

Open Education 2030

Call for Vision Papers

School Education

Improving the use of our most powerful resources - towards a culture of self-regulated learning

Giuliana Dettori

We will be able to take advantage of Open Education in school if we first learn to use well our most powerful resources: our minds. This can be achieved by fostering self-regulated learning from early school up to professional training.

2030 - We all imagine open education fully blooming, after a few decades of development: plenty of resources and practices of the most diverse kinds at disposal, apt to put the learners at the centre of their learning process and provide them possibilities to flexibly delve from, and combine, formal offers and informal opportunities, based on their wishes, needs and previous experiences.

Good. But will learners actually be able to take advantage of such opportunities? Will teachers be able to exploit the available open resources to enrich their own classroom activities, yet providing space for their students' individual learning goals? Will open resources be developed in such a way to actually support students and teachers' activities with them? If students, teachers and open resources will remain as they are in 2013, the answer to these questions will likely be far from positive, no matter how numerous and technologically powerful open resources will be available: we cannot take for granted that students are instinctively able to manage their own learning, nor that teachers can easily manage to integrate open education with the complexity of classroom management, nor that (open) educational resources of any kind always support students and teachers in those complex tasks.

A solution to this problem is provided by self-regulated learning. This field of study has been increasingly active in the past couple of decades, giving rise to several approaches (see e.g. Boekaerts, Pintrich, Zeidner, 2000; Zimmerman 2001), and a large amount of literature on all the various aspects involved, as well as on the possible support to its practice and improvement provided by technology-enhanced learning environments of any kinds. No matter how self-regulation is defined by the various authors, there is general agreement that it involves strategic action, motivation and awareness of one's own learning goals, needs, thoughts and achievements, and that its final aim is to help learners make a better use of their (mental) resources.

The literature shows that learners' acquisition of self-regulation competence is not automatic nor does it take place in a short time, but requires suitable teaching and practice (Boekaerts, 1997). This competence is partially dependent on the learning context, which means that it cannot be fostered within a single course but should be practiced in a variety of contexts and in relation to different subjects and activities. The good news is that self-regulation, and in particular its self-reflection/self-awareness component, which is usually called metacognition, is accessible to children from early school years, including those with learning difficulties (Larkin, 2010) and can profitably be included in classroom instruction (Schunk &

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Zimmerman, 1998). Technological resources of any kind can contribute to foster the practice and development of self-regulation during learning activities if they facilitate strategic action, self-reflection, self-evaluation, monitoring of the activity against the expected achievements, motivation support (Dettori & Persico, 2011). Self-regulation is necessary not only to learn well in school but also to successfully deal with any profession; teachers, in particular, need it to cope with the variety of situations they face in the classroom (Paris & Winograd, 2001) and to adjust to curricular revisions and the fast evolution of technological and cultural tools at disposal.

Hence, in my vision of a flourishing open education in 2030 a central place is given to self-regulated learning, as a necessary means to put learners and teachers in condition to really take advantage of open education's opportunities and fulfil their goals. This entails giving explicit attention to the practice of self-regulation in any educational offer, from early ages up to professional training, and taking care that open resources be apt to support its practice. This vision is not outdated or trivial as we could be tempted to think: despite the very positive outcomes presented by the increasingly big number of studies in this field, self-regulation is still mostly disregarded in school learning; its inclusion in school education entails a deep revision of curricula and teaching practices, which cannot be left to the good will and creativity of single teachers but should involve educators and policy makers. Its adoption, on the other hand, appears crucial to give concreteness to the idea of "learners responsible for their own learning" and to prepare a widespread and profitable exploitation of open education by helping us to use at best our most powerful resources - our minds.

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