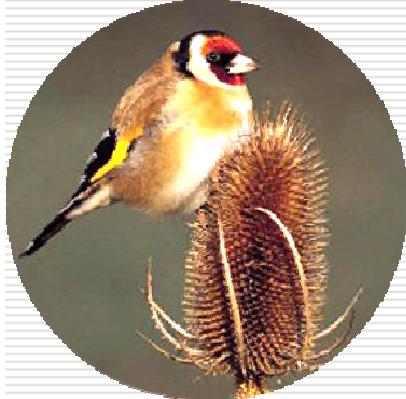


Problem Solving In Chemistry



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Overview

- Definition
- Problem Solving Methods
- The approach
- Is it possible to do it better ?
- Strategies for solving problems
- Conclusions

Problem

"a doubtful or difficult question; a thing hard to understand; a proposition in which something has to be constructed: an enquiry starting from given conditions to investigate a fact, result, or law"

Oxford Dictionary

A matter difficult of settlement or solution: a question or puzzle propounded for solution ... a proposition in which something is required to be constructed, not merely proved as in a theorem: a source of perplexity.

Chambers Dictionary

Problem

"Whenever there is a gap between where you are now and where you want to be, and you don't know how to find a way to cross the gap, you have a problem."

J. R. Hayes, *The complete problem solver*, 2nd Ed., Erlbaum: Hillsdale, NJ, 1989, p. xii.

Feature

"In understanding procedural knowledge we start with problem solving because it seems that all cognitive activities are fundamentally problem solving in nature."

J. R. Anderson, *Cognitive Psychology and its Implications*, 4th Ed., Freeman: New York, 1995, p. 237.

Problem solving

Problem solving is the result of application of knowledge and procedures to a problem situation.

Thought directed toward discovering a solution for a specific problem that involves both response formation and response selection.

Algorithm

A set of rules which are to be learnt and which if applied correctly to an appropriate standard problem will lead automatically to a solution of the problem.

M.J. Frazer, Solving Chemical Problems, *Chem. Soc. Rev.*, 1982, 11, 181.

Questions that require the use of a memorized set of procedures for their solutions.

U. Zoller, A. Lubetzky, M.B. Nakhleh, B. Tessier, Y.J. Dori, Success on Algorithmic and LOCS: vs. Conceptual Chemistry Exam Questions, *J. Chem. Educ.*, 1995, 72, 987.

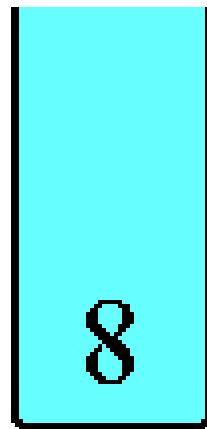
Problema

Si hanno a disposizione tre recipienti, A, B e C. A contiene esattamente 8 tazze di acqua, B contiene 5 tazze e C contiene esattamente 3 tazze

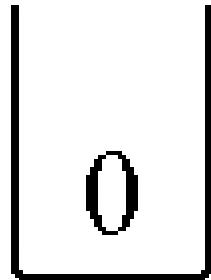
**A viene riempito con otto tazze di acqua.
B e C sono vuoti.**

Problema

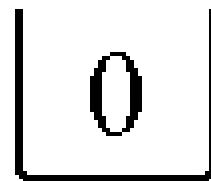
Trovare la maniera di dividere il contenuto di A in modo uguale tra A e B, in modo che entrambi contengano quattro tazze.



A(8)



B(5)



C(3)

È permesso travasare l'acqua tra i recipienti.

Characteristics of a problem

Givens—The problem begins in a certain state with certain conditions, objects, pieces of information, and so forth being present at the onset of work on the problem.

Goals—The desired or terminal state of the problem is the goal state, and thinking is required to transform the problem from the given to the goal state.

Characteristics of a problem

Obstacles—The thinker has at his or her disposal certain ways to change the given state or the goal state of the problem.

R.E. Mayer, *Thinking, problem solving, cognition*, Freeman, New York, 1992, p. 5.

The thinker, however, does not already know the correct answer; that is, the correct sequence of behaviors that will solve the problem is not immediately obvious.

A very helpful classification of problem types has been made by Johnstone. He suggested that there are three variables associated with *all* problems:

The data provided,

The method to be used,

The goal to be reached.

Johnstone, A. H. (1993) Introduction, in C. Wood and R. Sleet (Eds.), *Creative problem solving in chemistry*, London: The Royal Society of Chemistry.

Classification of problem types

Type	Data	Methods	Goals/ Outcomes	Skills Bonus
1	Given	Familiar	Given	Recall of algorithms
2	Given	Unfamiliar	Given	Looking for parallels to known methods
3	Incomplete	Familiar	Given	Analysis of problem to decide what further data are required
4	Incomplete	Unfamiliar	Given	Weighing up possible methods and then deciding on data required
5	Given	Familiar	Open	Decision making about appropriate goals. Exploration of knowledge networks
6	Given	Unfamiliar	Open	Decisions about goals and choices of appropriate methods. Exploration of knowledge and technique networks
7	Incomplete	Familiar	Open	Once goals have been specified by the student, these data are seen to be incomplete
8	Incomplete	Unfamiliar	Open	Suggestion of goals and methods to get there; consequent need for additional data. All of the above skills

Type 1 and 2 are the "normal" problems usually encountered in textbooks and examination papers with type 1 being of an algorithmic nature.

Type 1 can really be regarded as an "exercise".

With incomplete data offered, types 3 and 4 are more complex but not necessarily more difficult. It is a vital skill in being able to find and access relevant data, to know what to look for and how to use it.

Types 5 to 8 have open goals. Indeed, the type 8 problem is the nearest to real life problems.

Johnstone never intended that the eight types would be seen as a hierarchy of difficulty.



