



**8TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF  
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**CONFERENCE  
PROCEEDINGS**

**SEVILLE (SPAIN)  
16-18 NOVEMBER 2015**



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## WELCOME INTRODUCTION

Dear ICERI2015 participants,

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to this eighth edition of ICERI.

*"Facing the challenges of Education"* is the main theme of this year's ICERI, as it sets the agenda for an in-depth discussion of the most important questions facing those in education today: How education should be provided? What are the newest learning methodologies? How can we learn in an innovative way? In a world of rapid technological changes, how can we adapt to the changes in its due time?

All these questions and many more will be debated in the different interactive and thematic sessions. They will provide an excellent opportunity to acquire skills and get new ideas from different perspectives and innovative approaches in education around the world.

Every year, ICERI intends to bring together educational experts from all corners of the world. This year, it is a pleasure to welcome over 600 participants from more than 75 countries world-wide. This will ensure an international atmosphere that will enrich the conference program and networking activities.

We hope that joining ICERI2015 will provide you with an opportunity to share your experiences, learn from other educational innovations and meet new colleagues for future cooperation.

Thank you very much for your participation at ICERI2015. We hope you enjoy your time with us!

Thank you very much for your valuable contribution to ICERI2015!

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# COSMOPOLITAN EDUCATION IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: COMPARING THREE DIFFERENT HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

With massive changes in the contemporary culture, cosmopolitanism emerges as a new ideology in our societies, holding that all human beings on this globe belong to a mutual community with a shared morality. This new cosmopolitan syntax of reality has thus generated an experiential space and perception of one world. This experience of one world, in the meanwhile, is connected with an increasing awareness of the differences between cultures where our own world-of-life inhabits. However, on the one hand, the experience of one world, when influenced by neoliberalism which favors uniformity, is at the risk of homogenization, unable to foster a pluriverse where unity emerges out of and through differences. On the other, the increasing awareness of cultural differences, as closely related to the perception of one world, is likely to provoke self-encapsulation into one's own cultural tradition, disconnecting from other traditions. Therefore, a major challenge in contemporary scenarios is how to balance between the two counteractive forces of globalization/universality and plurality/particularism. A possible way to overcome this challenge is perhaps, as proposed by Gerald Delanty (2012) [1], through creating communicative models of world openness and understanding the cosmopolitan culture as one of self-problematization.

This paper takes a cosmopolitan cultural lens to look in higher education in different cultures. The Authors adopt the life-long learning paradigm and the intercultural pedagogy as the conceptual framework to describe and compare three higher educational systems in the U.S., China, and Italy, with a focus on their organizational, cultural and didactical aspects. By underlining the similarities and differences among these three higher education systems, this paper aims to understand how they impact on adult education in multicultural societies, highlighting demographic and psychosocial barriers to learning, and trends, issues and innovations in educational practices. This paper is thus significant in integrating cross-cultural studies and the international transferability of knowledge and human resources in the adult education research arena.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism; higher education; life-long learning; intercultural approach.

## 1 COSMOPOLITANISM IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: WHO NEEDS HIGHER EDUCATION?

### 1.1 Cosmopolitanism as a new way of thinking

The cosmopolitanism of the new massive change societies produced an experiential space and a horizon of perception of one world (Delanty, 2012) [1]. At the same time, this experience of one world—according to which events from all over the globe impact on and (almost) immediately concern one's own dealings with one's own world-of-life—is not disconnected from an increase in an awareness of the differences between cultures inhabiting our one and only world. On the one hand, instead of being a factor of world openness, the experience of one world can turn out to be just the outcome of a perverse homogenization due to neoliberalism (which imposes tendentially uniform lifestyles); on the other, far from being a driving force to foster a sort of 'pluriverse,' where unity emerges out of and through differences, the increased awareness of cultural differences can provoke a kind of selfencapsulation into one's own cultural tradition, living in it in a monadic way, as un-related to other

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<sup>1</sup> The paper was written by all Authors. Specifically, Maria Rosaria Strollo wrote the first paragraph (1 COSMOPOLITANISM IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: WHO NEEDS HIGHER EDUCATION?), while Alessandra Romano wrote the second paragraph (2 THREE DIFFERENT HIGHER EDUCATIONAL MODELS). Marie Volpe and Mingyan Hu supervised the work, giving their scientific perspectives and contribution, adding comments and viewpoints. Finally, the resource for the second paragraph and the figures 1-2-3 is Marie Volpe's oral presentation on July, 31, 2015 at Teachers College, Columbia University.

traditions. A major challenge in contemporary scenarios, therefore, is how to escape the stranglehold of 'globalization and universality, on the one side, and plurality and particularism on the other'. As proposed by Gerald Delanty (2012) [1], a possible way out is through promoting the creation and articulation of communicative models of world openness and to move to a cosmopolitan culture understood as "one of self-problematization". As David Hansen (2011) [2] argues, we need to construe education not only in terms of socialization (as the time-honored process of drawing the young into a way of life and equipping them to sustain it), but also in terms of new forms of understanding, undergoing, and moving in the world. To this end, educational strategies should be designed to allow people to shuttle between and interweave what Hansen (2011) [2] defines as a *reflective loyalty to the known* (that is, to one's own culture) and a *reflective openness to the new*. By articulating these two dimensions, a cosmopolitan culture should also operate in the direction of the promotion of more inclusive societies. This paper intends to investigate this topic focusing on the challenges it raises for educational theory and practice.

