

Work contexts and promotion of collective knowledge: the NRPP as an opportunity

Contesti lavorativi e promozione di conoscenza collettiva: il PNRR come opportunità

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ABSTRACT

One of the interesting proposals of the American model of *humanistic management* is that innovation is possible only when freedom of expression is left to (and among) people in the framework of renewed responsibilities and when the development of participatory practices is aimed at increasing the value of the social and productive role of the worker (Pilotti, 2019), but also by creating shared knowledge (Castells, 2014). It is precisely the latter that finds an ally and promoter in the measures provided for in the PNRR, which thus become opportunities for the promotion of a new vision: *organizational knowledge* that, like people, is the only asset of value that is not perishable for work contexts.

ABSTRACT

Una delle proposte interessanti del modello americano dello *humanistic management* è che l'innovazione è possibile unicamente quando si lascia libertà espressiva alle (e tra le) persone nel quadro di rinnovate responsabilità e quando si mira allo sviluppo di prassi partecipative che consentano di accrescere il valore del ruolo sociale e produttivo del lavoratore (Pilotti, 2019), ma anche di creare conoscenza condivisa (Castells, 2014). Proprio quest'ultima trova un alleato e promotore nelle misure previste nel PNRR, che diventano così opportunità di promozione di una nuova visione: *conoscenze organizzative* che, come le persone, sono l'unico bene di valore non deperibile per i contesti lavorativi.

KEYWORDS / PAROLE CHIAVE

Work; Collective Knowledge; Pedagogy; Humanism; Generativity.
Lavoro; Conoscenza collettiva; Pedagogia; Umanesimo; Generatività.

1. ORGANISATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE

The growing interest in work contexts and in the pedagogical implications affecting workers, relational dynamics, training, and knowledge production have considerably fuelled research on the pedagogy of work and organisations in Italy as well. The promotion of collective knowledge, the production of the same, from a concept pertaining in the last hundred years to innovative corporate realities, has come to be a necessity for any organisation.

There are various types of knowledge, and various ways to produce, transmit and use it. Bengt-Åke Lundvall has proposed a distinction between different types of knowledge: knowing what (*know-what*), i.e. having knowledge of relevant facts, which is usually called information; knowing the why of things (*know-why*), i.e. having scientific knowledge of principles and laws of motion of nature, the human mind and society; to know how to do (*know-how*), i.e. to have the practical skills to do something and that reside not only in people but also, and above all, in organisations; and finally to know who does what (*know-who*), i.e. to be informed about who is capable of solving specific problems, which entails forming social relations with experts in order to access their knowledge and use it efficiently. Whereas *know-what* and *know-why* are codified knowledge, *know-how* and *know-who*, on the other hand, rest primarily on practical experience and apprenticeship, and thus on the transmission of knowledge from master to apprentice. They are therefore defined as *tacit*, as they are usually not documented or made explicit by those who use and control them. The fundamental aspect involved in the actual production of knowledge - one often hears of *corporate know-how* - is the transformation of knowledge from tacit to codified in a continuous process of knowledge accumulation.

In the recent past, many organisations have tried to guard their tacit knowledge and, through their ability to collect, process, simulate and reuse it, produce new knowledge. What does this have to do with the NRRP? This measure is nothing more than an epochal incentive to transformation, to progress and, therefore, this new era - the one we will call post-NRRP - will be strongly conditioned by the promotion of knowledge that companies have introduced in the recent past, but even more by how much they will be able to generate, through this measure, new knowledge(s).

2. NEW WORKING CONTEXTS AND COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

The new work contexts are certainly characterised by innovation, digitalisation, and the massive use of technology at the service of production and the improvement of the quality of the products/services offered. Precisely, technological, and organisational innovations imply a rewriting of the very social and identity content of the relationships that characterise work (Tullini, 2016, pp. 1-15). Cyber-Physical System (CPS), Big Data, additive technologies, IoT, IoS, machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI) and much more are terms that refer to «those 'enabling technologies' whose application is deemed sufficient to delineate the features of a 'revolution' in which the salient element is the explosive development of new digital infrastructures and the possibility of organising production even virtually, via the Internet, in *cyber-physical* environments that make it possible to overcome the rigidities of Fordism in parallel with the creation of knowledge with unprecedented power» (Pesenti & Scansani, 2021, p. 82).

