University didactics, innovation and inclusion
Assessment and feedback

In the last years, educational research has explored new territories in the realm of assessment, focussing on the relationship between assessment, educational design and learning. The point of reference to this line of investigation is responsibility, democracy and equity (Ibarra-Sàiz et al., 2020).

A «holistic and transformational education», «an action-oriented, transformative pedagogy, which supports self-directed learning, participation and collaboration, problem-orientation, inter- and transdisciplinarity and the linking of formal and informal learning» (UNESCO, 2017, p. 7) is indispensable.

The models students learn with are different from the ones of the past, as different is the organization of knowledge that is no longer a single corpus already validated and defined, but it is a fluid, liquid and open object. Knowledge is characterized by the presence of multiple fragments (cognitive, experiential, emotional, aesthetic). They require aggregation into networks of meanings that are constructed in context in the recursive interaction between teacher and students (Rivoltella & Rossi, 2019a; 2019b; Rossi et al., 2018). Presently, professional trajectories require a different kind of care and preparation, since we need to support professionals who can deal with the unpredictability and changeability of work contexts, with professional profiles that do not yet exist and that will have to be invented and designed by the very students who attend universities today (Martindale, 2017). The relationships between experience and knowledge and between theory and practice appear as recursive, overcoming the linear and hierarchical paths of the past. The debate on university didactics is first and foremost the debate on didactic innovation, on new models of knowledge, on digital processes that are modifying ways of being and thinking.

In this fluid and constantly changing landscape, university should ask itself how to rethink assessment as an essential element of instructional action in the recursiveness between design, action, and documentation (Rossi & Pentucci, 2021). Thus, instructional design should rethink assessment practices not only as tools to assess learning, but as devices to encourage and promote learning (Grion & Serbati, 2019).

Such a perspective requires a strong synergy between learning objectives, teaching approaches and assessment strategies, sensitive to the opportunities and limitations of the situation (UNESCO, 2017, p. 51), enhancing formative assessment (OECD CERI, 2008), which becomes trans-formative (Torrance, 2012; Popham, 2008). It also requires, within the framework of the transition from *assessment of learning* to *assessment for learning* and *assessment as learning* (UNESCO, 2017, p. 51; Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013) the aware and situationally transparent use of a mix of traditional assessment methods and more reflective methods, such as self-assessment and peer-assessment. In this respect, we bring the student's attention to the processes of personal transformation, critical and deep learning, and the achievement of the cross-cutting goals of sustainability and citizenship (UNESCO, 2017, p. 57).

Finally, it requires a circular and recursive comparison between *feedbacks* offered by educators, feedbacks offered by peers, and self-assessment processes using rubrics and portfolios stimulating reflective processes (Winstone & Carless, 2019; Nicol, 2020; Boud & Dawson, 2021; Rossi et al., 2018, 2021; Giannandrea, 2009, 2019; Coggi & Ricchiardi, 2018; Laici, 2021; Laici & Pentucci, 2019; 2021). In fact, feedback from simple teacher commentary, commentary on a performance, or correction on an assignment, i.e., "feedback as telling" (Sadler, 2010) becomes a recursive and open-ended process (Laici, 2021). Such feedback personally engages students in activities in which they themselves request and seek feedback, fully understand its meaning, and can use the information about their work or approach to learning in productive and progressive ways over time (Winstone & Carless, 2019).

If the purposes of evaluation and feedback change, then practices must also be rethought, experimenting with a different synergy between goals and means and new modes of action that modify contexts and the didactic action. Parallel to this is the reflection on the support that technologies can give: often the very possibility of evaluating and providing feedback in real time or in a timely manner is given only by digital technology.

Starting from these reflections and accepting the challenges, supported also by the centrality of the theme in the current debate, this week we want to stimulate further questions, sketch possible answers but trace sustainable and inclusive paths for a real innovation in university didactics.