### 1.1.1 What means the cosmopolitanism (Delanty, 2012) [1] in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

The Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are to face the new problems of the globalization (and for new problems there should be new solutions), to create the conditions for adapting to change, developing critical thinking skills and improved interpersonal/communications skills in this smaller world, with hundred and hundred billions of information to process. The only constant today is change: technology is increasing faster than we can keep up with it; and we are faced with new challenges for which there is no precedent. We cannot draw on solutions we used to use in the 20th century because the problems we face are new - or we have to 'think outside the box', and there are new competencies that will be needed in the 21st century. While we always needed these competencies:

1. analytic skills (Finger, Volpe, Asun, 1995) [3], as critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, ability of research and inquiry
2. interpersonal skills (Finger, Volpe, Asun, 1995) [3], as communication, collaboration, leadership and responsibility, team building, and ability to execute, such as initiative, productivity, self-direction
3. information processing skills (Finger, Volpe, Asun, 1995) [3], like information literacy, media literacy, digital citizenship, ICT operation
4. capacity for change (Finger, Volpe, Asun, 1995) [3], as creativity, innovation, adaptive learning (learn to learn and to be flexible).

All of these competencies are now heightened as never before because change is so rapid, technology is increasing so fast it is hard to keep up with it and because we live in a global multi-cultural world. The educational systems should prepare students about all this stuff.

A conceptual understanding of globalization and internationalization is needed to make sense of the varied and complex ways they are affecting higher education in the United States and worldwide. In broad terms, globalization refers to trends in higher education that have cross-national implications. These include mass higher education; a global marketplace for students, faculty, and highly educated personnel; and the global reach of the new Internet-based technologies, among others. Internationalization refers to the specific policies and initiatives of countries and individual academic institutions or systems to deal with global trends (Romano, in press) [4]. Examples of internationalization activities include policies relating to recruitment of foreign students, collaboration with academic institutions or systems in other countries, and the establishment of branch campuses abroad.

Deep inequalities undergird many of the current trends in globalization and internationalization in higher education, and they too need to be understood as part of the picture. A few countries dominate global scientific systems, primarily multinational corporations or academic institutions in the major Western industrialized nations own the new technologies, and the domination of English creates advantages for the countries that use English as the medium of instruction and research. All this means that the developing countries find themselves dependent on the major academic superpowers (Altbach, 2010) [5].

With the economic crisis of 2008–2009, Colleges and universities were forced to adjust to a variety of shortfalls in anticipated revenues, but deeper structural changes were virtually impossible. Now, the current crisis has made it far more difficult to address the long-term weaknesses of American higher education (Geiger, 2010) [6].

The fall in endowment values had the greatest impact on the wealthiest institutions, since they support a larger share of their budgets with endowment income (Vidal, 2013) [7]. The wealthiest institutions upheld the highest standards of US science, scholarship, and graduate education. Thus, the research capacity of the US most distinguished universities will be frozen for some time. Selective private colleges and universities have become more dependent on student tuition and fees. Public universities in many states have faced severe cuts in appropriations. However, public tuitions have been rising steeply, especially since 2000 (Vidal, 2013) [7]. The economic downturn has caused students to downgrade their educational aspirations and educational spending. Thus, students have opted for public universities instead of private ones, for regional institutions instead of flagships, for two-year instead of four-year programs, for commuting instead of attending a residential college. This race to lower costs has increased demand for places at regional public universities and community colleges at a time when their resources are being reduced (Dumay, 2010) [8]. These practices simultaneously broadened the market for high-quality education (increasing demand) and bolstered quality as well by ensuring the recruitment of top students (Geiger, 2010) [6].

US universities are recognized for excellence in all aspects of academic research and graduate education. Yet, American higher education has a far more equivocal record in recent years for educating young people in keeping with a knowledge society and a democratic polity. The United States no longer leads the world in the proportion of young people graduating from college, as it did until late in the 20th century (Geiger, 2010) [6].

The economic downturn of 2008–2009 will exaggerate the fundamental problems facing American higher education and make them more difficult to address, let alone reverse or attenuate. The most distinguished American universities, which largely support scientific excellence, have ceased to expand their research capacity. Federal research funding has been artificially inflated with stimulus funds (Geiger, 2010) [6].

