MAKNO SHARED DEFINITIONS

Vision (model VS approach): behind each model or each approach there is a vision. It is not necessary it is aware. model is a static structure, a blocked shape we can use in a specific situation as solution for the problems that situation proposes.

Nevertheless vision can be considered too a conceptual tool box that may provide tools for a specific point of view (an interpretation) of a specific situation in order to chose an approach for solving the problems that situation proposes.

Model is easy to use. it is faster to use it for big organisations because it is a ready tool for the player of the problem solving; overall it is functional if the player is not the person in charge for deciding interpretation of situation. This is why we could define it as a vertical tool.

Vision instead asks for taking decisions in each moment you are using it. It doesn't protect from the risk of mistake in various moments of its use (collect data, make the interpretation, chose the approach, fit the approach with the real situation and so on). Furthermore vision asks for a match between people involved in its use, it means that it is more useful for small or horizontally-coordinated groups.

Model is creative only in the moment it arises or if it is "re-handled" improving it by experience of use; instead approach needs a continuous, creative re-organisation, even because it is affected by events.

Of course often tools we use in practice are in between the two different items.

Learning community: shared knowledge space, lived by people with shared mediated aims. A place where exchange knowledge in order to learn more and more about a specific topic, building a new shared knowledge. Our definition of learning community and its practical approach to knowledge is related to the vision of horizontal dynamic. It is a space in continuous re-definition: to build a shared knowledge means to re-define continuously not only topics but also, vision, roles, relations and relationships within the learning community. Furthermore the community is a complex system where each transformation of one item affects the whole and the relations among the other items. This also means that each learning community is different from another and the same learning community changes in the time.

A community originates from the interaction of all its members: no-one must be considered more important or determining than the others in quality terms: the value of everybody's contribution is strengthened by debate, so the strength of the group lays in the possibility for its various members to interact. This way a cooperative and collaborative interaction can be carried out by individuals who have the same responsibilities towards themselves and the others. The overall aim is to set up a collaborative/open research/learning process which becomes self-sufficient over time in a perspective of constant self-training and updating.

Possible cultural dynamics (as processes): multicultural situation means a lot of people or small groups with different cultures that do not share nothing but the

Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

space of existence. They tolerate or ignore the others in the best cases.

Intercultural situation means people (and/or small groups) curious and/or interested and/or obliged by circumstances to have constructive interactions. For example when two or more cultural communities open each others for an event of "cultural introduction" (a party, a convention, etc.). In this situation, in the facts, people recognize value to the concept of dialogue.

Transcultural situation means when people and groups of different cultures start to learn one from another. They build a shared culture that include whatever is proposed from someone and well accepted by the community(ies). In a certain sense it is the positive continuation of intercultural situation.

Crosscultural situation: when cultural, racial, ethnic, religious conflicts explode. In a certain sense it is the negative continuation of intercultural situation.

Of course often when a cultural process begins we have a multicultural situation and intercultural situation starts in the moment in which different people are settled in the same territory. It is not a choice, it is a not (often) aware dynamic. Crosscultural situations are normal in this dynamic of matching and the transcultural situation could be defined in the same moment a part of the dynamic and a good results. Often in a cultural matching process we have all these situations in the same moment among different players or players play different roles in relation to other roles played by other players. And these dynamics often are mixed in the time as a part of bigger process.

Asymmetry: In learning community each person has the same value because he/she brings his/her own knowledge and experience in the community and each kind of knowledge is important as element for feeding the shared elaboration. Thus, horizontal processes forecast people playing different roles in them, and each person may play different roles in the process. Rules for playing roles are internal to the dynamics of each communities, but also they depends from how contents change in the exchange worked out time by time. In fact these changes may involve people in different ways in relation to the contribution they are able or they are interested in giving.

Aims: they are the engine of the learning community. They are shared and mediated between participants to the community. They can change during the life of the community. Or, it is better to say, the internal life processes of the community change its aims. In fact developing knowledge means also developing new practices and discovering it is possible to achieve new goals. Furthermore no content is neutral; it brings consequences, tools, approaches, etc. In a certain sense also aims of the community are the knowledge shared; in fact they are the horizon community is going towards. Thus usually aims suggest if community outcomes are functional to results it wants to achieve, even if sometimes old aims are overcome by new knowledge developed.