Characteristics of a problem

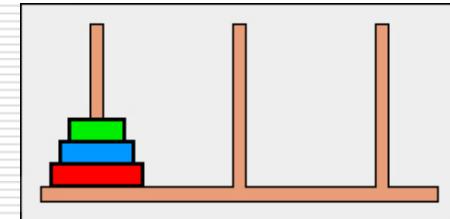
In short, any definition of "problem" should consist of the three ideas that

- (1) the problem is presently in some state, but**
- (2) it is desired that it be in another state, and**
- (3) there is no direct, obvious way to accomplish the change.**

La torre di Hanoi

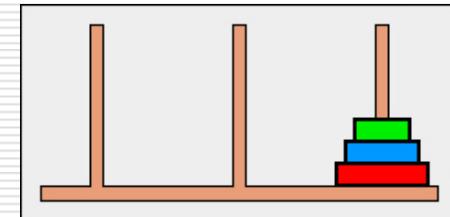
1. Lo stato iniziale

È l'insieme dei dischi di dimensioni differenti impilati in un certo modo nel piolo A e con altri due pioli vuoti, B e C.



2. Lo scopo

Viene raggiunto quando i tre dischi vengono impilati sul piolo B (o C), con il disco piccolo in alto, quello medio al centro e quello grande in basso nella pila.



3. Operatori

L'operatore 'muovi' permette al solutore di spostare i dischi da un piolo ad un altro.

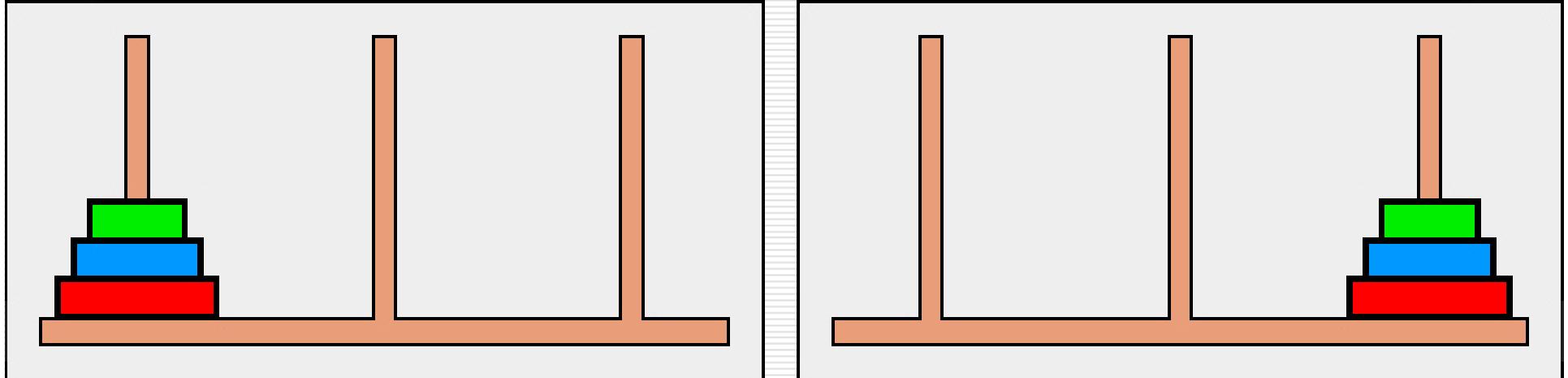
4. Restrizioni

- a) È permesso spostare un disco alla volta;
- b) Non è permesso mettere un disco più grande sopra un disco più piccolo;
- c) È permesso mettere i dischi soltanto nei tre pioli.

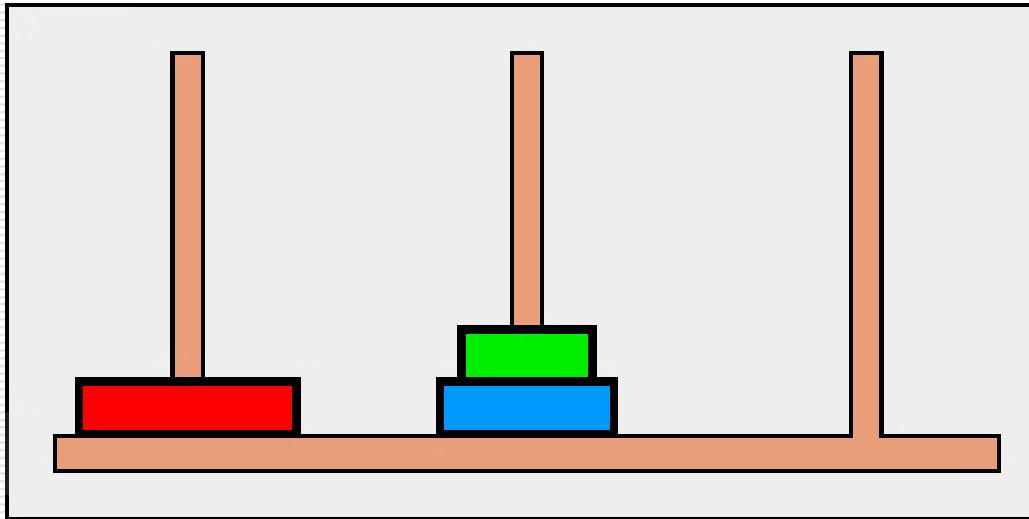
Problem space

Problem space: all the sequences of moves available to the problem solver.