Worldwide, two major transformations in higher education are simultaneously under way. Many scholarly and media accounts of these two changes present them as polar opposites, creating more conflict than harmony within the university. The first trend, often considered pedestrian, is the unprecedented expansion and massification of higher education in most nations. The second trend is the rise and flourishing of what can be called the *super research university* (Baker, 2010) [9], mostly in the United States but increasingly now a model aspired to by many research universities throughout the world. The model for the American super research university has become attractive to many other nations. From this model, policymakers identify factors to mimic — including faculty working conditions, competitiveness-based governmental support for research, a large private sector, and so forth. What is frequently missed in this approach is the exceptional societal support the United States has been able to generate for education—particularly in general and higher education (Baker, 2010) [9]. The United States has achieved this model, first through a comprehensive system of secondary education that provides graduates with aspirations and expectations for more education and, second, through a relatively open and comprehensive higher education system. This has led to the belief in American society that the university, particularly the super research university, is not an elitist or esoteric enterprise but rather a remarkably democratic and useful institution. The fact that so many Americans attend and have deep connections to institutions of higher education in all of their many types translates into wide societal support for the costs of super research universities, even if only a small proportion of Americans attend one of the highly selective research institutions. The super research university model is an expensive one to pursue, requiring a wealthy society. Private money now makes up substantial funding in the United States. Many super research universities are privately controlled. The American case illustrates that mass access to higher education and the model of the super research university in reality support one another.

International students are now a significant factor in U.S. higher education. Maybe a half million foreign students spend more than \$11 billion on tuition and living expenses. Relatively few receive scholarships or other support from American institutions or agencies. Foreign students are concentrated in a relatively small number of U.S. colleges and universities (Altbach, 2010) [5].

The flows of students overseas move largely from the developing countries to the industrialized nations. Just 15 percent of foreign students in the United States come from Europe. The large majority come from developing countries — 55 percent from Asia (although Japan ranks number three). China has more than 10 percent of the total number of international students in the United States. There has been considerable stability in these patterns over time for the United States (Altbach, 2010) [5]. In Europe, the situation has changed. As the Student Mobility study points out, there has been considerable growth in intra-European mobility in such European Union programs as ERASMUS and

SOCRATES. They are central to the EU's efforts to build a sense of European unity and encourage integration in education and in the labor market. Recently, the EU has pledged to harmonize degree structures and programs so that it will be easier for European students to transfer from one university to another, as it is common in the United States (Altbach, 2010) [5].

The three elements of this tectonic shift can be summarized as public good vs. private good, high tuition and high aid, and send the masses to the community colleges. While the United States retains its position as the major host country for international students, it is losing its dominance. European and Commonwealth countries have clear policy goals to enhance internationalization and improve their competitive position as destinations for students and as sponsors of international degree programs. The United States has no such policy and no national commitment to internationalization (Altbach, 2010) [5].

Two useful studies, funded by the Ford Foundation and undertaken by the American Council on Education (ACE) (Hayward, 2000; 2001) [10] [11], examine patterns of internationalization in U.S. higher education, and attitudes about international issues and campus-based international programs among high school students and the general public. Three quarters of college graduates reported foreign travel. Seventeen percent reported fluency in another language, and 98 percent of the high school students polled reported that they had studied a foreign language in primary or secondary school. The public, as reflected in the ACE survey, is very supportive of foreign language instruction in higher education, and even more strongly favors courses that focus on international issues (Hayward, 2000; 2001) [10] [11].

Globalization and internationalization are now central issues for higher education worldwide. The United States is a major exporter of education — from standardized tests such as the Graduate Record Exam to U.S.-style management education — and it benefits tremendously from the 547,000 students from other countries attending higher education institutions in the United States (Altbach, 2010) [5]. The United States has a huge educational advantage at the postsecondary level. Not only is it by far the largest academic system in the world, but it is widely perceived as being the best. It is highly unusual for a country to claim both the mass market and the elite market, but in higher education this is the case. Further, the United States has advantages not only in its traditional colleges and universities but also in the ancillary education markets such as testing, specialized training, the control of knowledge networks (such as Lexus-Nexus), and others. The American higher education system is not only large, it is also diverse and efficient (Altbach, 2010) [5]. There are educational providers serving every type and level of study—from prestigious research-based graduate schools to community colleges. Specialized trade schools provide training to meet specific needs, from computer technicians to architectural design. Few niche markets exist in the United States for foreign institutions to serve. Further, with few exceptions, there is no shortage of places in the American system for students. While the competition is fierce for the top undergraduate colleges and universities, and for admission to the best medical, law, and business schools, qualified students can gain admission to an institution in their field of interest—even if not necessarily at top-ranked institutions. Interestingly, in those few fields where capacity is limited in the United States, such as medical education, Americans who cannot gain entry at home go abroad to study. Foreign medical schools have not, however, entered the U.S. market. It is unlikely that foreign providers will be able to succeed in penetrating this large and diverse educational market.

Most American academic institutions, public and private, are dependent on enrollments to survive and prosper, and thus they have learned how to locate students. U.S. colleges and universities are both efficient and market-savvy. They tend to be nimble in figuring out their niche in the system and in offering programs that will appeal to their particular audience. When interests shift, so, too, do institutional priorities. The English language also helps to ensure American academic dominance. English is the world language of science and scholarship, and English is increasingly the language of instruction overseas. While there is a market for education in English in many countries, there is no market in America for education in other languages (Altbach, 2010) [5].