For a correct view of future prospects and the developments that the NRRP measures will bring about, it should be noted that innovation is not mere progress but requires major change; even the transition to digital often has «little to do with technology and much to do with *mindset* and leadership skills» (Maestri, 2019, p. 103). It must be fully understood that among the future challenges, of today and tomorrow, there is the need to find a new

balance between two concomitant phenomena: firstly, «digital connection networks» that «have given a coup de grace to the boundaries that work to protect corporate organisational architectures», then «the breakdown of corporate perimeters» that «has taken away from the articulation of vertical powers [...] its legitimate foundation: the territory, on whose unitary basis every power has always been founded» (Celli, 2021, p. 56).

Work, therefore, despite innovation, digitalisation, and virtuality, is still a 'place' in which to find, first and foremost, freedom, i.e. a concrete opportunity for everyone to realise their own expressive dimension and participation. Work for Butera is, among other things, the interpretation of an open role also based on the responsibility for measurable results and the ability to manage relationships with people and technology (Butera, 2020, p. 376). There is, therefore, a changed protagonism of the person and an increasing involvement of the worker, a point of no small importance in the perspective of a pedagogy of work that must now confront the social transformations taking place, but above all with the transformations that have affected the school from March 2020 onwards. Indeed, the individual may, in part, emerge apparently strengthened. Both *hard skills* and *soft skills* assume importance. Overseas, where the neo-humanistic organizational approach (*Humanistic Management*) has been taking shape for a few decades, the assumptions are quite clear: «innovation is only possible when expressive freedom is left to (and among) people within the framework of renewed responsibilities and when we aim at the development of participatory practices that allow the value of the worker's social and productive role to increase» (Pesenti & Scansani, 2021, p. 96).

At the centre of the work experience is still the worker, the person at work, who, if on the one hand sees 'the classic relationship in contexts' partly rewritten, on the other hand is enriched with responsibility, training power, and participation. Businesses, schools, and organizations at work on the training front have already been confronting for years - and this phenomenon is growing daily - with wide-ranging issues concerning privacy and the safeguarding of company data and 'knowledge', all of which become priorities before the guarantee of wellbeing, relationships, responsibility, and participation. This happens because it is increasingly the knowledge generated, the 'secret recipes', the specificities built over time that represent the true product to be defended, the mother yeast from which every other product takes shape and on which it feeds.

3. NRRP AS AN OPPORTUNITY

The NRRP, a European measure launched because of the global crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic, is not one of the many opportunities of our time: it is *the opportunity*. This is because we are talking about the most important investment plan that Europe has ever put in place. The National Recovery and Resilience Plan includes 134 investments (235 if sub-investments are counted) and 63 reforms. It is developed along 16 components, functional to achieving the economic and social objectives defined in the Government's strategy. These components are grouped into 6 core Missions, which are:

- MISSION 1: Digitisation, innovation, competitiveness, culture and tourism;
- MISSION 2: Green Revolution and Ecological Transition;

- MISSION 3: Infrastructure for sustainable mobility;
- MISSION 4: Education and research;
- MISSION 5: Inclusion and cohesion;
- MISSION 6: Health.

Specifically, Missions 1 and 4 will have a major impact as opportunities for the creation and promotion of collective knowledge in workplaces, be they companies or more or less complex organisations.

The 26% of the total European *NextGenerationEU* funds are dedicated to Digital Transformation. In line with the European average, Italy has allocated 25% of the PNRR resources to the implementation of its Digital Transformation. This amounts to EUR 48 billion, of which EUR 40.7 billion is earmarked for the interventions of Mission 1 and the remainder divided among the other five Missions of which the Plan is composed. An important part of these funds (around 32 per cent) is eGovernment, with key interventions such as the digitisation of public services offered by local and central PAs, the innovation of internal PA processes, and of the judicial system; another important area of expenditure (27 per cent of the digital funds) is that for the digitisation of businesses, with tax credits made available for investments in capital goods, business innovation, and personnel training, overcoming the hyper-depreciation tool of the Industria 4.0 plan.

