Individuals as a Pre-condition for Understanding Things”to Rubtsov. He explained how he was brought to the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, where he succeded to Davydov as Director coming from the outstanding Moscow Institute of Physics (MIFI), place of his first formation. Davydov was looking for a scholar able of conceivimg a programme of physics for primary school. This interview was edited also in Italian. [2-pp.13-44] [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. The research was supported by more than a grant from countries of the former Soviet Union and by InternatIonal Research grantsꓽ the RGNF010600133,030600446,0707284,2A601 “Open Society”, 161 /1998 Res. Support Scheme of the Open Society Prague, 1995-1996 Social Science Curriculum Development Scholarship Int. Res. And Exchange Board 2001-2002, and 2001-2002 Fullbright Scholarship. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)