

EDITORIALE

DIGITAL LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

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The study of learning and knowledge management has attracted the attention of a large number of organizational scholars. One of the main tenets emerging from extant literature is that organizations' capabilities of using and improving their knowledge stocks represent an important driver for superior performances in different sectors (Grant, 1996; Inkinen, 2016; Wu, Chen, 2014). For example, scholars agree that how organizations manage knowledge stocks across their departments or units affect their ability to support innovation, which is fundamental to successfully compete in contemporary markets (e.g., Palacios, Gil, Garrigos, 2009; Phelps, Heidl, Wadhwa, 2012). Similarly, organizational process and practices aimed at developing new skills and disseminating knowledge and information among employees are key to create a breeding ground for innovation as well as for coping with continuously changing environment (e.g., Chien, Tsai, 2012; Lee, Kim, Kim, 2012). In this perspective, this topic has represented a fertile field both on the academic side and on the managerial one.

Recent advancements in digital technologies have induced significant changes that affect organizational life in diverse realms and at different levels. For example, they have blurred the boundaries between work and non-work domains, thus becoming pervasive of personal everyday life and inducing both positive and negative consequences in terms of experienced well-being and work-life balance (Barley, Meyerson, Grodal, 2011). Moreover, the rapid pace of technological innovation, adoption and disruption has contributed to increasing the complexity of the contemporary economic scenario in which organizations operate (North, Maier, Haas, 2018; Schwa, 2016). Indeed, new digital technologies have reduced dramatically the span of life cycles of products and services, thus urging managers to make decisions more quickly and sustain continuous innovation processes in order to adapt fast and proactively to continuous changes in business models and consumer preferences. Such a technological (r)evolution has also impacted the way that work is structured and carried out, posing several challenges in redesigning workplace, work processes, and even work contents and relationships (Colbert, Yee, George, 2016; Dery, Ina, van der Meulen 2017).

Organizations are in the midst of such a reflection that involves several aspects of their functioning, from selection processes to organizational design solutions. In this vein, several questions emerge about what learning and knowledge management processes are more suited to cope with contemporary challenges and fast-paced changing contextual conditions.

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Indeed, new technologies require new competencies and skills in the workforce and, thus, organizations should design effective processes and practices that could sustain the acquisition, development and sharing of all the relevant and necessary skills, knowledge, and competences among their employees. To this end, some paradoxes seem to emerge. For example, while recent advances in technologies in machine learning and big data analysis seem to reduce the role of human intervention in knowledge transfer processes, their functioning is in some cases dependent on the presence of intense and dense interactions among individuals keen on sharing information and knowledge (Ferrazzi, 2014). In addition, while digital technologies improve group or community learning by means of increasingly sophisticated platforms and devices, new technologies seem also to foster an individualistic approach to work, which emphasizes how each worker should personalize his/her own learning space, so to obtain access to information and knowledge that are relevant for personal goals and needs, not necessarily coherent and aligned with organizational ones (Li, Herd, 2017; Yen et alii, 2018).

Within this complex - and sometimes contradictory - evolving framework, a new approach to knowledge management is required, as well as a specific attention has to be devoted to learning processes in organizational contexts. In particular, different aspects of organizing need to be put on the fore of discussion since rethinking learning and knowledge management processes has several organizational implications, which go further the technological dimension of the problem and representing a precondition for an appropriate evaluation of the technological aspects. Indeed, they imply specific reflection on elements regarding human resource management and its practices, organizational culture and structure.

Following these considerations, we invited scholars to contribute to this Special Issue, which aims at providing a deep reflection on how organizations are dealing with the previously discussed issues so to enrich the debate among scholars interested in such a field and offer stimula for future increasingly interactions with researchers engaged on the technological perspective and the learning dynamics.

The resulting Issue consists of five manuscripts, which have endured competition and judicious review process. Some of the included papers come from the XXI Italian Workshop of Organization Scholars held at the University of Milan in February 2020, others submitted papers came from different disciplinary areas, confirming the relevance of the research proposal among the hot questions at the heart of the organizations, which asks for diversified approaches..

Taken together, they depict an original and relevant snapshot of the complexity of learning and knowledge management processes in contemporary organizations. Analyzing the general theme of learning and knowledge management in different contexts as well as with different methodologies, they offer interesting contributions to deepen this crucial and always more engaging challenging.

