

NEW RYTHMS FOR SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

In times when some opinion leaders base their points of view on an 'alternate reality' and a vertiginous development of the information and communication technologies takes place, the latter steadily moves farther away from the traditional means and values such as reading and writing. The informatics revolution, the exponential growth of available capacities and its enormous penetration capacity within the population have changed the ways in which issues are approached and handled in the political, financial and work domains. The revision of the role of the ways to communicate science and, especially, of the paradigms on which its teaching is based, has become of urgency.

The millennial generation, as it has been called, builds its realities and develops its abilities in such a way that the traditional dynamics of the school, at all levels, must be revised and substituted by means and methods that will allow it to keep up and achieve an effective transmission of knowledge to the new generations. This requires an updated communication, adjusted to the times. The substitution of the textbook and of the library by the internet and the search engines, as well as the impressive speeds reached in information transmission in the new media, impose a new dynamic, totally different, in teaching in the classroom at educational institutions as well as in distance learning.

The development and popularization of the electronic media to which we have made reference has been an essential element for democratization within the knowledge society, breaking scholastic barriers that limited exposure in the past and allowing it to reach large masses, something unthinkable a few decades ago. The teaching community, therefore, handles a student body that moves through the sources of knowledge at a great speed and, generally, with a marked superficiality. To take full advantage of such speed allows to reach farther. To counteract the superficiality is a must. The many advantages achieved, such as search speed and the

increase of free time availability, should be used for the sake of reaching a better understanding of the study material and the pedagogical objectives.

The many possibilities opened for the interaction and collaboration among scientists in distant institutions have multiplied and the capacity for data handling has grown enormously, to a level that was unthinkable only one or two generations ago, opening great possibilities for accelerating the acquisition of knowledge.

The diffusion of knowledge and the scientific journals are equally subjected to important changes, as also do the work and products of publishing houses. The appearance of electronic books in ever increasing numbers, the progressive disappearance of the printed edition of a large number of scientific journals and the growing implementation of manuscript and refereeing handling are examples of such changes. But the new media also facilitate blackmail and should therefore be administered with great precaution. The barriers built against the new menaces will never be overemphasized.

In countries where internet speeds are low, as is the case in Venezuela, society at large, and particularly the academic community, are at disadvantage in relation to the rest of the countries of the region. In each one of them, it is the responsibility of the State to keep up-to-date the technologies in use and to maintain the systems employed in such a way as to provide the best possible service to the population at all times. As long as this does not become a reality it will not be possible to overcome the differences that unfortunately still persist between our countries and which at times seem to increase instead of diminishing, as one would expect.

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