Entering the U.S. higher education market would be very expensive for foreign providers. Local institutions generally have good facilities, and foreign schools would need to make major investments in facilities, marketing, staffing, and the like. Few local institutions in the United States would see an advantage in partnering with foreign schools to set up joint programs.

The United States remains the number one international study destination for intelligent students from across the world—in particular from India, China, and Korea, the big three sources of international students globally. In the long term, little doubt exists that US higher education will remain extremely

attractive to foreign talent—due to the academic quality of a large number of its research universities; the legacy of a relatively open society for immigrants; and America's still-brilliant, if slightly tarnished, reputation as a land of opportunity. In sum, there are already signs that the world market for student talent is shifting to the benefit of the United States' competitors, and in bad economic times we may find that shift accelerating. Currently, the United States remains a good performer in attracting the world's growing cadre of international students to its graduate and professional schools, although it could do much better, and its once-dominant position is eroding (Douglass, Edelstein, 2010) [12]. Yet, it is an underperformer at the first-degree level, when compared to its competitors. Perhaps most importantly, the United States lacks a strategic approach to capitalizing on the global pool of mobile students.

So what has changed? Two macro trends help explain the shift: growing demand and increased competition. One is about the global demand for higher education, which is creating a surge in the number of students seeking an international experience in higher education. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimates 135 million students in tertiary education worldwide, a number doubled over the last 10 years, with huge increases in Asia and across Europe, especially. More students are seeking to study outside their home countries (Dumay, 2010) [8].

The second trend is about new competitors: developed and developing nations are improving their higher education systems, seeking to raise the international profile and attractiveness of their universities, and integrating higher education into their domestic and foreign policy initiatives. Consequently, new competitors for international students have emerged in a market once dominated by the United States and a select group of largely English-speaking nations. Meanwhile, most European Union nations and countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Japan have retained and, in some cases, expanded their market share of international students. The United Kingdom, France, and Germany continue to attract large numbers of international students; and relative newcomers with high growth in the past decade include Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the Netherlands, Japan, and China. In the United Kingdom, for example, international students now produce some 10 percent of the entire income of the higher education system, while in Australia they fund some 15 percent of all income for the national universities. New Zealand also relies heavily on international students to support its national higher education system; Japan is attempting to follow a similar path (Dumay, 2010) [8].

Evolving notions of workforce development is another important key factor. Canada and the Netherlands, for instance, are openly using higher education to attract and retain highly educated immigrants. They — along with Japan, New Zealand, Australia, and most of Europe — are all experiencing declines in population and are thus recruiting and enrolling more international students as a means to remain economically competitive (Dumay, 2010) [8].

Over the past decades, international students who gained a doctorate increasingly chose to stay in the United States. As more students came to the United States, more of them stayed and entered the job market. Their presence has markedly influenced technological innovation and the overall competitiveness of the US economy (Douglass, Edelstein, 2010) [12].

But this past success story also indicates vulnerabilities in the ability of the United States, and other major national providers like the United Kingdom, to continue to be dominant. Citizens of China, India, South Korea, and Taiwan secured about 20 percent of all doctorates in the United States in 2007. In a sign that this pattern may be unsustainable, the United States and other developed economies with mature higher education systems are experiencing the new phenomenon of declining stay rates. The market for international students is only one dimension of the larger problem of adapting the university to globalization and the global economy. The United States lacks key components of an international strategy for its higher education sector and has assumed that its premier position in past decades will simply be retained. We do not think in that direction and do believe the Obama administration needs a much more proactive strategy at the national, state, and institutional level to recruit foreign students (Dumay, 2010) [8].

Here are some of our recommendations to US policymakers. First, the central administration needs to elaborate a national policy on higher education as a critical national resource in the global economy that must attract talented students and scholars from abroad and prepare Americans to be competent professionals and leaders in an international context.

We also urge the development of national strategic goals for international student enrollments at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and link them to broader policy objectives in areas such as foreign relations, national economic development, and educational attainment. We suggest a goal to

double international student enrollments in the United States to 1.25 million by 2020, with emphasis on increasing the percentage of undergraduate students and on public-sector institutions (Douglass, Edelstein, 2010) [12].

There's the real need to increase financial aid for foreign students via grants, scholarships, loans, and paid work.

The federal government, along with smart state and local governments, can greatly support marketing US higher education internationally, with the goal of creating a more friendly and supportive environment for students to apply and enroll in US universities and colleges. The real need is to improve the availability of information within an international market often crowded with multiple, often profit-minded ventures. And finally, the US strategy should include an effort to diversify the national origin of international students to anticipate new markets for talented students in the future. The United States is, in short, too dependent on only a few major providers of international students.

