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[Review of the book: *Learning to Learn: International perspectives from theory and practice*, by Ruth Deakin Crick, Cristina Stringher & Kai Ren. Routledge, 2014. ISBN: 9780415656245]

There has been an increasing interest in Learning to Learn (L2L). One of the basic skills for success in the knowledge society is the ability to learn. In Education, at work and throughout one's own individual and social life learning to learn is a crucial issue for success in a complex, unpredictable and challenging world we share. With increasingly rapid changes in the work place, in part due to changing technology and as a result of changing societal needs in the context of globalization, citizens must learn to learn in order that they can maintain their full and continued participation in employment and civil society or risk social exclusion (European Commission, 2007). In this context learning to learn is a quintessential tool for lifelong learning and thus education and training needs to provide the learning environment for the development of this competence for all citizens including persons with fewer opportunities (those with special needs and school dropouts), throughout the whole lifespan (including pre-school and adult learners) and through different learning environments (formal, non-formal and informal) (Fredriksson & Hoskins, 2007). It is one of the eight competencies identified by the European Union in the Lisbon at the 2020 strategies. "Learning to learn is the ability to pursue and organise one's own learning, either individually or in group, in accordance with one's own needs, and awareness of methods in order to learn successfully. This competence means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and

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making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence." (EU's recommendation key competence, 2006, p. 2). The European Union maintains a keen interest in this topic as demonstrated by the European network of policy makers and several working groups on key competencies, including the creation of the European Network on Learning to Learn (Hoskins & Fredriksson, 2008). Internationally, learning to learn is emerging as a focus for school improvement and as a foundation for lifelong and lifewide learning. Internationally, L2L is considered one of the eight key competencies needed to compete in the global economy, but also a crucial factor for individual and social well-being. There have also been a number of recent studies carried out on learning to learn; the University of Helsinki has as a part of the Finnish project "Life as Learning (LEARN)" organised a number of studies on learning to learn (Hautamäki et al., 2002). Within the British Project "Teaching and Learning Research Programme" questions related to learning to learn have been raised (TLRP, 2007). Within the PISA surveys, a special study took place in 2003 on problem solving (OECD, 2004). A wealth of research has been flourishing on this key educational goal in recent years. The aim of this review is to present the innovative approach to learning to learn. In fact, this book draws on leading international contributors to provide a cutting edge overview of current thinking on research, policy, and implementation in both formal and informal learning environments. However, what learning to learn is exactly and what its constituting elements are, is a much debated issue. The main theoretical and operational models, based on the approach-cognitive psychological or socio-cultural, do not agree on a single definition of L2L, nevertheless shows common points: attention to affective-motivational aspects and socio-relational, situated learning. Current research paradigms of L2L refer to metacognition, the socio-constructivism, lifelong learning and assessment studies. The book is organized in two parts: theory and international case-studies. What unites them is represented by two key-themes: the complexity to be addressed in researching learning to learn and the values of international views and contributions. Learning to learn is a complex process that involve all society and each person because it's about human beings becoming self-organizing agents of their own life and the challenge is to create the conditions for this to happen. Therefore, the book begins with