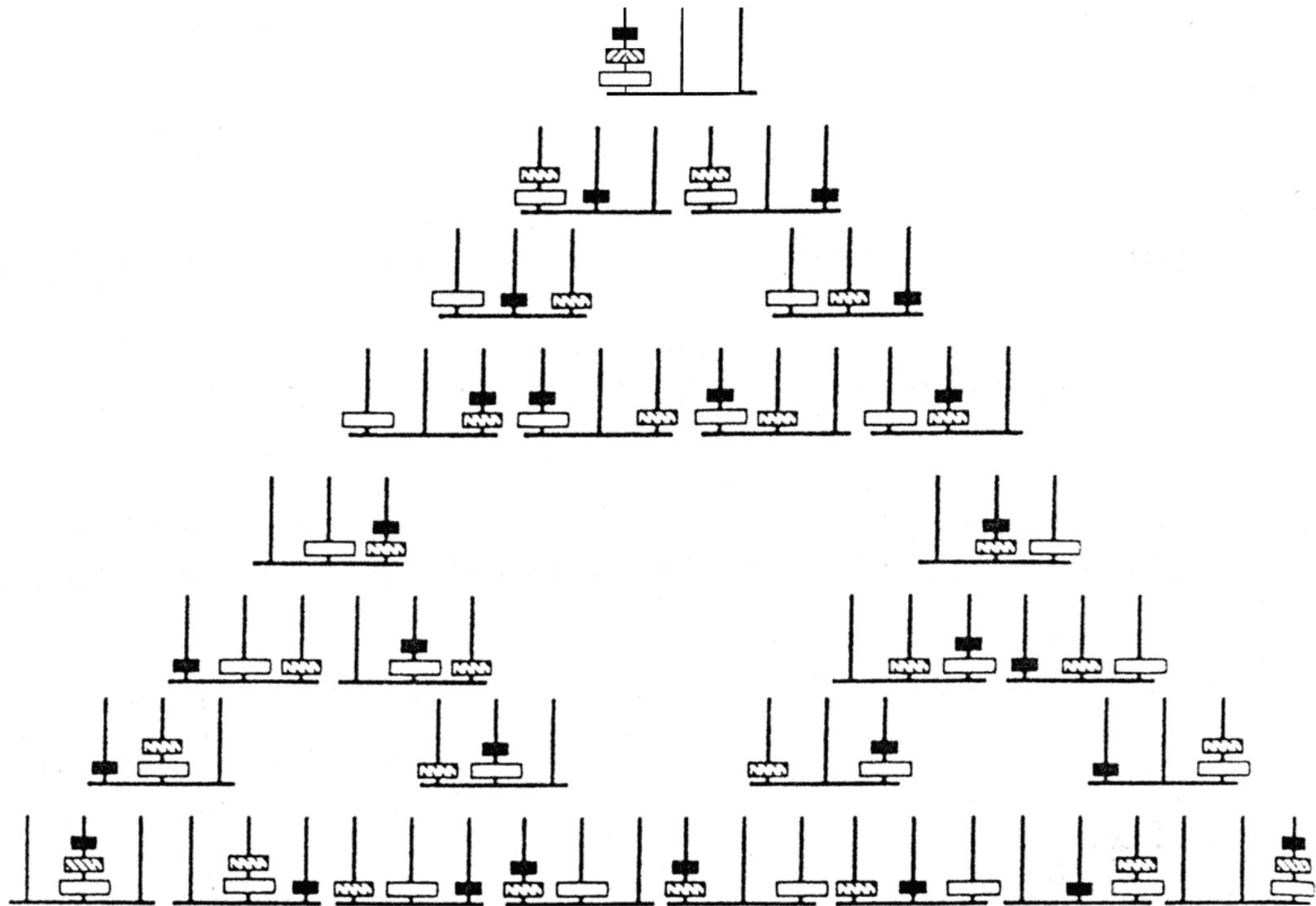
Initial state → **Final state (Goal)**



Subgoals



Subgoals can be used to guide the problem solver around detours.



Adjacent configurations can be reached by a single, legal move of the disk

Well-defined and ill-defined problems

In well-defined problems the solver is provided with four different sorts of information:

1. information about the *initial state* of the problem;
2. information about the *goal state*;
3. information about legal *operators*;
- 4 information about *operator restrictions* which constrain the application of operators.

H. Kahney, *Problem Solving: A Cognitive Approach*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, UK, 1986, p. 20.

We can illustrate the notion of a well-defined problem with reference to the Towers of Hanoi problem.

Initial state. In the Towers of Hanoi problem the initial state is the set of three different-sized rings piled up in a particular way on peg A, an empty peg, Peg B, to the right of Peg A, and another empty peg, Peg C, on the extreme right.

Goal state. The goal state is achieved when the set of different-sized rings are piled up on Peg B, with the small ring on top, the large ring on the bottom, and the medium-sized ring in the middle of the pile.

Operators. Only one operator is explicitly mentioned in the problem statement - the 'move' operator. The operator allows the solver to move rings from one peg to another.

Operator restrictions. There are three restrictions placed on the use of the 'move' operator:

- a) the solver is allowed to move only one ring at a time;
- b) the solver is not allowed to place a larger ring on top of a smaller ring;
- c) the solver is not allowed to place rings anywhere except on one of the three pegs.

Problem Representation

A problem representation is a cognitive structure corresponding to a problem, constructed by a solver on the basis of his domain-related knowledge and its organization.

M. T. H. Chi, P. J. Feltovich, R. Glaser, Categorization and Representation of Physics Problems by Experts and Novices, *Cognitive Science*, 1981, 5, 121-152.

Internal and External Representations

The problem solver creates imagines, objects and relations in his head which correspond to objects and relations in the externally presented (text) problem).

Internal representation: the mental objects and relations related to the problem.

External representation: sketches, diagrams, symbols or equations which correspond to (parts of) the internal representation.

J. R. Hayes, The complete problem solver, 2nd Ed., Lawrence Erlbaum: Hillsdale, NJ, 1989, p. 5.

What do we need to include in an internal representation?

1. The goal
2. The initial state
3. The operators
4. The restrictions on the operators

Rappresentazione del problema

Talvolta la maniera più efficace di rappresentare un problema astratto è l'uso di simboli.

Si consideri il problema: Maria ha dieci anni di meno del doppio dell'età di Silvia. Tra cinque anni Maria avrà otto anni più di Silvia. Quanti anni hanno Maria e Silvia?

La prima frase: $m = 2s - 10$

La seconda: $m + 5 = s + 5 + 8$

$s = 18$ e $m = 26$

WHY PROBLEM-SOLVE?

- problem-solving enables youngsters to take ownership of a task
- it encourages decision-making and many social skills
- it is a form of both active learning and discovery learning
- it is a vehicle for teaching many scientific skills, and for reaching the content aspects of science
- it allows cross-curricular activity

- it provides relevance and real-life contexts
- problem-solving and creative thinking are among the highest and most complex forms of human activity
- it enhances communication.

Watts, M. *The Science of Problem-solving. A Practical Guide for Science Teachers*. Cassell, London, 1991, p. 15.

- it can be fun!