### *1.1.2 What happened in the other part of the world?*

For several decades Italy has been changing its demographic and cultural shape. The proportion of foreigners currently present in Italian country is 8.1% - one every 12 inhabitants - equal to 4,922,085 people. Although the trend of migration flows in 2013, because of the crisis, slowed somewhat by an increase in internal migration to other countries, the presence of foreigners has become a structural reality. In Italy, students immigrated, who according to the processing of the data analysis produced by the Ministry of Education and the Foundation ISMU, during the school year 2012/2013 were totaled 786,630 units, or 8.8% of total enrollment, of which 47.2% is the second generation, they are more likely to incur irregular paths, starting from the delay to the non admission. According to the report, 38.2% of all pupils foreigners who attended the Italian school is in a situation of delay school. The more one ascends to upper school levels, the more discomfort one experiences. The immigrated children of primary schools who are losing their academic year are 16.3%, 44.1% of immigrated young people who are attending the secondary school level are risking to be rejected at school, 67.1% of immigrated people who are attending secondary school degree are risking to be rejected (compare with Italian people attending the same degree that reach 24%). The most critical elements are registered in the secondary school level where the risk of social segregation is expressed in the choice of fields of study mostly directed towards technical and vocational training and poorly towards high schools, focusing in particular address scientific. About 20% of non-Italian citizenship children, attended high school, compared with 43.9% of Italian citizenship students; 38.5% of non-Italian young attend technical institutes against 33.4% of Italians, 38.6% of the vocational schools, compared to 18,9% of Italian peers (data from Italian Ministry of Education, 2014).

Compared to the processes of social integration of young people from immigrant families, the family as an index of social capital can be configured both as a promotional resource and as a negative agent with respect to the results of success or failure in school and more deeply to the processes of inclusion or exclusion. The diversity of family models and of migration experiences does not always guarantee the necessary conditions of containment and support in the growth process. Factors such as insecurity, loneliness, the trauma of migration can adversely affect the life paths (Grasso, 2015) [13]. Politics and society must take charge of equalization of future Italian citizens and school acts as a driver of inclusion and support to students but also to their families, through opportunities for active participation.

What about the changing governance of the Italian schooling system in times of crisis? In particular, standards of input and standards of outcomes are becoming objects of value for the spending containment and assessment. There's an ongoing standardization that are changing the ecology of educational practice (Landri, 2012) [14]. Ten years after the policy of school autonomy a governance of standards, data and performance is emerging albeit the direction of the current changes is not yet irreversible. The economic crisis, the stagnation in the growth prospects in the Eurozone, the difficulties of implementation of lifelong learning policies are determining a number of effects on the operating modes of the educational organization that it is appropriate to assess in the short and medium-long term. The crisis modifies the conditions that make possible the educational activities; it acts, that is, on the conditions of performativity of educational practices, but, in a deeper way, has effect on the defining perimeters and, therefore, on the constitutive rules, of what is defined as education. The financial and economic crisis that began in 2007 is considered the most serious of the contemporary capitalism and by far the deepest since the Great Depression of 1929. The responses, and especially the perception of the crisis, they can change considerably from country to country. In the Italian case, the dramatization of the crisis showed Italian population to be in the midst of a difficult

situation on financial markets, while the whole of the community policies, scientific communities took note that the sovereign debt is under attack and that the spread between German bunds and Italian government debt threatens to make unsustainable in the long run the government debt situation. As regards education, accountability of individual schools is increased (based on the evidence of INVALSI test), calling for a restructuring program for those schools with unsatisfactory results; it would enhance the role of teachers (by raising, for over five years, teaching commitment and salary level relative); it would introduce a new system of selection and recruitment (Landri, 2014) [15]. Schools ought to be made more accountable through the trials INVALSI (testing learning standardized nationally) and action is taken to restructure those with low performance. The performance indicators become obligatory point of passage (a lever) to transform an inefficient system in an efficient system. It is to determine, in addition, a strong link between accountability of schools, teacher quality (determined by reference to capacity to improve the performance of the test INVALSI). Measurability and objectivity of the measures INVALSI are mobilized (among other reforms that the government is committed to implement) to increase the reliability of the system of education. The dramatization of the financial crisis become matters of fact, it translates into a policy of standardization of educational practice and can be read, in some ways, as a way of deepening of 'neo-liberal agenda in the Italian school'. Standardization is a signal for control of the educational practice and related costs and tends to make it more visible, accountable and controllable (on the level of spending) from the viewpoint of public governance, the black-box schools. In this game, the worlds of professional school see move the governance of the institutional field to a new form of state evaluator that develops in connection with the construction of the transnational European area of education (Landri, 2014) [15].

Strollo questions about how Italian schools can «respond to the needs of globalization and interculture, which are imposing an abandonment of all forms of fundamentalism in favour of a pluralistic vision of the religious and moral world?» (Strollo, 2013, p. 25) [16]. Italy managed «to do something exactly to Catholics: it has given them a taste of earthly sovereignty to be shared with the people, with the civic virtues that it involves» (Strollo, 2013, p. 38) [16]. In terms of «globalization, religion urges 'faith' to mutual comparison, imposing co-existence, tolerance, openness, and dialogue on them, and requiring not a defensive or attacking reinterpretation of each of them, but asking them to be more problematically open, starting from the experience of the sacred. [...] What is required is to read religion as a problem rather than a certainty, living it in a dialogue with other creeds and irreligious and atheistic positions. However, the heuristic attitude towards religion does not imply a rejection of belonging. [...] the task of schools should be the promotion of tolerance, doubt, dialogue, openness to other forms of the religious phenomenon, urging not only the recognition of differences and their legitimacy, but also a work of comparison and integration between different confessions, in a collaborative perspective open to listening and dialogue» (Strollo, p. 38-39) [16]. The religious issue seems to be a specifically Italian educational system problem, which is not so relevant for other countries. Religion seems to be the educational ideology in Italian schools.