introducing what is learning to learn. The literature search was carried out using the following key words: learning to learn, learning competence/competency, learning how to learn, learning about learning, independent learning and so on and so on. Despite the analyse of 40 definitions and 37,064 documents, the concept remains partial or flews, for that, the Author argues the idea of outline a meta-definition (p. 13; p. 22) that try to summarize the personal, pedagogical and learning trajectory learning elements highlighted in the huge analyzed literature. L2L is the “Executive process of control of learning conceivable as a disposition to engage deeply in learning, which bestows individuals with increasingly higher command over modes, time and space of their own learning. Such a process evolves in a developmental and lifelong trajectory, with the ultimate goal of making sense of reality”, so it is just not a mere instrument for surviving in working life, but it goes into the deep meaning of human development and human flourishing. Caring for our brains also involves making other lifestyle choices and even if there is a persistent disagreement around this concept, the definition proposed by Stringher is useful in order to proceed for an operationalization of the concept. To deepen this discussion, chapter 2 reflects on crucial question about aspects of L2L: conceptual change, reasoning development, and critical thinking are complementary aspects of cognitive development and learning to learn. Education, at any phase, must lead and support the students to develop and refine these skills: curriculum, instruction methods and moment- to- moment teaching must adapt to every student. This is the core of a good L2L approach: a school for all that becomes a school for everyone. This is the message of the chapter. Chapter 3 try to going into the debate around L2L. Even if it is clear that the dominant theories that studied the mind since the last two centuries do not suffice to explicate L2L approach, the Author outlines a complex holistic understanding of learning to learn and the conditions necessary to support it so, maybe, this is the most important chapter of the book. Crick accepts the challenge to strengthen a system architecture for L2L because it is crucial for everyone (educators, teachers, students) in what is so called ‘learning society’. Donald Schon (1998), ‘the great theorist of the learning society’, affirms that we must learn to understand, guide, influence and manage these transformations. We must make the capacity for undertaking them integral to ourselves and to our institutions. We must, in other words, become adept at learning. We must become able not only to transform our institutions, in response to changing situations and requirements; we must invent and

develop institutions which are ‘learning systems’, that is to say, systems capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation. This is the purpose of L2L. The idea of the development of competence is important for a student, for a citizen in order to be able to utilize inter- and intra-personal resources to engage with the world, in real world challenge (Richen & Salgnik, 2003). Becoming a competent lifelong learner is the purpose of L2L and, at its heart; it is about enabling the individual to appropriate their own purpose in learning. A key part of the teacher’s lesson is in providing feedback and learning loop for learners for the development of learning power. It is not an isolated process, as Bateson (1972; p. 162) remind us, L2L is a sort of ‘deutero-learning’. Bateson introduced the concept of deutero-learning just for explain the process of learning to learn: it means the acquisition of certain habits of thought and action. It’s an inside-outside model (pp. 82-83) in which the student become able to change/correct her/him process of learning in order to be more awareness of himself/herself for a skillful engagement with the world. Therefore, L2L is a journey, an unisolated process in which there is present a strong pedagogy characterized by a strong understanding of the processes and the relationship that are significant to learn. It is a process competence that enables a person to respond productively to uncertain and risk and to develop a resilience to withstand personal, professional and social challenges. The section continues discussing key element of L2L: Alberici and di Rienzo (Chapter 4) focus their attention on L2L as a fundamental resource for personal and social development. “Learning to learn” is interpreted as an essential capacity for all that facilitates the development of democracy. According to the Authors (p. 98), if we are able to read L2L as a lifelong learning skill to adapt to our lives it could become a strategic and empowering tool for everyone. Even if it can’t be defined once and for all or accomplished permanently, or to be achieved merely through and appropriate learning processes, but it implies an ever-changing human condition, rolling through the life of an individual. Chapter 5 implies some insights from China. Confucius said C.T.M.A.T.M. 135, “Study without thought is labor lost; thought without study is dangerous”. When referring to his own way of learning, he said: “Select what is good, and follow it” Thus he saw learning as a process of observation of some type of subject matter whether it be books, objects, or people, followed by reflection, that somehow changed one. He saw learning as a highly personal and therefore, highly individual activity. He seemed to feel once awakened by any kind of real learning, this process would be repeated by the

