

Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning and Psychology and option for the future?

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Covid19 Pandemic has had a massive impact on people's lives. The urge to respect the social distancing measures has led to a shift in the fruition of services. The lockdown has resulted in a global closure of schools and colleges. About 1.2 billion students were out of the classroom worldwide (186 countries). Fortunately, the closure of schools did not end schooling altogether, but it did change it. During the lockdown, schools had to search for new ways to provide access to education to minimize the effects of closures. Education was carried out online and on multimedia platforms. Many of the courses traditionally carried out face to face have been conducted online. Students were digitally taught worldwide using technologies such as online courses, video lectures, and electronic textbooks.

Before the Covid19 crisis, the use of distance learning worldwide was comparatively rare. According to the World Bank data, just 20% of countries had teaching tools for digital learning, but it was only available in certain schools, and no nation had a universal multimedia curriculum for teaching and studying. Education has drastically changed during the Pandemic, the recent COVID-19 crisis has seen a significant rise in online learning. The Covid 19 crisis provides an important measure of online learning potentiality.

With this sudden shift away from the classroom in many parts of the globe, some wonder whether the adoption of online learning will continue to persist post-pandemic.

There are several challenges that online learning expansion has to address still.

The first one is the digital divide; according to data from UNESCO Globally, 826 million students do not have access to a household computer, and 706 million do not have access to the internet at home. In high-income countries, access to a computer is higher; for example, according to the OECD statistics, 95 % of students in Switzerland, Norway, and Austria have computers for their school work. To appropriately implement online learning, access to the internet is necessary, but it is also necessary to have a quiet place to follow the lessons. According to a recent OECD report based on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) among 15-year-olds, 91% have access to a quiet place to study in Europe, but in Indonesia, just 70% have access to a quiet place to study. The new significant shift in online education could widen inequalities and socio-economic related to the digital divide. With school closures, low socio-economic groups such as racial communities, refugees, learners with disabilities face the risk of slipping further behind. Governments need to promote policies to bridge the divide for low-income students.

Furthermore, the perceived disadvantages of online learning may hinder the transition to distance education. For decades, scholars have argued if online education is less effective than traditional face-to-face. Opponents of online learning maintain that online courses' quality is compromised because teaching and learning are dynamic processes that benefit from non-verbal cues present only in traditional face-to-face settings. Some studies have shown that online courses were perceived as inferior to face-to-face ones (Allen & Seamen, 2013). Other research (Summer et al., 2005; and Kartha, 2006) has

shown that online courses' student satisfaction was lower than students on the ground learning environment. Recent evidence suggests that face-to-face courses have higher course completion rates than online courses (Brady, 2001; Carr, 2000; Simpson, 2003). Other research has indicated that online delivery does not achieve the same effectiveness (Jaggars et al. 2013; Xu and Jaggars, 2013).

The debate on the quality of e-learning continues since other studies, instead (Brown, 2016; Neuhauser 2010; Murdock et al. 2012; Pai, 2013; Katy and Anderson 2006), have reported that the performance of online students was very similar to that of face-to-face ones. Farmakis and Kaulbach (2013) indicated that accurately-structured online offered the same quality as traditional courses. Several empirical studies have revealed that online courses are as effective as traditional ones (McLaren 2004; Summers et al. 2005; Larson and Sung 2009; Ni 2013; Cavanaugh and Jacquemin 2015).

One of the main criticism of online learning is the loss of contact and collaboration among learners and the social compact. Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) has emerged as a mean of learning and teaching that can promote the social aspects of learning through a variety of technical and pedagogical techniques (Dillenbourg et al. 2009; Stahl et al. 2014). CSCL is based on cooperative and constructivist learning theories concentrating on social interdependence and learning through students who teach each other. Several theorists from Vygotsky (1978) to Lave and Wenger (1991) have maintained social interaction's relevance for an effective learning process. Collaborative learning promotes critical thinking skills, involves students actively in the learning processes, promotes social support and diversity understanding among students, develops positive attitudes towards teachers and colleagues. The new technologies offered by software platforms, including multiple communication modalities, made possible the application of cooperative and constructivist models online. Correctly applied CSCL can create an optimal environment in which interaction among students plays a relevant role in the learning process. Supporters of CSCL maintain that the social experiences available online can create interpersonal effects. Furthermore, CSCL can offer educational opportunities to develop professional skills, typically taught in face to face settings (Rudesstam, 2004).

This study aims to examine the research of the last ten years regarding the effects of CSCL, focusing primarily on psychology courses. It is crucial to consider the conditions under which CSCL can be effective and promote students' processes to understand better the psychological learning domains, academic knowledge, professional psychological skills, and promote social capital.

Understanding if CSCL can transfer academic and professional psychological skills is particularly important in the Italian context where the distrust of online training in Psychology is widespread, and the Miur threatened in the year 2020/21 that telematic universities will no longer be able to activate courses in Psychology, Educational Sciences, and Pedagogical Sciences.