## 2 THREE DIFFERENT HIGHER EDUCATIONAL MODELS

### 2.1 Adult Learning Theory and adult education

Looking at educational systems in three different countries, Italy, the U.S. and China – from the viewpoints of educators, administrators and students can be an interesting sharing of our multiple perspectives, in the hope that it can lead us to new insights, new ideas and new ways of thinking about teaching and learning.

Mezirow (1991) [17] distinguishes among different *levels of learning*: These levels are distinct rather than sequential. In other words, each level focuses on the development of specific either basic and higher order skills.

- Instrumental Learning: Focuses on the development of needed basic skills. These are standardized skills we all need to function in society. They are rote, repetitive skills that we must all do in exactly the same way; like driving a car, reading music, flying a plane, turning knobs in a power plant, etc., they all require precision and there can be no deviation.
- Dialogic Learning: Focuses on the development of higher order skills, such as problem solving, idea generation, conflict resolution, influencing others and effective interpersonal skills. Development is contingent upon engaging in dialog with others.

- Transformative Learning: Focuses on changing individual perspectives by challenging long held assumptions that underlie our beliefs and values, and through critical reflection reaching a new and fuller understanding of our world.

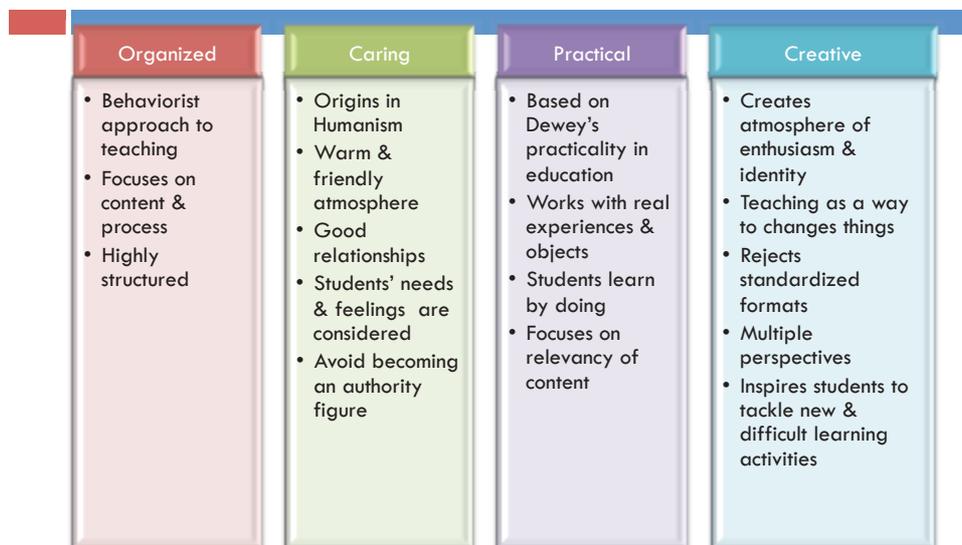
Each of these levels have implications for how we teach and the methods we use. For example, the instrumental level is concerned with the development of basic skills or firm content such as physics or math with lectures, where there is no room or place for discussion or different opinions. Thus this level prizes conformity. The role of the educator on this level is that of teacher or trainer imparting information to students and/or participants.

The dialogic level focuses on the development of higher order skills, such as: critical thinking, divergent thinking, conflict resolution, negotiations skills, etc. This kind of learning occurs through discussion with others. When we share our opinions and perspectives and if we are open and authentic, we begin to see the perspectives of others and that process heightens and even changes our own opinion. The most sophisticated level of learning is what is called transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997, 2000) [18] [19]. On this level, the individual experiences some sort of disorienting dilemma, some devastating occurrence, some terrible situation. Experiencing such a dilemma provides us the opportunity to begin to challenge our assumptions about the situation, ourselves in the context of the situation we are experiencing. This self-reflection holds the potential to completely reframe how we view our world and ourselves in the context of how we interact with the world.

If people developed all through the lifespan then they will have to continue to learn, because each stage of life presents the need to learn and opportunities for learning. This assumption gave birth to adult learning theory, that is the theory that focuses on how adults learn. There are different perspectives about learning, as we have seen before, so each of these perspectives resulted in adult education or the practice of training and developing people in schools, in the workplace, in society.

Teachers are critically important in influencing not only what we learn but how we learn, and Schon (1987) [20] reminds us that teachers should be reflective practitioners. no matter what level of learning they are seeking to develop. Cranton (2011) [21] describes four types of teachers: The Organized teacher, The Caring Teacher, The Practical Teacher and the Creative Teacher. Figure 1, below, more fully describes the characteristics associated with each of these types.

