Potential and Responsibility

Rosa Pastore, John Hannon
Liceo Linguistico e Tecnico Economico "Marco Polo" (Italy)
pastore.rosa@virgilio.it, j.hannon56@gmail.com

The school of the future is potentially already here. It is a school that will be about decision-making and the shifting of responsibilities. Given that adaptive learning is already possible, it must be decided how much freedom and responsibility will be given to the learner to adapt resources and opportunities to his own needs. Conversely, how much will the individual have to adapt to the demands of social and professional requirements? Now that ubiquitous computing is already in place, what decisions should school leaders make about removing structural and temporal constraints so that everyone can profit from their resources, connectivity and know-how? Learning can now really be tailored to each learner's needs and talents. How can teachers adapt their actions so as to guide students in the cultivation of their own decision-making capability, and so become responsible in the choices that they make? How can this lead to the awareness that learning strategies adopted in a recognised "place" of learning can influence and be influenced by informal learning activities and strategies practised in places not immediately recognise as such? The information surge of recent years is putting pressure on all those involved in education to be courageous faced with such challenges. We cannot exchange one system for another "system". A structured system will not be immediately forthcoming or necessarily desirable at a moment when courageous risks must be taken. School timetables need to be changed. Schools need to be smaller to facilitate greater flexibility. Learning packages need to be made available and offered to students. Teachers need to be trained to prepare these. Students have to be given the chance to prove acquired competencies without having to wait for yearly assessment. Greater freedom of opportunity is now technically possible and should be accorded in order to promote the assumption of responsibility in deciding about learning and life. Many schools are already well placed to accept these challenges: learning environments enhanced by technologies enable students to interact more effectively with resources and exercise greater choice over what to use to learn and how; in some cases the use of technologies are making the passage from school-based learning to out-of-school learning a seamless one; greater use of mobile learning is indeed knocking down barriers both of time and space, permitting formal and informal learners gradually to extend and amplify learning activities, becoming more conscious of what they are doing. Changes are underway: what is important is the involvement in them of all those who have a stake in the future of education.