



FEBRUARY - MAY 2017

SMARTPHONE EDUCATION

A Pedagogical Model for a conscious use of the Smartphone

EDUCATIONAL GUIDE FOR THEACHERS AND EDUCATORS

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP 4 – DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE

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EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP 4 – DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE

Methodological path

Introduction

Thanks to internet connection and access to the world, the smartphone is potentially a container of endless knowledge. Like a computer, it allows its users to quickly and easily benefit of all the information circulating on the web. As emerged from SMART Generation project research, young people consider the smartphone as means to acquire skills and competences, not only for leisure but also in school and educational contexts. Among digital natives knowledge is developed through a fast and shared exploration and through the use of multiple media codes to incorporate and produce information. But to what extent are young people able to exploit all the learning and information opportunities offered by the web? How much are they able to defend themselves from manipulation, extremism, “fake news” or even simply approximate news conveyed by the web?

It is therefore necessary to provide young people with the tools to consciously orient themselves and surf in the sea of information that the web offers and to be able to assess the level of reliability and accuracy of contents.

Objectives

- To increase the capacity to search for contents corresponding to the needs
- To assess the reliability of information and of websites
- To reflect on information and news dissemination methods
- To reflect on conveyed cultures
- To learn criteria and methods to recognize truth from falsehood
- To support learning

Path sheet

DESCRIPTION	Search for truths and falsehoods and elements to assess the reliability of websites through a sort of treasure hunt activity. Elaboration of a Decalogue of rules of appropriate web surfing.
KEY WORDS	Information, fake news, truth, debunking
TARGET	12-17-years-olds
LENGTH	1 hour
MODALITY	game, brainstorm, online search
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT	1 smartphone per group, PC and projector

READER Activity: “Online news!”

To begin with, the teacher / educator shows on the screen or send to the class / group chat two news, one true and one false. These two news have been chosen because they are both online since several years and international. Each teacher / educator can of course choose different news.

News 1: “Chemtrails: aircrafts in flight release poisonous chemicals to humans”

(Proposed link:)

News 2: “Thousands of spiders raining down in Australia”

(Proposed link:

Participants read the news and then everyone decides, on the basis of their own analysis, which is true and which is false in their opinion. The teacher / educator proposes a quick game to make different positions evident. For each piece of news, she / he asks participants if it is true or false. Depending on the answer, participants can go to a different side of the room or, as an alternative, they can just stand up or sit. Each group must justify its choice. The teacher / educator takes note of the choices, but does not give the solution.

(See materials in the project website).

USER Activity: “Website hunt”

Before starting this activity, the teacher / educator divides participants into groups.

Through an online search, each group must identify the elements to see if the news proposed in the READER Activity are true or false. It is likely that young people may find it difficult to properly set the search, then after a few minutes, the teacher / educator directs them with the help of the “Reliability criteria” sheet, which also includes “debunking” sites dedicated to debunk false news with evidence.

At the end of the search, the teacher / educator invites the groups to share their findings and to evaluate them together.

SHEET

“RELIABILITY CRITERIA: HOW TO VERIFY NEWS”

LEVEL 1 (FOR YOUNGER PARTICIPANTS)

1. THE EASIEST AND MOST DIRECT WAY TO VERIFY THE RELIABILITY OF NEWS IS TO MAKE A SEARCH WITH GOOGLE (OR ANOTHER SEARCH ENGINE) BY INSERTING THE TITLE OF THE NEWS OR THE ISSUE IT DEALS WITH, AND THEN TO ANALYZE THE LIST OF RESULTS. IF THE NEWS RUNS ON THE WEB FOR SOME TIME, HAS STIRRED SOME DEBATE AND HAS ALREADY BEEN PROVED FALSE, IN THE RESULTS LIST YOU WILL FIND LINKS TO WEB PAGES THAT CONFIRM IT BUT ALSO TO WEB PAGES THAT PROVE IT WRONG. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT CLUE THAT MUST RAISE DOUBTS ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEWS.
2. THE SECOND STEP IS TO VERIFY WHICH SITES HAVE PROVED IT WRONG. GENERALLY, THEY ARE SO-CALLED “DEBUNKING” SITES. THE TERM COMES FROM THE ENGLISH VERB “TO DEBUNK” WHICH MEANS “TO DISMANTLE”. DEBUNKING SITES ARE IN FACT CREATED WITH THE STATED AIM OF COMBATING ONLINE MISINFORMATION, “DISMANTLING” AND DENYING, BY APPLYING SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGIES, FALSE, EXAGGERATED AND UNSCIENTIFIC STATEMENTS AND NEWS.