## Types of Teachers/Facilitators



Extracted from Patricia Cranton (2001), "Becoming an Authentic Teacher," Krieger Publishing, Malabar, Fla.

Figure 1

As can be seen from Figure 1 above, The organized teacher focuses on context and not discussion of content while the Caring and Practical teachers are more focused on the development of higher order skills and the Creative teacher can lead students to some transformation in their thinking and view of their world.

Education at the upper levels in the U.S. is based on Adult Learning Theory; a theory devoted to understanding how adults learn that is only about 50+ years old. This theory has as its genesis the work of Malcolm Knowles (1980) [22] known as the Father of Adult Learning and Education. Knowles is the first to make the distinction between how adults learn versus how children learn. This distinction has implication for the teaching and learning of adults and children. The primary distinction lies in the fact that adults bring their reservoir of experience to the learning while children are repositories of learning on the precipice of building their store of experience. The significance of this difference is that if teachers in a classroom of adult students or a trainer in a workshop fail to recognize and draw on the experience of their adult students and participants, the adult attendees will not become fully engaged in the intended learning. Thus, not recognizing the experience adults bring to the learning negates the potential contribution of the adult and results in the disengagement in the learning process. The US educational system is based on what has been explained as adult learning theory. The adult learning theory refers to how people look at educational processes and at their construction of knowledge. This theory has a great influence on teaching methods, especially in colleges and universities and even in middle schools and grammar schools in the three countries. Adult education is the practical side of the adult learning theories.

Italian and Chinese students learning strategies are not necessarily self-directed in classroom, also because they defer teachers as experts, and adopt rote learning and memorization since their primary and secondary schools. The evaluation criteria are those of the performance, with exams, and occasionally assigned essays not opinion based. In US, however, students learning methods are usually self-directed, and they try to challenge teachers' and parents' assumptions and perspectives: students learn through exchanges with teacher and dialogue with others, always seek multiple answers.

The tuition and the fees for university in Italy and in China are between two and ten thousands of euros per year, while in America it can be higher: that's because American Universities are private corporations and require high costs tuition for being admitted and registered. However, this does not mean anything about the quality of the education, of the teaching and learning, but maybe, it impacts on the facilities and on the resources and materials available for students. Let's go to the methods of the classroom of teaching: in Italy and in China the most spread way of teaching in class is lecture-based, with limited group work, while in US the lecture is only for content, and there's a focus on group work. There are not necessarily prescribed textbooks, but more recommended readings and abundant library resources. This wouldn't be a generalization: in Italian academia there's a deep openness to new and more dialogical teaching and experiential methodologies. Just think about the experience of the Lepe Lab at University of Naples "Federico II" (Strollo, Romano, Galante, 2014; Strollo, Romano, 2015; Strollo, Vittoria, Romano, Brock, 2014; Strollo, De Simone, Romano, 2015) [23] [24] [25] [26]: it is the Laboratory of Epistemology and Educational Practices where undergraduating and graduating students, and teachers can learn learning-teaching methodologies, problem-solving strategies, formative practices.

Every year more than sixty students attend it. Among the training activities of the LEPE Lab, there are:

- The Laboratory of Education to listening, where students have the possibility to experience the connections between music, body, attention to the others, empathy, silence and sounds. They could develop skills of meaningful listening, creativeness and critical thinking, and could gain awareness of themselves and of their physical and embedded perceptions. The activities of the Laboratory of Education to Listening are not a sort of Music Therapy, because they aimed to an educational and formative purpose. The methodologies which were used are exercises of attention to themselves and the others, exercises of imagination, exercises for hand writing mechanism, sound dramatization.
- The Hypertext workshops: the hypertext is a multifaceted individual presentation divided into three sections (formal, non-formal and informal learning). Students are asked to put some quotes and references from the books they studied in the previous years. Then they should create links with films and songs for the non-formal section, and finally they should put in the informal section life experiences and events. Thanks to the construction of hypertext students

can analyse the nexus and the connections between formal, non-formal and informal learning, comparing in a metacognitive perspective the knowledge acquired in each field of their life.

- The mindfulness workshops: the mindfulness workshops consist of six meeting of mindfulness exercises according to the ACT Protocol of mindfulness.
- The Theatre of the oppressed, that according to the dramatic methodologies by Augusto Boal (Strollo, Vittoria, Romano, Brock, 2014) [25], is an experience of problem-solving simulation starting against social injustices, prejudices, stereotypes and violence.