Livelli

1. Fare conversazione

2. Identificare elementi

3. Riconoscere strutture

4. Risolvere problemi

5. Proporre problemi

6. Fare connessioni

7. Creare estensioni

Transizioni

Idee vaghe trasformate in concetti

Concetti organizzati in strutture

Il significato nelle strutture

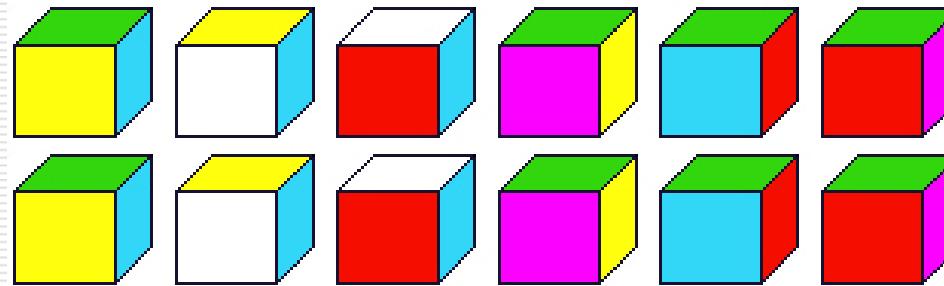
Procedure imparate per ripetizione

Trasferimento ad altri domini

Procedure adattate ad altri contesti

Uno tosto

Si hanno 12 cubetti apparentemente identici. Di questi 12, ce n'è uno che ha il peso differente dagli altri.



Si dispone anche di una bilancia a due piatti.



Come è possibile trovare in 3 pesate il cubo che ha peso diverso ?

Metodi Problem Solving



Strategia Hill Climbing

Strategia Hill Climbing

È la ricerca sistematica della soluzione: continuamente si cerca l'operazione che dallo stato presente porta ad uno stato che è più vicino alla soluzione.

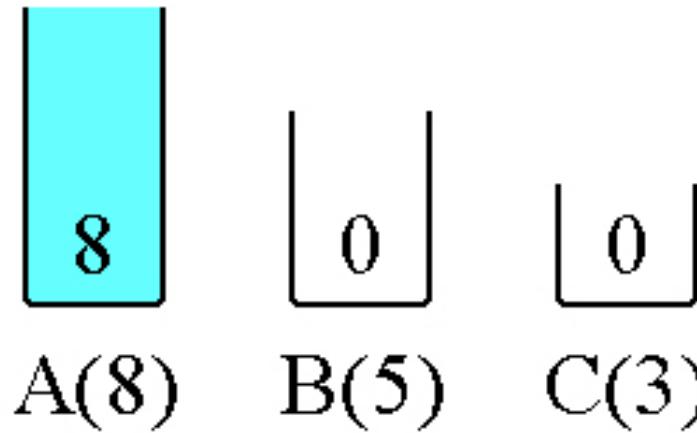
Trovandosi in un certo stato, si valutano tutti i nuovi possibili stati ottenibili dall'applicazione dell'operatore e si sceglie lo stato che porta più vicino alla soluzione.

Utilizzando il metodo hill-climbing è necessario disporre di una **procedura di valutazione** dello stato.

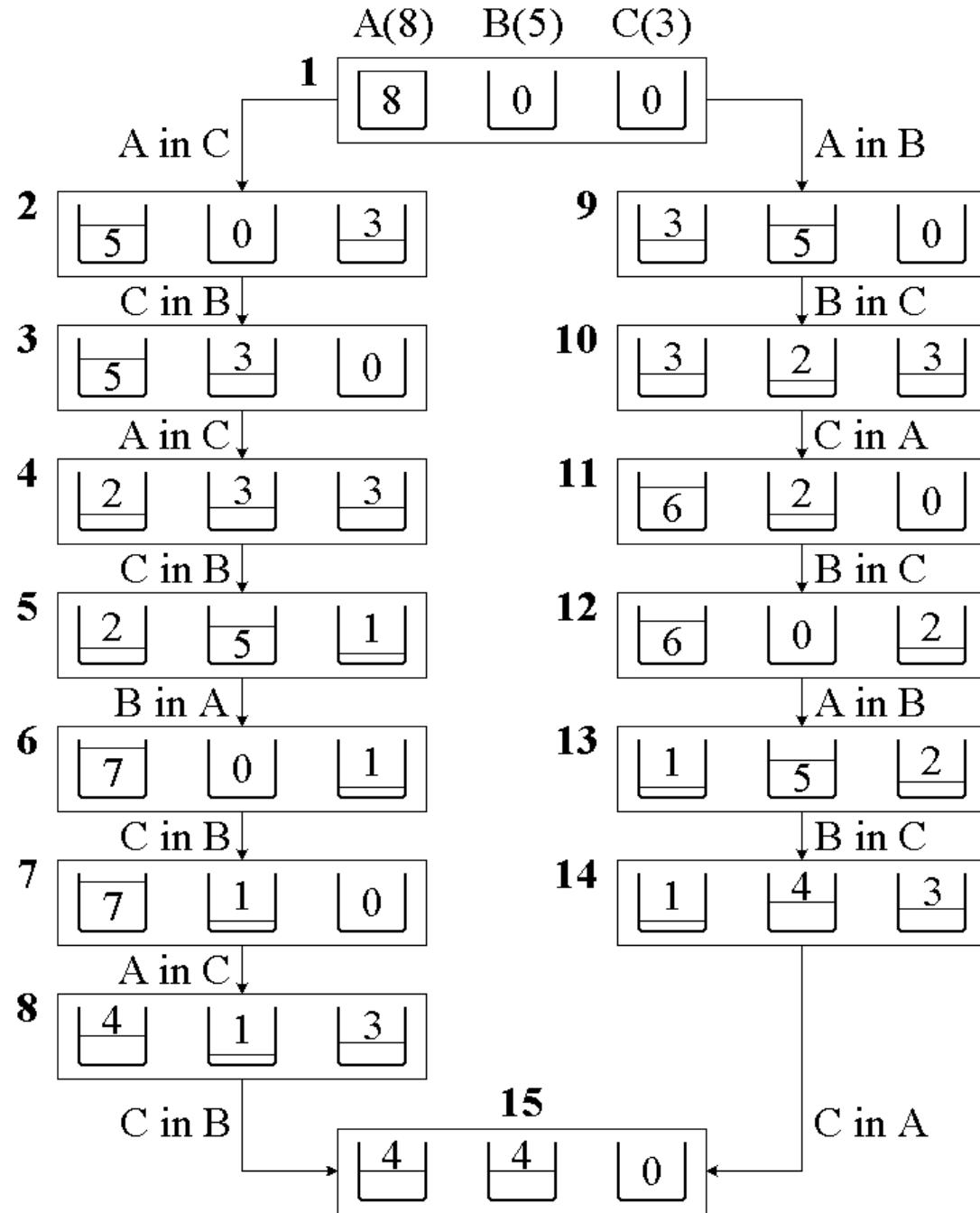
Valutando un solo passo in avanti, in certi casi (strade cieche e deviazioni) fallisce.