student. Confucius was probably the first to have developed a theory around the idea of L2L. He emphasized that learning is a form of habit through you can acquire the moral virtuous values and attitudes for learning so learning should be oriented to a higher morality and contribute to society. Cultivating a passion for learning across the life course, making meaning for learning, learning by doing, creating harmonious learning relationships are the key elements that characterizes L2L according by Confucio. Nowadays the effects of Confucian teachings on the learning to learn in Chinese people are still present: the last decade saw (p. 115) a number of educational initiatives that encourage inquiry-based learning and learning centred education in China (Mooney 2007, p. 120). ‘You can’t really change the heart without telling a story’ said Martha C. Nussbaum and it’s true, so here layed the importance of the second part of the book, that is on a series of case studies described from Chapter 6 to Chapter 14. Chapter 6 deal again with Chinese Learners’ world: it considered how family and preschools could help in promoting children’s learning to learn skills. Chapter 7 presents an analysis of a L2L change initiative within the State education system in South Australia. Teaching for Effective Learning is the key of the chapter: it shows that school reform which is driven by an emphasis on learning and the attendant attention to relationships and cultural change can effect school level change. Chapter 8 is about developing a framework for learning to learn in Finland and a tool for its assessment. In the Finnish framework, learning to learn is defined as the ability and willingness to adapt to novel tasks, activating one’s mastery of thinking and the perspective of hope by means of maintaining one’s cognitive and affective self-regulation in and of learning action (Hautamäki et al., 2002; Hautamäki et al., 2010, Kyttälä, Aunio & Hautamäki, 2010). 120,000 students have participated in the different national, municipal, and school-level assessments between 1996 and 2013, providing one of the largest data sets worldwide of the competences and learning-related attitudes of students of different ages, gathered with statistically comparable instruments. This Chapter is quite interesting because it presents a 16-year-old tradition of work between education policy and educational practice. Indeed it presents the inclusion of both the cognitive and the affective components of learning – in their role of fostering new learning and as outcomes of education – has given new insight into the development of the relationship between students’ cognitive competence, learning-related attitudes, and scholastic achievement through the school years (Kupiainen et al., 2011b). Chapter 9 is about the Spanish

approach to learning to learn and how it has been developed in Spanish educational policy. They propose a definition of L2L as a strategic activity whose development would require the students to be aware of (a) their reasons and intentions, (b) their own cognitive capabilities, and (c) the demands of the academic tasks. Besides this, they should be able to (d) control their resources and (e) regulate their subsequent performance (Biggs, 1988). So, to be a good student means, to a certain extent, to learn to become aware of one's own mind and of the level of one's own understanding. According to this way, learning to learn reflects intellectual and individual features, but also motivational, affective, and social aspects. Since 1990, the Spanish curriculum included many of the characteristics of the concept of learning to learn in the Law of General Organization of the Educational System (LOGSE). Thus, the essential educational goal is expressed in terms of competencies and, within them, those that refer to the knowledge of the cognitive processes themselves and their conscious control (Martín & Coll, 2003). Learning to learn is learning a new way of thinking about learning that involves more than simply accumulating information. It involves asking why, questioning consequences, taking responsibility for the processes of learning, and engaging in learning as a collective enterprise. The purpose of Chapter 10 is to analyse the theoretical implications for a school improvement programme conceived within the ESF (European Social Funds) evaluation in Southern Italian middle school. The Author - through a diachronic literature review of school effectiveness and improvement models, and a brief analysis of Italian school-self evaluation – tries to answer to this crucial issue: What should we focus on in order to improve students' learning outcomes? The answer is a theoretical approach to school improvement that aims for coherence of practices and is grounded in L2L for students, teachers, school and community organizations. The novelty of this approach lie in the overarching sociocultural constructivist epistemology that attempts to inform all subsequent principles and actions. Chapter 11 moves a step towards a 360 degree assessment model to support L2L. Data are presented to demonstrate that the best methods are those that use a collaborative 360 degree assessment approach, contextualized within local contexts and cultures. With a 360 degree assessment approach, all stakeholders in the learning process are given the opportunity to provide their perspectives on the extent to which the student is experiencing a positive learning environment and instructional practices that meet their learning needs. Chapter 12 is on L2L in practice in non- formal education. The Author