The diversity among the three systems is also in the distribution of power (see Figure 2):

## A typical US university structure

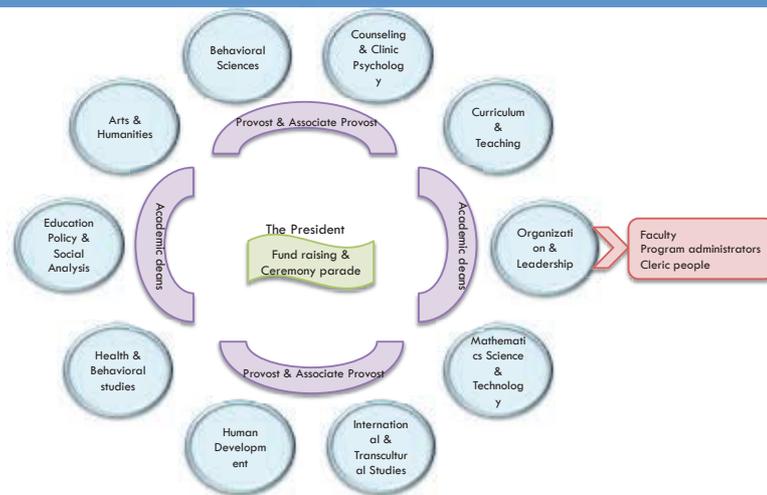


Figure 2

As it is represented in Figure 2, the power in a typical U.S. university is spread among the various program areas. In this scenario, faculty have power within their own areas. The program areas tend to operate as individual silos, collaborating and cooperating with other programs only when deemed in the best interest of two or more particular programs. This model is the opposite of a pyramid or a hierarchy, it is decentralized while the typical hierarchical matrix it is a centralized one.

## Power structure of a Chinese university

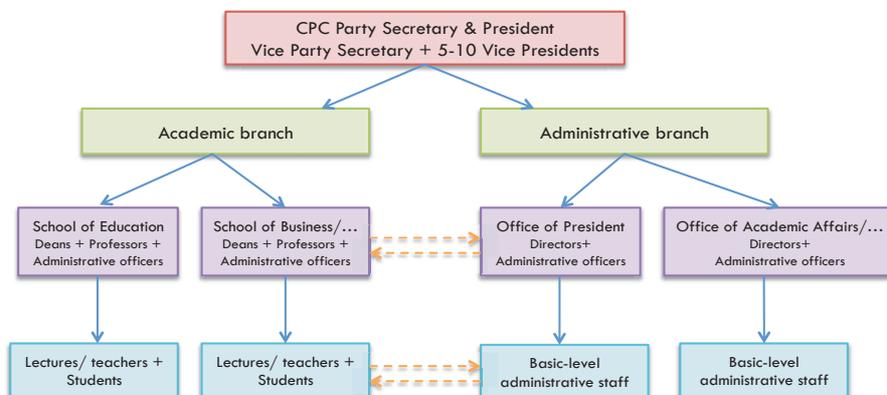


Figure 3

As we can see in the Figure 3 in this typical Chinese university power is centralized at the top. It is a hierarchical structure, like the military or the hospitals and like corporations and other organizations in the three countries. What all these organizations have in common is that with power at the top people at lower levels have less influence. Specifically, in the case of education, we see that since professors and teachers are several levels removed from power, they have less ability to influence curriculum and teaching methods.

Here there's the structure of an Italian University (see Figure 4):

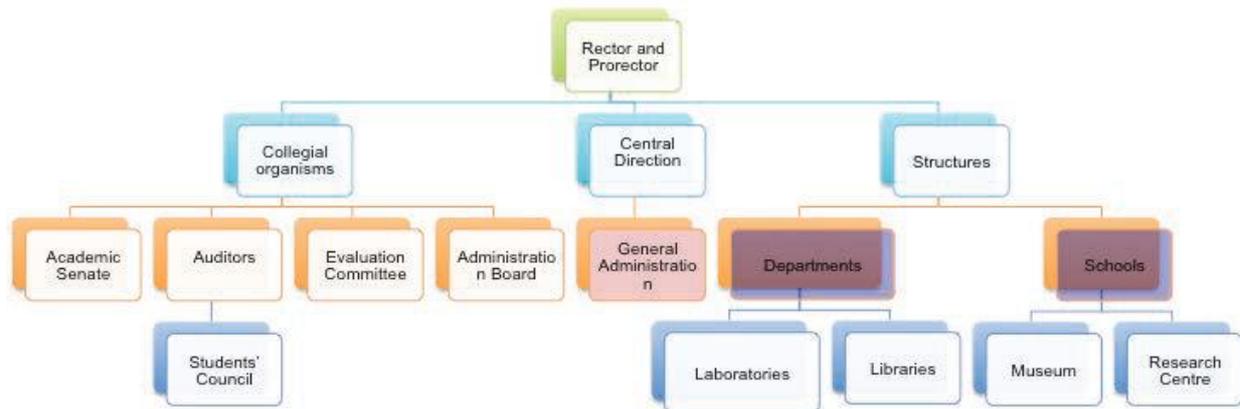


Figure 4: Italian hierarchical structure of university

## 2.2 Suggestions for future development

We believe that each person has unique and distinct life experiences, so whenever teachers and students come together, there are opportunities for what is called *-incidental learning* that is, the opportunity to share and learn some things beyond the subject matter being covered in our classrooms. In this sense, we see the teacher begins class by providing formal content and the student informally draws on and shares his or her own experiences: this should be encouraged because it tells us students find relevancy in what is being covered - and we believe we should encourage this kind of dialogue. If students can relate to the subject matter, they will likely assimilate the intended learning. The teacher is student and the student is teacher, as to say that the product is the manufacturer of what produces it.

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