Si hanno a disposizione tre recipienti, A, B e C. A contiene esattamente otto tazze di acqua, B contiene esattamente cinque tazze e C contiene esattamente tre tazze.

A viene riempito con otto tazze di acqua. B e C sono vuoti.



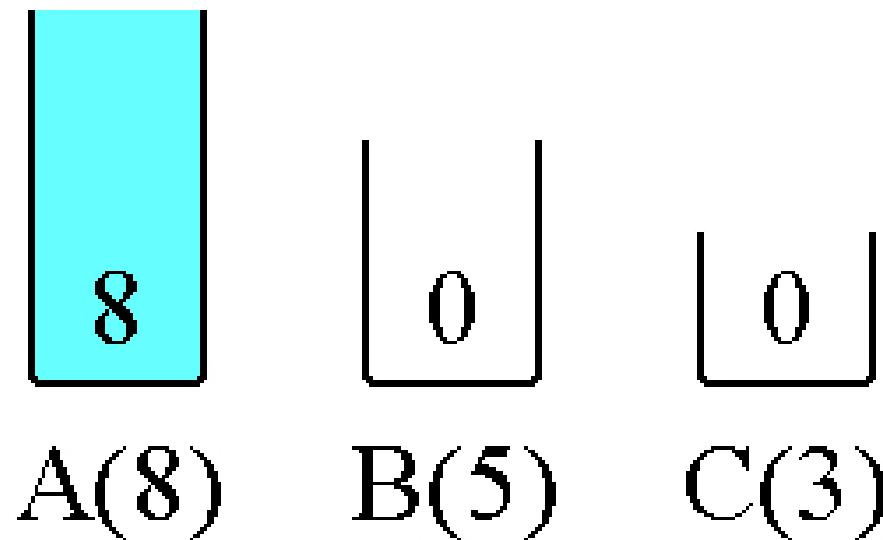
Trovare la maniera di dividere il contenuto di A in modo uguale tra A e B, in modo che entrambi contengano quattro tazze. È permesso travasare l'acqua tra i recipienti.



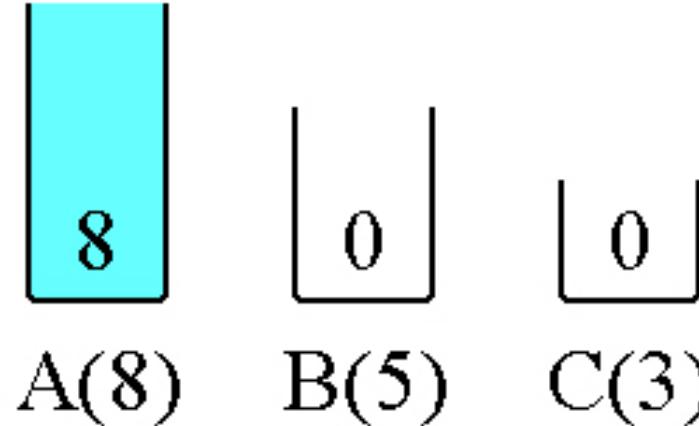
Analisi del problema

Lo stato iniziale (S_i) è definito da A che contiene otto tazze mentre B e C sono vuoti.

Lo stato finale (S_f) è raggiunto quando sia A che B contengono quattro tazze.



Strategia Hill-climbing

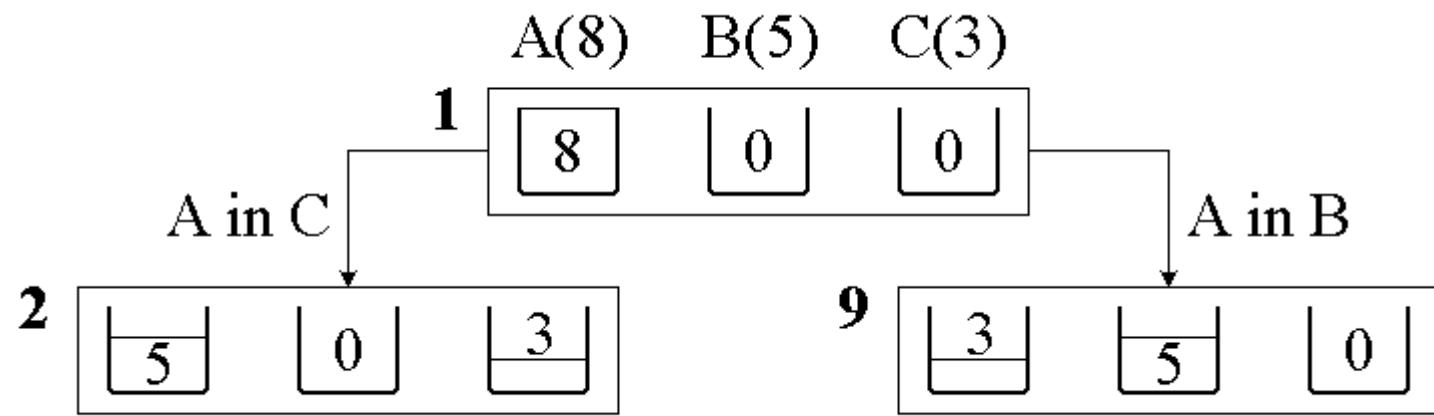


Supponiamo di valutare ciascuno stato determinando quanto i contenitori A e B si discostano da quattro tazze (procedura di valutazione); più ci avviciniamo alle quattro tazze, migliore sarà la valutazione dello stato.

Quale sarà la mossa che una persona farà: verserà A in B o verserà A in C?