DEBUNKING SITES (IN LANGUAGE OF THE PARTNER)

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AMONG ENGLISH WEBSITES, YOU MAY FIND WWW.SNOPES.COM, THE “FATHER” OF ALL DEBUNKING SITES, AND WWW.BELLINGCAT.COM, INTERESTING ENGLISH SITE USING SATELLITE MAPS TO VERIFY THE NEWS.

LEVEL 2

THERE ARE SEVERAL ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS TO THOSE ALREADY PRESENTED THAT HELP US TO UNDERSTAND IF THE NEWS IS TRUE:

1. TO CROSS DATA FROM MULTIPLE SECONDARY SOURCES (AT LEAST THREE). IN OTHER WORDS, IF THE SAME NEWS APPEARS ON MULTIPLE ORGANS OF RELIABLE INFORMATION IT IS USUALLY REASONABLE (BUT NOT SURE) TO THINK THAT IT IS TRUE.
2. TO LOOK FOR CONFIRMATION FROM A PRIMARY SOURCE: FOR EXAMPLE, IF THE NEWS CONCERNS A CELEBRITY, WE HAVE TO LOOK ON THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THAT PERSON. IF INFORMATION CONCERNS THE GOVERNMENT, THEN WE HAVE TO LOOK AT THE GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WEBSITE.
3. IF SOME TIME HAS PASSED AFTER THE NEWS WAS PUBLISHED AND THERE ARE NO DENIALS OR CORRECTIONS, IT IS MORE REASONABLE TO THINK THAT IS TRUE. THEREFORE, IT IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO CHECK THE DATE OF AN ARTICLE AND BE WARY OF THOSE WHO DO NOT REPORT IT.
4. CHECK THE WEBSITE: IS IT A REGISTERED ONLINE NEWSPAPER? IS IT A BLOG RUN BY ONE PERSON ONLY? DO THE AUTHORS OF THE WEBSITE MAKE A PRESENTATION OF THEMSELVES OR PRESENT THEIR SITE? THE MORE THIS INFORMATION IS VAGUE, THE LESS THE WEBSITE IS RELIABLE
5. ARE THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION CLEARLY MENTIONED INSIDE THE ARTICLE YOU ARE READING? IF THEY BROADLY CITE “RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY SCHOLARS OF AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY”, WITHOUT MENTIONING THE TITLE OF RESEARCH, WHEN IT WAS MADE, BY WHAT SCHOLARS, BY WHAT UNIVERSITY, WE NEED TO DISTRUST.
6. PAY ATTENTION TO THE GRAPHICS AND THE STYLE OF THE WEBSITE: IF THERE ARE MANY WORDS WRITTEN ALL IN CAPITAL LETTERS, WITH EVIDENT FONT, WITH EXCLAMATION POINTS, USING PHRASES SUCH AS “THE WHOLE TRUTH”, “WE WERE CHEATED!” OR THEORIES OF TOTAL CONTROL BY OCCULT POWERS, YOU ARE ALMOST CERTAINLY ENTERED A SITE FULL OF HOAXES.

LAST ELEMENT TO KEEP IN MIND: THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED AN EXTRAORDINARY NEWS BY A FRIEND, A CLASSMATE, YOUR BROTHER OR YOUR UNCLE DOES NOT MEAN IT IS REAL.

Other news that could be used:

UK school pupil ethnicity question angers Italy

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-37631062>

Debunking:

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Bonsaikitten: kitten in a jar

http://uncyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Bonsai_Kitten

Debunking:

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Other materials on chemtrails

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CRITIC Activity: “Cyber truth”

The teacher / educator distributes to each participant a short questionnaire which will serve as a basis for initiating a brainstorm to raise awareness among young people about their behaviors and their ability to do an online search or to read search results.

Questions included in the questionnaire:

While chatting with friends you get a funny, odd or interesting piece of news. What do you do?

1. you immediately forward it to other friends
2. you verify it and then decide if you send it to friends or not

Instead of news, you receive the link to the website containing it. You go to the website and: (you can choose more than one answer)

1. read the news and immediately forward it to someone else
2. control if it is the website of a registered online newspaper in order to figure out who has spread the information
3. verify the date of the news to see if it is old or recent
4. check if the article is signed
5. look also for other news on that site to understand if it reliable

You do a search for the school on a specific theme. You have entered the title or keywords in Google and you have found a lot of results. How do you behave?

1. take the first result on the list, copy and paste it
2. you only trust Wikipedia
3. try to compare different sites to see if there is information conformity

Depending on the answers provided by participants, the teacher / educator initiates a discussion on how to recognize the reliability of sites and information.

EVALUATOR Activity: “Web decalogue”

To begin the activity, the teacher / educator divides participants into groups. Each group tries to elaborate the ten good rules for a reliable online search and for a conscious reading and dissemination of news. At the end of the time allocated, they share the proposed rules and, starting from them, the class / group defines its own web decalogue.

In collaboration with