focuses his attention on the implication of L2L on the roles of learners and educators. The starting point is in the field of European non-formal education programme through the analysis of two projects for adult education and youth work. According to the Author, the competence to plan and organize your own learning is a necessary and vital competence for engaging our challenging times. Often the experience in traditional education system leaves learner with a negative perception of learning, so the main challenge for teachers and educators is having the belief and trust that learners are best placed to know their own learning needs and being able to facilitate the path that the learner has chosen. The Author draws some findings from the two projects in order to go beyond paradoxes of a traditional school system. They are four fields of competence (p. 274): i) awareness of self as a learner; ii) organizing and planning one's learning; iii) learning with others; iv) reflection, reviewing and self-assessment. Educators may be inspired by self-directed learning and committed to enabling their learners to take responsibility for their own learning. Self-responsible learners have to be given the responsibility for their own learning, but at the same time, trainers have the task to create a constructive atmosphere that motivates the participants. To find the right balance is far from easy. As a result of this work with youth projects some tools, such as self-perceptions inventories, self-assessment forms and personal development plans, have been developed to support learner. And the end of the chapter, the Author reflects on what makes a good social climate for learning in order to outline the conditions that encourage people to be open to change and for taking initiative and getting active: linking to others and confronting self-limiting perceptions, working in small and big groups and so on. Reflections on New Zealand experience is the issue of the second to last chapter. New Zealand has been at the forefront of both educational research and futures thinking in education. The learner is considered as a whole person because L2L is thought as a learning to do and to be, not just to know. This is reflected internationally in the UNESCO pillars of learning—learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. The Authors argue that students cannot leverage the potential for lifelong learning in the absence of a strategic awareness of how to develop access and activate any kind of resources to support their learning. This implies that learning will require additional resources/support/expertise/input from a much wider range of people. Teachers ought not to be the only people from whom young people learn. Learning needs to be more connected with the community. Teachers

still need strong pedagogical knowledge, but they also need to be able to collaborate with other people who can provide specific kinds of expertise, knowledge or access to learning opportunities in community contexts. The last chapter deals with Indigenous Australians. Describing three case studies in L2L, the Author outlines how each study began with the intention of transitioning from a training model of education to a L2L model that champions a self-learning process. The utilities from these studies come from a range of insights that highlighted the need for flexibility and responsiveness in L2L processes. Learning is in the relationships between people. Learning is in the conditions that bring people together and organize a point of contact that allows for particular pieces of information to take on a relevance; without the points of contact, without the system of relevancies, there is not learning, and there is little memory. Learning does not belong to individual persons, but to the various conversations of which they are a part (Murphy, 1999). Therefore, the chapter is a reflection on L2L as a framework on learning design system and the role of learners. It not so much that learners acquire structures or models to understand the world, but they participate in frameworks that that have structure. Learning involves participation in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The book will close with summary of the key findings and future directions. How to evaluate to facilitate learning; how to support the development of students key competence -learning to learn, namely the right of power learning; as help people plan their personal and professional future by identifying and assessing results of their learning and skills: are among the challenges is to addressing the education and training system. To meet these challenges, it must be reconsidered globally the ratio of valuation procedures, guidance and teaching-learning. In recent years there has been a profound rethinking of the evaluation mode Teaching, however, is still inadequate dissemination, among the teachers, skills methodological and operational in the field of learning assessment. They must be improved as necessary in view of a new teaching, that it is centered on meta - competence -learning to learn - understood both as a regulator -function learning, of character, as both, in turn, competence, result of a learning process that evolves throughout the life cycle and in different contexts learning. In addition, help to explain the elements that connect in a L2L continuum teaching guidance and orientation training, but also to the professional orientation per se, may be an additional, tangible contribution to the development of learner-centered teaching effective and appropriate to the stage to accompany the individual

throughout life. A school as a learning organisation has a shared vision that gives it a sense of direction and serves as a motivating force for sustained action to achieve individual and school goals. Having a shared vision is more an outcome of a process than it is a starting point – a process that involves all staff, students, parents and other stakeholders. One of the biggest challenges facing communities today is integrating those on the margins of society whose learning difficulties undermine their self-confidence. Not only is their exclusion a waste of human potential, their alienation poses a real threat to democracy. Education stakeholders need to believe that a school's vision and goals include a moral purpose. Having an inspiring and motivating vision statement that is committed to enhancing the lives of all students is vitally important. Success in school is possible for all students. Many schools and education systems around the globe have realised their vision to dramatically improve the learning outcomes of the most disadvantaged children. PISA 2012, for example, shows that the countries that have improved student performance significantly since 2000, including Brazil, Germany, Greece, Italy, Mexico, Tunisia and Turkey, have managed to reduce the proportion of low-achieving students. The evidence shows that excellence and equity in education are not mutually exclusive goals (OECD, 2016). Thus, any vision to transform a school into a learning organisation that is able to support L2L processes should include two things: a front and centre commitment to making a difference in the learning and lives of all students.

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