In this dynamic each participant is involved. In fact each of them has his/her own aims that will be mediate with aims of others in the process of learning. In fact each participant brings his/her own knowledge and experience to the community and he/she will play them in the community processes following his/her aims, so they will become clearer and clearer to him/her and to the community in a process of matching, mediation, exchange and sharing with the other participants and with the affinity group.

Affinity group: it contributes to define learning community borders. It s the group of participant more involved in the processes and it is the core of the community. Its activities is very significant in the mediation of aims. This means that affinity group establishes parameters for the participation to the community. Affinity group is not a group closed. Its being open depends from shared rules (declared and/or aware or not), community dynamics, group dynamics. The more an affinity group is open to new contributions and to re-elaborate borders, the more the community is alive; in fact being open toward external space means to be able to re-elaborate in creative ways new contents and new stimulations, for the building of shared knowledge. In the same time, being open means to have tools and resources to re-elaborate whatever of new is coming. Furthermore being open means also to be able to use outcomes developed by the community in the context, in a functional way. Or at least, to be available to risk for assessing outcomes. And this indicates an elevate level of self-confidence of the community as a whole. A new participant may enter the affinity group through becoming more and more expert of topics, dynamics, aims and practices of the community; sharing more and more them, and so contributing to re-elaborate them.

Possible path organisations (formal, non formal, informal): as defined by UE there are three possible ways of organizing learning paths.
- Formal paths: they are designed, planned; their main aim is to provide tools, approaches and methodologies for learning. There are persons with the role of facilitators, teachers, etc. At the end of these paths is forecasted the official certification of what learners have learned. This certification is recognized by public authorities.
- Non formal paths: they are designed, planned; their main aim is to provide tools, approaches and methodologies for learning. Often there are persons with the role of facilitators, teachers, etc. At the end of these paths might be forecasted a certification of what learners have learned, but this certification is NOT recognized by public authorities.
- Informal paths: They are not designed, neither planned. They have not the aware aim of providing tools, approaches and methodologies for learning. With a part of exaggeration we might define the whole life of each person a continuous informal path. the definition of Life Long Learning arises from this consideration. It important for each person to have tools and methodologies in order to assess what he/she has learned up to that moment. In fact assessment provides a deeper awareness of what I'm able to do and what I know; it improves my self-confidence and, as consequence, enables me to interact with contexts.

Knowledge building processes: we consider learning as a social practice and so knowledge is the shared product of a common process in which each subject (individual or collective) shares its skills, know-how, practices, etc. In this point of view the approach is the constructivist one: knowledge is a social activity built from a community in its interaction. From here difference between training processes and learning processes arises. In fact, the first one implies a submissive and behaviourist transfer-of-knowledge model that can be "delivered", rather than

a constructivist learning experience that one must undergo in order to derive any benefit. In learning processes there is not a passage of contents from the teacher to the learners. The facilitator's activity is to guide people to express their views and needs in self-aware way in order to perform a continuous exchange of knowledge, allowing co-construction of a shared and conscious knowledge.

Diversity: each individual has his/her specific peculiarities. Each individual feels to be different from the others, for character or culture, or attitude, or whatever things. This feeling is his/her diversity. It could be considered in a positive or negative way, by the individual; anyway, it has a connotation of qualitative value. This feeling allows me to recognize the other individuals as something else from me. This means also that each other person recognizes in me "the other", but there is no awareness of this, because of the lack of dialogue. Only outcome (if any) is a certain dose of suspicions among individuals identified by their diversity. Dialogue arising by shared practices allows to understand that everyone is a stranger for "the others" (each person is stranger for another person with different culture, religion, uses, etc. and vice versa). Everyone has its specific qualities (cultural, physical, personal, experienced, etc): they are the differences that are the wealth of a group. In fact differences haven't a qualitative value in themselves (even if they are not neutral); they develop value in the exchange of the group, as contribution to the building of the shared knowledge.

Contents: topics the participants of the learning community are interested in; information, case studies, bibliography, conversations among participants, example, articles, etc. related to the community topics.