The call we are launching will animate the **International Conference** to be held from **5 October to7 October 2022**, as part of the **7th Week of Excellence**. Contributions for the International Conference may focus on the following themes:

Research on assessment and feedback

- How do we **move beyond an approach to feedback viewed as teacher commentary**, as "feedback as telling" (Sadler, 2010) and progressively view it as a **recursive open-ended process** that focuses on what the student understands about the feedback, how he actively interprets it and use it for improvement in relation to present and future tasks, progressively developing self-assessment, self-regulation, and learning to make increasingly autonomous judgments (Winstone & Carless, 2019)?

- How can we promote the **Feedback Literacy** of teachers and students, that is, to put students in a position to understand what feedback is, bestow meaning upon information, know how to manage the relational aspects and make a productive use of it oriented to improvement and self-regulation in a logic of co-responsibility with the teacher and peers (Sutton, 2012; Carless & Boud, 2018)? In parallel, how to enable the teacher to orchestrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes to design feedback in a way that fosters students' understanding, activation, and productive use of feedback (Carless & Winstone, 2020)? How can we promote greater involvement of **undergraduate students** in feedback processes and knowledge co-construction and revision in the logic of an effective lecturer-student partnership (Ranieri, Rossi, Panciroli, 2021)?

- How can **technologies**, including those exploring artificial intelligence and robotics (Lehmann & Rossi, 2020), support feedback processes and in particular active student engagement even in large classes? How can they foster not only the ability to receive but also to generate feedback and use it productively? How does the use of digital feedback highlight the emergence of a hybrid mode, characterized not so much by alternating in-person and remote situations, but by the synchronic use of digital and analog?

- How should we set up a **digital educational ecosystem** (Krämer, 2007; Gütl & Chang, 2008; Väljataga et al, 2020) based on feedback as a generative and constitutive device of the didactic action in the different cognitive, intrapersonal, interpersonal dimensions (Fishman & Dede, 2016)? How do we achieve in a digital educational ecosystem didactics that goes beyond the space of the classroom and the time of the lecture, through the aggregation of technological resources both properly designed for teaching and generalist but rethought to meet training needs and interaction between students and teachers (Rossi & Pentucci, 2021)?

Research topics

- The aforementioned themes will be explored from the perspective of both general didactics and disciplinary didactics. The role of feedback fits into the complexity and fluidity of teaching-learning processes in different disciplinary tracks where there is a strong synergy between learning objectives, teaching approaches, and evaluative strategies. Research in mathematics education has highlighted the role of feedback both in the formulation of the notion of competence (D'Amore, 2003; Fandiño Pinilla, 2003) and as an underlying dimension of assessment (Fandiño Pinilla, 2002). Models of formative assessment in mathematics have been developed around the notion of feedback according to the declinations of different authors (Black & William, 2009; William & Thompson, 2007) also in digital environments (Albano & Dello Iacono, Perri, 2020; Aldon, Cusi, Morselli, Panero, & Sabena, 2017; Cusi, Morselli, & Sabena, 2017).

- If the purposes of assessment and feedback change, this change must also be understood in inclusive terms. Practices must be rethought, experimenting with a different synergy between goals and means and new modes of action to support the success of all students. We think of inclusive evaluation as a strategic opportunity to rethink structured pathways that allow students, including those with Special Educational Needs, to acquire the necessary tools to choose and implement their educational pathway autonomously.

Aims

- How can we invest in professionalization, in the role of collaboration and shared experimentation among colleagues and in the opportunities that **Teaching and Learning Centers** can offer, in the perspective of building a shared institutional culture of evaluation and feedback as an element of innovation in university teaching?

In the parallel panels of the **International Conference**, we will discuss the contributions that will be available to all participants at http://3i4u.unimc.it/assessment-feedback-2022 after September 19, 2022.

All those interested in formulating proposals or describing experiments related to the above themes are invited to send a contribution in the form of a long abstract (min 5,000 max 7,000 characters including spaces, references excluded) by August 31, 2022.

To send the abstract please use the form and template available at the following link: https://forms.gle/hTUHZJBh546zSn1F7

Those interested may subsequently submit the **full paper** (25,000 characters including spaces) by **January 10, 2023**. Accepted papers, after review, will be published in the first issue of Education Science & Society (Anvur class A for disciplinary sectors 11/D1, 11/D2) in 2023.

For information:
3i4u@unimc.it
didunimc@gmail.com