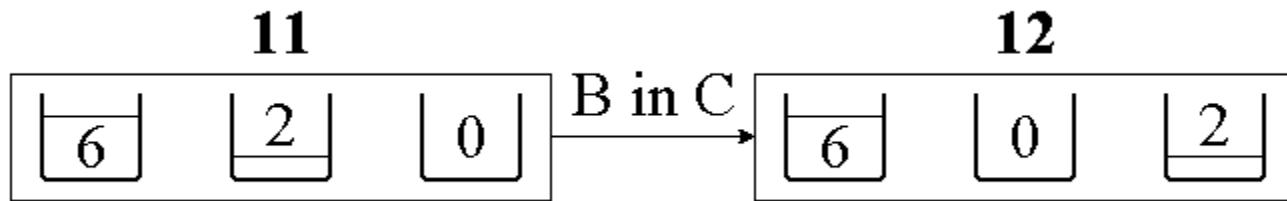
Versando A in B, si ottiene lo stato 9, che differisce dallo stato finale per due tazze (A e B si discostano ciascuno di una tazza); mentre, versando A in C si ottiene lo stato 2, che differisce dallo stato finale per cinque tazze (A differisce di una tazza, B di quattro).

Come è facile predire, lo stato 9 viene scelto dal doppio di persone, rispetto allo stato 2.



Andando da 9 a 15, ci sono delle operazioni che vanno contro la strategia Hill-climbing?

Consideriamo ad esempio l'operazione dallo stato 11 allo stato 12.



L'operazione è tra uno stato che differisce di quattro tazze dallo scopo e si arriva ad uno stato (12) che differisce di sei tazze; secondo la strategia Hill-climbing si sta perdendo terreno.

Soluzione all'indietro

Alcuni tipi di problemi si prestano a questa tecnica; invece di procedere dai dati al risultato, si lavora nella direzione opposta, dal risultato verso i dati.

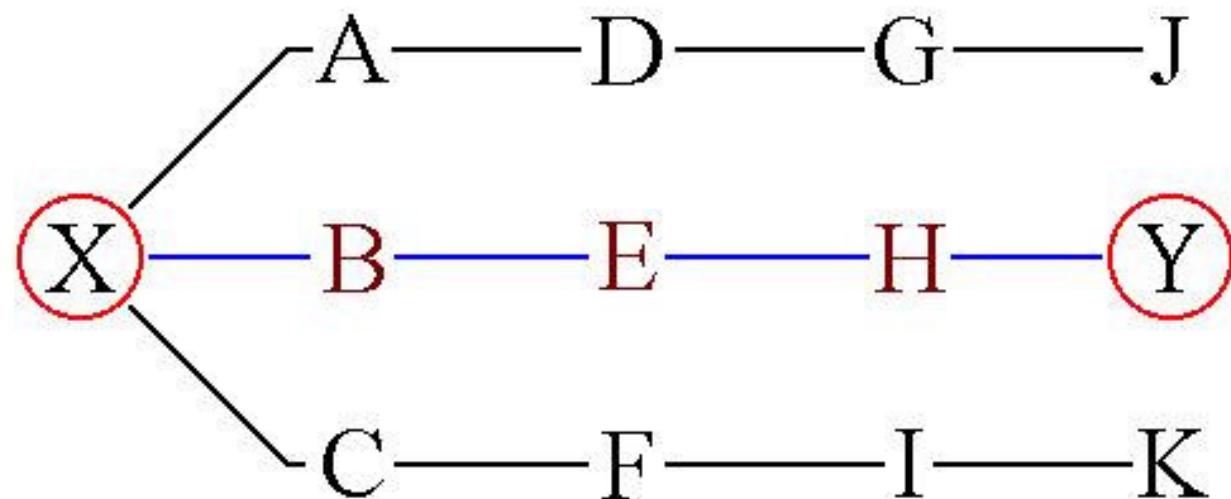
La soluzione all'indietro richiede un semplice cambio nella rappresentazione.

Il vantaggio di questo metodo risiede nel fatto che alcuni problemi sono più facili da risolvere in una direzione piuttosto che in un'altra.

In generale questo metodo funziona in questo modo:
supponiamo che il problema chieda di andare da X a Y.

Partendo da X, ci sono diverse vie promettenti da esplorare nella costruzione della soluzione.

Partendo invece da Y, esiste un'unica successione di operazioni che ci porta ad X.



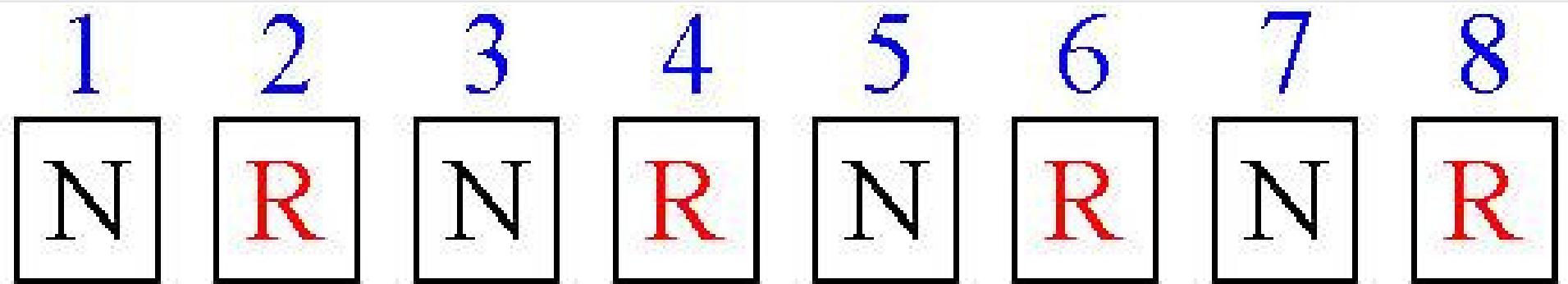
Problema

Si hanno quattro carte nere e quattro carte rosse, facenti parte di un ordinario mazzo di carte. Disporre le otto carte in una pila (faccia in basso) in modo che siano possibili le seguenti operazioni:

1. La carta in alto nella pila si gira sul tavolo: **è nera**.
2. La carta successiva (ora è la prima in alto) va posta in fondo alla pila.
3. La prossima carta in alto nella pila si gira sul tavolo: **è rossa**.
4. La carta successiva in alto nella pila va spostata in fondo.