Culture: (from the Latin cultura stemming from colere, meaning "to cultivate") generally refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activities significance and importance. Cultures can be "understood as systems of symbols and meanings that even their creators contest, that lack fixed boundaries, that are constantly in flux, and that interact and compete with one another".[Findley, Carther Vaughn and John Alexander Rothney (2006). Twentieth-century World. Sixth edition, p. 14.]
Or
Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs".[UNESCO. 2002. Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.]

Large societies often have subcultures, or groups of people with distinct sets of behavior and beliefs that differentiate them from a larger culture of which they are a part. The subculture may be distinctive because of the age of its members, or by their race, ethnicity, class, or gender. The qualities that determine a subculture as distinct may be aesthetic, religious, occupational, political, sexual, or a combination of these factors. Each individual make an interpretation of his/her own culture through his/her own personality and the personality of each

individual is affected by his/her culture. In a certain sense people living together build a shared culture in their interaction and it is close part of the knowledge they build together. On the other hand the group ethos and the values of a learning community depends in part from the cultural roots of the participants (in particular from the cultural provenience of the affinity group) and the cultural provenience of an individual in part allows him/her to chose if joining or not a specific learning community and how to join it.

Self-awareness: To know in a deep, not only rational way who I'm. To know my weak and strong points and to accept them completely, with no quality judgement. It means there is no difference of consideration between a strong and weak point, but their functionality in the specific situation. In a certain point of view there are no weak and strong points, but moments of weakness and moments of strength considering my personal conditions of the moment in relation with the context. Self-awareness is to know what are my responsibilities implied by the role I'm playing, what is my conditions in relation to the context, my chances to interact with the context for improving my condition or achieving my aims. Self-awareness is to know well what are my resources and if and how I can/may use them in that specific situation for making interaction functional to may needs/aims. And so on... Self-awareness is a continuous process each person can do, because internal and external conditions change continuously; what is possible to learn is the way to carry on the process. It is a sort of continuous (self)training for learning to analyse oneself, the others, the situation and their interaction for what it is and not from the point of view of expectations and of "what it should be in my opinion".

Self-awareness is a tool for defining one's own identity and how to play it in positive interaction with other people, where positive means "functional to achieve a specific goal". In trascultural situation self-awareness is an important personal tool: it allows to accept a situation for what it is and so analyse it in order to improve it (if considered necessary). On the contrary, the cause of cultural conflicts very often is the inability to accept something different from what I think it must be in that specific way. This doesn't means everything is fine, but only that it is important to evaluate carefully all the implications and the chances in a situation; In fact the risk is to apply a model we are used to in certain situation, only because it is the model we are used to, instead to look for specific approach and tools elaborated for that situation and so better-fitting (please, see item "vision: model VS approach").

Self-awareness is a process we can use as tool for knowing better and better our needs, wishes, fears, expectations, prejudices, and for identifying them when we project them in a situation and so they affect our interpretation of it. Sometimes our projections are only knowledge we have of situations; if we don't develop a vision allowing us to have different points of view, we risk not to have chance to create tools, approaches, etc, to interact positively with the situation and with other people.

Self-awareness is a tool for switching from the model to the approach.

NOTE: in the religion of ancient Greece, hybris was the only sin they conceived. It consisted in lack of awareness of one's own limits and/or inability to understand consequences of a behaviour.

Self-confidence: it is the value a person gives to her/himself. It is possible to improve it by a process of self-awareness. Thus, it is a personal process coming from the inner of a person. It is possible accompanying a person through a path aimed at improving self-confidence, but it is impossible to offer the self-confidence to a person. That is to say a person has to chose to work on his/her self-confidence and to make efforts for improving it. It is possible to support a person in his/her efforts but it is impossible to substitute him/her in making them.

Self-empowerment: It is a process individual carries out in order to improve his/her chances to have positive interactions with the context. It consists in acquiring awareness to be able to interact with the context using well one's own resources. It means to have confidence in them and so to be aware of them.
Self-empowerment is closely linked to self-confidence and self-awareness; this means it is impossible to speak about "empowerment", because we can accompanying a person through a path of self-empowerment (as counsellor, as coacher, as peer, etc.) but it is like freedom or democracy: it is impossible to give it to somebody, it is a personal conquest belonging to inner of each subject (individual or collective ones).