Also relevant are the strategic plans connected to the PNRR, namely:

- *Three-year plan for IT in PA*: indicates the lines of action to promote the digital transformation of the public sector and the country;
- *Digital Administration Code (CAD)*;
- *National Digital Skills Strategy*: First comprehensive strategy on digital skills in Italy, adopted in August 2020. It is directed by the Repubblica Digital Technical Steering Committee, coordinated by the Department for Digital Transformation. There are four axes of intervention: Higher Education and Training; Active Workforce; ICT Specialised Skills; Citizens. The objectives of the Strategy are to eliminate the gap with other European countries and to break down the digital divide between various areas of our national territory.
- *Strategic Programme for Artificial Intelligence*: In line with the European Strategy, the Programme outlines 24 policies to be implemented over the next three years to strengthen the AI system in Italy, through the creation and enhancement of AI skills, research, development programmes, and applications. These policies aim to make Italy a globally competitive AI centre by strengthening research and encouraging technology transfer.
- *Public Contracts Code*: with the enactment of Legislative Decree No. 36 of 31 March 2023, effective as of 1 July 2023, the text has been heavily overhauled, with important innovations introduced both in administrative matters (in particular, with the introduction of the principle of trust) and in technological and process aspects, e.g., with the digitisation of the entire life cycle of public contracts.

There are many challenges and opportunities in different sectors of the economy. The digitisation of the Public Administration is a central point, with targeted investments in Cloud migration and digital skills enhancement. Health Care, Cultural Heritage, Tourism, Primary Sector, Labour, Digital Identity, Space Economy, Supply Chain Finance,

Contract Logistics, Smart Buildings and Smart Cities are all involved, with objectives of innovation, sustainability, and technological development. The NRRP represents a valuable opportunity for the country's growth and progress, but also an opportunity, like any transformative measure, to generate knowledge (Kelly, 2017).

Indeed, the real issue will be to ensure that every investment looks far ahead and generates wealth, increasing its impact over time. This is only possible through the development of those work contexts within which knowledge increasingly occupies a prominent place. It is not a question of going back to talking about places where training enters by right and in the strict sense of the word, such as schools for example, but of all those realities where knowledge is the fruit of people's daily work and, through them and the investments of the NRRP, can self-generate and/or grow. The dawn of a new phase of participation capable of increasing the *generativity* of work (Mannese, 2020) and the human and professional expression of the person, thus raising the dignity of the worker, and promoting knowledge and relationships. More circulation and more sharing of knowledge means more participation and the latter, in turn, also presupposes renewed relationships based on trust and cooperation between people and between individual workers and the management to which they refer.

The project lines of the NRP thus become an opportunity to promote a new vision that re-starts from the generation of value, therefore, from shared knowledge, which is the only non-perishable asset for working contexts. If resources are channelled towards one-sided interventions of appropriate follow-up, they will be partly wasted resources (Boeri & Perotti, 2023), if instead they produce non-perishable assets, such as knowledge (Fernbach & Light, 2020), corporate know-how, new and different competences, then an important page, if not a new chapter, of the post-NRRP era can be written.

Training (of workers), in the end, will also have to look beyond the goal of transition (mostly digital) to build useful skills, before soft or hard. Training workers capable of producing value (Torlone, 2021) means procuring the most valuable asset for companies, which, of course, are people. There is in fact «a close connection between experience, self-training, eco-training and the development of the subject's identity» (Pallozzi & Tumino, 2022, p. 209), understood as professional identity. «The subject constructs his/her own professional self-education through a process of autonomous and personal elaboration of knowledge and knowledge starting from the problem and experience that always takes place in an ecoformative context. The ecoformative environment today is also the one offered by the Internet and by access to Big Data» (Ibid.); this opens, therefore, to a space of innovation that will be proper to the NRRP and that will personally involve workers, companies, organisations, communities, therefore, the entire country in a process of growth and therefore training (Malavasi, 2022).

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