

Conclusions

The research work at the 14 schools that were analyzed highlighted how there is a positive correlation between the capabilities of school self-organization and the innovation of learning environments, as is well summarized in Figure A.

In other words, the more self-organized schools are, the more innovative learning environments are.

Field tests confirm that innovation works if it is generated from below and extended to other schools. See, for example, the experience, promoted by *Indire* (a research institution of the Ministry of Education), of the Movement of Educational Avant-gardes, a network established in 2014 by 22 Italian schools, which today have become 1,052. The network has the function of supporting schools in implementing organizational and educational practices oriented toward innovation. A real community of practices has been created, where less experienced schools can find the help of those that have already successfully experimented them (see Appendix K).

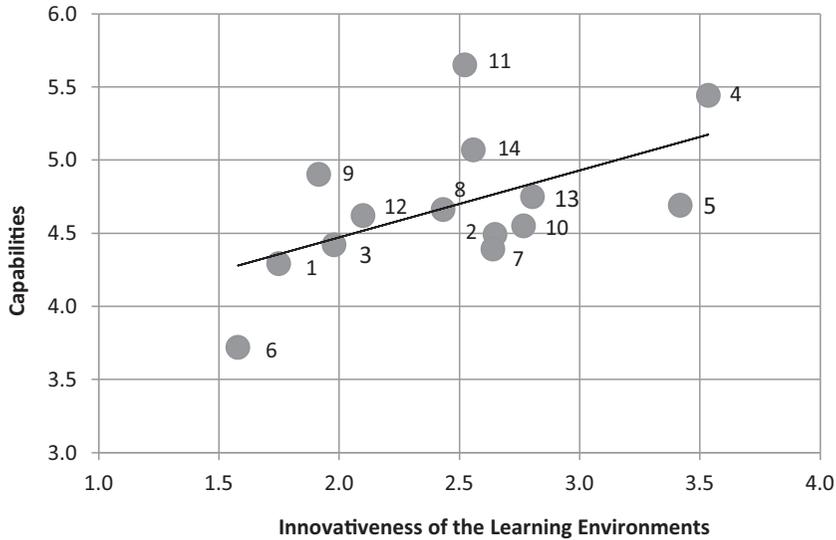
The outcome of the empirical work described in the text primarily empowers teachers, their scientific associations, their communities of practice, and secondly, schools with their principals, networks of schools and their governing and coordinating bodies. The key tasks of defining policies, allocating resources, implementing measures of accompaniment, networking, evaluation of outgoing results, etc. are left to the scholastic apex, namely the Ministry of Education, Regional School Offices, Territorial School Offices, Supporting Agencies (*Invalsi*, *Indire*, etc.).

The typical capabilities of self-organization are the key resources for offering students effective learning environments.

As reiterated in the text, self-organization is not synonymous with self-management: it is a different logic of organization, which can only be realized in the presence of well-defined conditions, the research on and creation of which is the task of the best teachers and the best principals.

Resistance to self-organization comes from both the top and bottom of the school organizational pyramid.

Resistance from the top, that is, from the Ministry, derives from the fact that the greater autonomy – which must be guaranteed to teachers,

**Key:**

- 1 - "Piazzì Lena Perpentì" State High School in Sondrio
- 2 - "Gioia" State High School in Piacenza
- 3 - "Russell" State High School in Cles
- 4 - "Majorana" State High School in Brindisi
- 5 - "Fermi" State High School in Mantova
- 6 - "Barsanti" State Technological Institute in Castelfranco Veneto
- 7 - "Collegio del Mondo Unito" School in Duino
- 8 - "Marconi" Junior High School in Modena
- 9 - "Ristori" Comprehensive Institute in Naples
- 10 - Comprehensive Institute in Montespertoli
- 11 - "eSpazia" Comprehensive Institute in Monterotondo
- 12 - "Giovanni XXIII" Comprehensive Institute in Tricesimo
- 13 - "Randi" Comprehensive Institute in Ravenna
- 14 - "CEIS" in Rimini