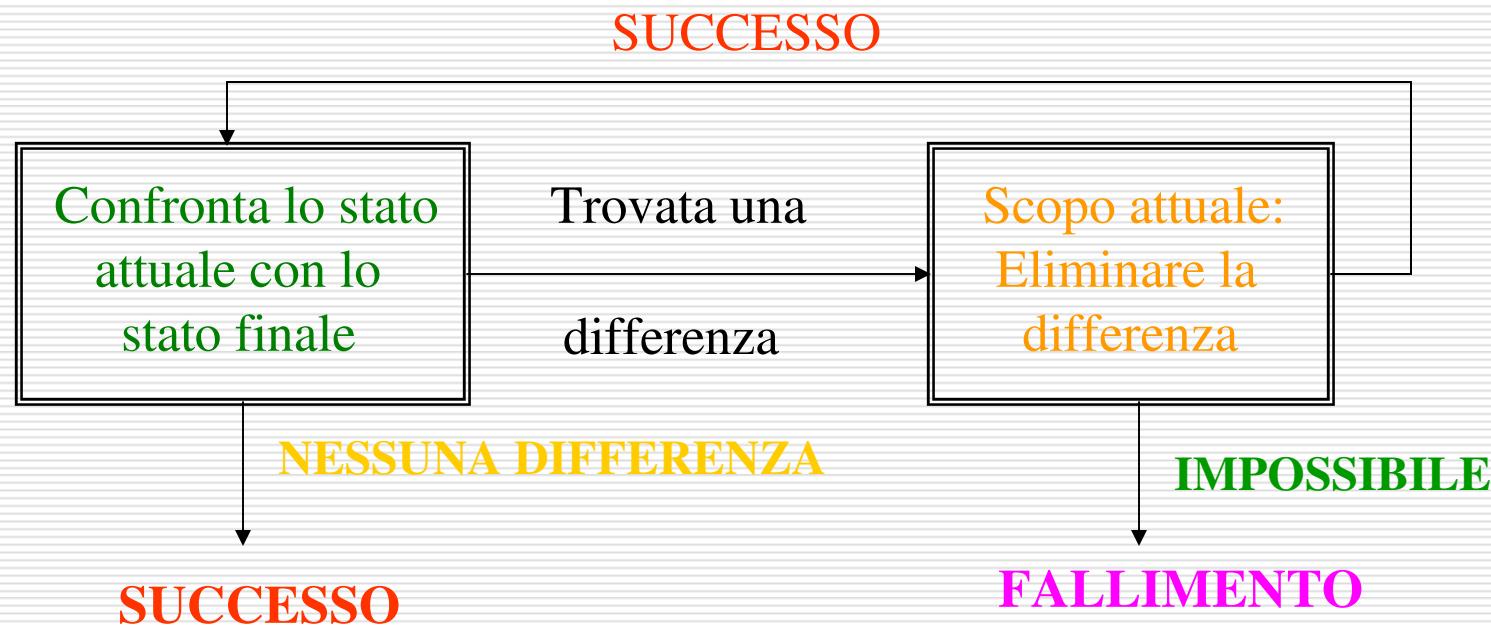
Si procede in questo modo - girando sul tavolo carte in modo alterno - fino a che tutte le carte siano state girate.

Il problema è stato risolto se si ottiene la successione:



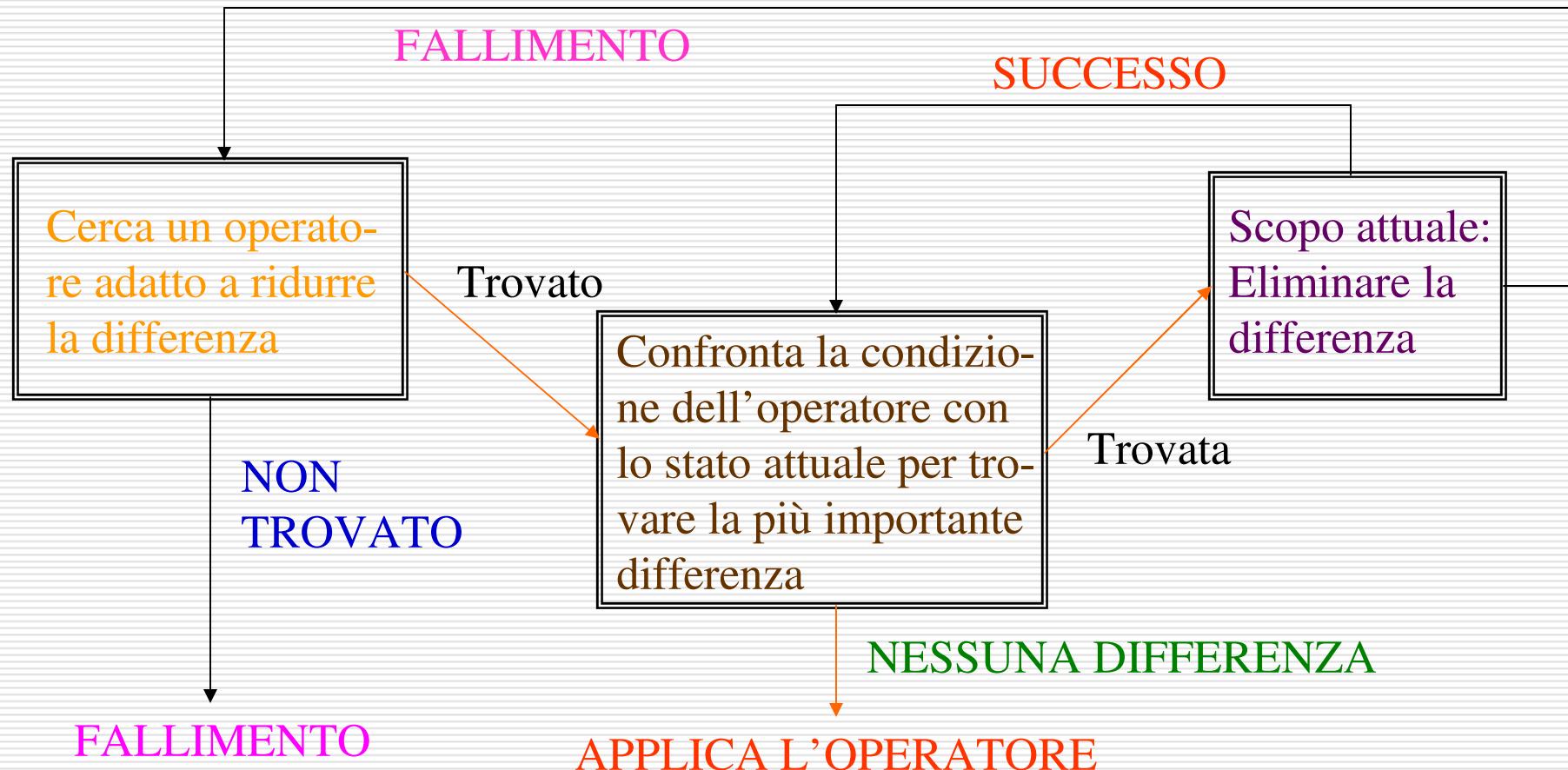
Analisi mezzi-fini (Means-Ends analysis)