The first paper, that is offered to the public of this Journal, is proposed by Lapo Mola, Renata Kaminska, Natalie Richebe and Andrea Carugati and is entitled "The dynamics of digitizing the internal communication: the regulation process of

mandated Enterprise Social Networking System (ESNS). Authors start underlying that in nowadays knowledge intensive organizations – like IT companies and consultancy firms - knowledge sharing process and collaboration represent key success factors for competing in a dynamic business environment. In large organization characterized by distributed settings, managers need to develop tools and technique that can allow employees and teams dispersed in different geographical area to collaborate and share data, information and knowledge in order to avoid reworks and inconsistencies among projects. In this perspective, the research introduced in the paper aims to understand the mechanisms and the tension between the organization that mandate the use of certain technology and the actors that are supposed to adopt it. The preliminary findings show that three different strategies, which they defined as parallel use strategy; overuse strategy; and tolerant strategy, can be put in place in order to align existing practices and the new logics introduced by the new tools and propose first interesting considerations.

The second manuscript, is entitled “Employee skills and digital transformation: preliminary insights from a case study” and has as coauthors Gianluca Prezioso, Federica Ceci and Stefano Za, The researchers consider that recent technological innovations are reshaping the work-life and the workplace. Advances in automation and information and communication technology (ICT) and underline that this drove scholars to identify the skills required for a competitive workforce. Following this stream, they analysed empirical data, collected from a multinational firm, through the lenses of the situational awareness approach, with the aim of investigating managers’ awareness about the relevance of digital skills to undertake a digitalization processes and whether this awareness differs across departments within the same organization. This study leads to three main contributions: (i) managers consider it essential to have a clear digital strategy in order to undertake digital transformation initiatives; (ii) managers consider it quite relevant to implement proper training initiatives both for acquiring and maintaining DS inside the organization and for fostering informal learning among senior experts and new employees; (iii) regardless of the business department, managers are often not properly aware of the DS required for a digital transformation process

The third contribution is focused on learning processes, supported by technologies. It is entitled “The E-Learning of entrepreneurial skills through Practice Management and MOOCs. Projects, Perceptions and Perspectives” and it is written by Massimo Bianchi. It presents the first results of some projects developed using learning by doing in the creation of start-ups, through practice management by Simulimpresa. As the author explains, the purpose of these projects was to refine the teaching of entrepreneurial skills coupling the Practice Enterprise (PE) with the so called MOOCs, Massive Open On line Courses. Both approaches can be included in the category of innovative teaching stream, usually defined “Peer Learning” as an educational practice in which students interact to attain educational goals. In PE the challenge is the start of the enterprise start-up processes. The theoretical framework

is represented by connectivism and its relationships with cognitivism and behaviourism. The empirical field consists in experiences realized in Erasmus Projects. The research is based on the perceptions of students in the acquisition of entrepreneurial competences and develops on the comparison among results obtained in main functional units. Main findings concern the improvement of the teaching approach in digital learning according to the learners' functional destination, offering so a useful contribution to the debate on these topics.

The following paper is written by Christian Rainero and Giuseppe Modarelli. It proposes an in-depth analysis on "Empowering technology acceptance through the added value of urgency: teaching profession smart working case". The presented research is based on the near future for pervasive technologies in social practices and work context, fixing its pillars on a controversial debate related to the innovation acceptance under the light of the forth industrial revolution. The recent Covid-19 pandemic would shape the line of a new work environment, never experienced before with this wide spread: smart working. The authors would try to clarify at theoretical level the role of knowledge in innovation and evolution of civil society based on needs and problem-solving. The objective to shape a theoretical dorsal in which intersect empirical analysis (survey-based) on real smart-working experiences, would be strictly related to urgency conditions (as acceptance facilitator), due to the considerable one of the widest "social phenomenon" observable (Covid-19). In this sense, the authors make possible to investigate the relations between need, knowledge, urgency and smart-working acceptance among public sector teachers in Italy offering interesting insights on the role of quick learning as reinforcement for knowledge acquisition and management.

Finally, the last manuscript is proposed by Concetta Lucia Cristofaro, Marzia Ventura, Teresa Gentile and Rocco Reina and titled "Measuring Healthcare performance in digitalization era an empirical analysis". This work focuses on a specific sector, in which to contextualize implications of digitalization processes and their effects on learning for better professional practice. The field of performance has grown so much over the years that in the various organizational contexts the awareness and use of performance measurement systems has increased. This change occurs also in healthcare. Performance measurement emerged in healthcare organizations to better quantify the achievement of objectives, to evaluate overall performance and promote excellence. Meanwhile organizations have increasingly refined ICT technologies and data collection and flows, in order to better configure performance measurement systems for the organizational units and processes. The focus of this research is to better understand how health performance measurement can be supported in digitalization era; so the principle aim of this paper is to comprehend if and how digitalization can impact on measuring performance through an exploratory study on one specific hospital ward. In this case, the focus was on Academic Hospital of Catanzaro, where the performance measurement system was implemented in order to improve the quality of the offered services.

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