

Comments on cantoni

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COMMENTS ON CANTONI

The idea of studying the double path from education to communication and from communication to education is surely one of the possibilities we have for clarifying the relationship between these two really important dimensions of human life and culture. The problem here, accepting this kind of conceptual frame, is the risk of two opposite reductionisms.

The first one is a “pedagogic” reductionism, according to which communication means basically a set of tools, media, technological devices. We can find here an implicit psychology (Bruner 1996) at work. Its focus is a merely instrumental comprehension of human activity in the world: if our aim is to use things around us for satisfying our needs, then media are tools allowing us to do that.

On the other side we can configure another reductionism, we can name it a “communicational” reductionism. Here the basic idea is that education could be one of the application fields of the paradigm of communication: but this is not different from what happens for other applications such as playing, advertising, and so on. Here we have a different implicit psychology: according to it, introducing the media (particularly new media) in education means to change structure and functions of the human activities, and of education among them.

These are two strong and arrogant ideas; each of them tries to determine the other one without any space for mediation: education declares the subalternity of communication, reducing it to a system of tools; communication, on the other side, highlights the irrelevance of education, thinking of it only as one of its own effects.

Furthermore, conceptualizing communication and education in this way, implies the adoption of two different epistemologies; better, it means to consider communication and education as two separate scientific domains. On the contrary it should be better to imagine that com-

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munication and education are different aspects of a new research field (Rivoltella 2005). This implies almost two effects.

First, according to this perspective we are forced to change our idea of the sciences of communication and education. According to that, we need to abandon the idea of this science such as a *suitcase-object*, into which we can put either communication or education; on the contrary we must think of it as a *frontier-object*, arising in the area of both communication and education (Jacquinot-Delaunay 2002). So we need to consider this new epistemology not only as an addition of communication and education frames: we can name this new research field in different ways (Pedagogy of Media, Media Education), but the real important thing is to think about it as an integrated domain between education and communication.

Secondly, we must re-consider our way of thinking about communication and education as activities. Communication is no more only the area of media production; at the same time, we cannot consider education only like a very serious activity into which we can “do things with words”. What we mean here is that, traditionally, communication is considered only as a business, and education only as a very boring thing where someone is speaking and others are listening to him. The challenge here is to imagine a new form of activity – some colleagues talk about edu-communication – that could allow to project and circulate new formats and products.

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