Figure A Relationship between the capabilities of self-organization and the innovativeness of learning environments

technicians and principals who self-organize to innovate the learning environments and the school – is experienced as a reduction in the capacity of the Ministry itself to monitor activities. We have seen (see Section 3.5) that the idea of 1993 of giving schools – understood as autonomous educating communities – real financial autonomy has never been implemented. Schools, in fact, have organizational autonomy and autonomy regarding teaching, but not financial autonomy. They are still considered as bodies with the task of implementing the central administration policies throughout the territory and therefore, they only manage a budget consisting of an allotment by the State for operating expenses. Being really autonomous schools (on

an organizational, educational and financial level) is nevertheless a starting point: the point of arrival is that of self-organized schools (see Section 5.8). In other words, real scholastic autonomy is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition to guaranteeing effective learning. And to do this we must focus on self-organization as an evolution of scholastic autonomy.

Resistance from the top can also come from the principal. We are used to a leadership that controls. But this reduces the leader to a mere controller. The aforementioned Mario Andretti, historic Ferrari driver, reminds us that: “If everything is under control, you are going too slowly”.

The fundamental conceptual step to overcoming resistance from the top is to understand that self-organization does not imply loss of power. Power is like knowledge: it can be duplicated. The conceptualization of power as a non-zero-sum entity is the critical step toward understanding the essence of empowerment and the management of systems by multiple minds. Empowerment is not an abdication of power, nor a sharing of power. It is a duplication of power.

However, resistance also comes from those who are at the bottom. Hierarchy, the illusion of order, control and predictability, is much safer and more reassuring. Many people also within the school expect stability; they expect that the helmsmen – first and foremost, the Ministry, the school offices and the principals – know exactly where to go. They expect those who are at the top to know more than those who are at the bottom.

If self-organization does not prevail in a widespread and stable way, the reason is because it requires particular attitudes and involves profound changes in the behavior of all the people in the organization, up to the most peripheral ones. As we have seen, the Jesuits who set almost impossible goals for their brothers had understood all this: the choice of admitting only the “very apt” to the order was functional to the need to have, in order to operate in complex environments, only people with an intra-entrepreneurial spirit and capable of self-leadership. That is, to have people, in a word, ready for “greater things”.

Resistance from the bottom will never be overcome if the school lacks a soul, a common inspiration, a dream, a passion that involves all the collaborators in the zest for discovery, the satisfaction of research, in the construction of the new, in the satisfaction of creating something of their own, something that distinguishes them, something that gives meaning to their own history, to their life project, to a more just and responsible project of society.

Self-organization requires energy in order to succeed. Self-organization does not take place unless there is a continuous flow of energy from the outside to the inside of the system. External energy is necessary so that complex adaptive systems – such as schools and classes – can organize themselves. And this flow is guaranteed by the intra-entrepreneurship of teachers (in the class) and of principals (in the school). School changes if its players push from the bottom for new activities, if they bring new challenges and goals to everyone’s attention, if they form and break connections inside and outside the school.

In a school that promotes self-organization, principals and teachers move from a classic role of “planning and control” (of school and learning, respectively) to a new one of “creation and supervision” of the context (school and learning, respectively). A context where the real motivation is self-motivation, the result of a shared vision, obtained with the example of the leader that provides the energy of change.

To increase the quality of the learning processes and of schools, it is necessary to focus on the capabilities of self-organization, that is on the participation and the assumption of responsibility by all in a logic of intra-entrepreneurship.

You need distributed, inter-connected, self-motivated and self-activated intelligence. These problems are not solved at a central level. The Ministry is necessary, but it is not enough. The future is in the periphery, within self-organized schools, capable of promoting fruitful interconnected networks of students, technicians, teachers, principals and schools. In conclusion: self-organization is the most fascinating future of a truly autonomous school.