PROCEDURA 1. Scopo: Trasformare lo stato corrente nello stato finale



Analisi mezzi-fini (Means-Ends analysis)

PROCEDURA 2. Scopo: Eliminare le differenze



J. R. Anderson, Problem Solving and Learning, *American Psychologist*, 1993, 48, 35-44.

Consideriamo gli estremi

Due pali piantati nel terreno sono alti 100 m.
Una corda legata nella parte più alta dei pali
penzola liberamente.

L'estremità inferiore della corda si trova a
25 m dal suolo. Quanto distano i pali tra
loro?

Acquisition of problem schemas

Schemas are memory representations which embody knowledge based on past experiences with a particular type of problem.

Classification of physics problems

The experts classified problems on the basis of fundamental laws of physics, such as Newton's first law.

Novices grouped problems on the basis of 'surface' features of the problems.

For example, novices were likely to categorize two problems as members of the same class if the diagrams accompanying the problems both showed blocks on an inclined plane.

In fact, the novices tended to call such problems 'inclined plane' problems.

The experts were able to distinguish between different types of problems that had surface similarities; they grouped problems in terms of deep solution principles, such as 'Conservation of energy'.

Chi, M.T.H., Feltovich, P.J., Glaser, R., Categorization and representation of physics problems by experts and novices, *Cognitive Science*, 1981, 5, 121-152.

Le galline

In un pollaio ci sono X galline. Un primo cliente acquista un numero di galline pari alla metà di quelle che ci sono nel pollaio più mezza gallina; un secondo cliente acquista un numero di galline pari alla metà di quelle che ci sono nel pollaio più mezza gallina; il terzo cliente acquista la metà delle galline rimanenti nel pollaio più mezza gallina.

Regole:

1. nessuna gallina muore;
2. nessuna gallina rimane alla fine
nel pollaio.

Quante erano le galline nel pollaio?



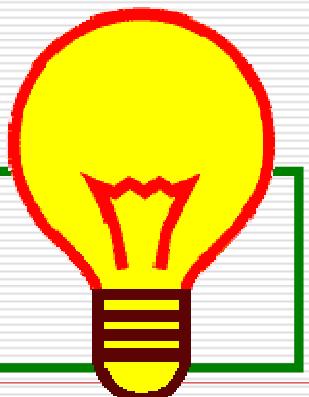


Capacità della memoria di lavoro

Numero di differenti informazioni
(chunks) presenti nella memoria
attiva in un certo istante: 7 ± 2

Miller, G. A. (1956). The magic number seven, plus or minus two: some limits on our capacity for processing information, *Psychological Review*, 63, 81-91.

Quali implicazioni ?



Limoni

Lemon

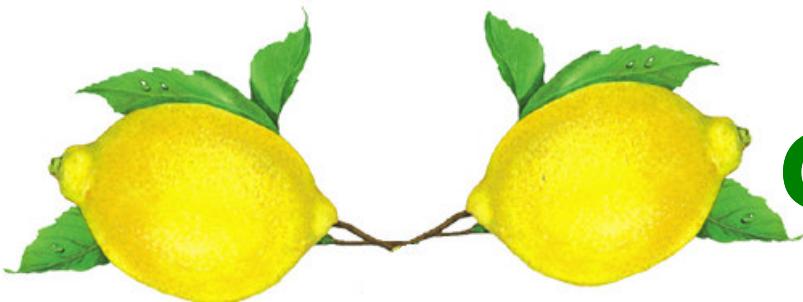
Citron

Zitrone

Жлстрфийидвся

מַחְקִיּוֹלָןְחַבִּישֶׁרָאֵל

产品：硫酸四氨合铜



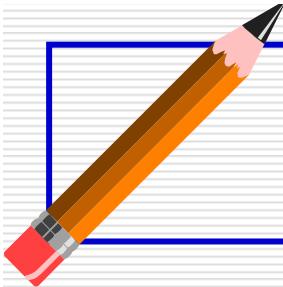
Factors Influencing Success in PS

Prior Experiences and Knowledge. Various studies (Frazer & Sleet; Bodner; Reid & Yang) have shown that students either *cannot* or *will not* use planning in solving problems.

Conceptual Grasp of Ideas. Chemistry is hard to learn. Johnstone suggested that chemistry involves three levels of knowledge: the macroscopic, the microscopic and the symbolic level.

L'esperto (e lo studente)

- 1-Esegue l'analisi del problema in modo completo e pianifica la risoluzione prima di iniziare a fare i calcoli
- 2 - Usa strategie più potenti ed efficaci
- 3 - Conosce l'ordine di grandezza del risultato ed esegue continuamente la verifica rispetto ai risultati che ottiene

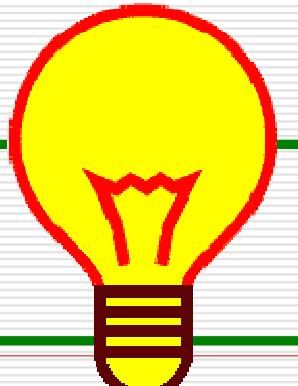


Analisi del problema

Analizzare il problema significa comprendere il problema, ragionare sui dati, cercare delle relazioni, rileggere il testo, riflettere su quanto scritto, cercare una soluzione qualitativa, controllare la rappresentazione, ecc.

Si suggerisce di leggere il testo del problema, rifletterci per 3-5 minuti, poi rileggerlo incominciando dalla richiesta finale.

Quali implicazioni ?



La stima del risultato è un potente strumento logico a disposizione dello studente

I metodi di verifica si basano:

- 1.** Sul bilancio di massa e di carica
- 2.** Sull'uso di relazioni indipendenti e su soluzioni alternative
- 3.** Sul controllo di quantità invarianti

Cosa si fa quando la verifica non è esauritiva?

Vanno tenute presenti queste domande:

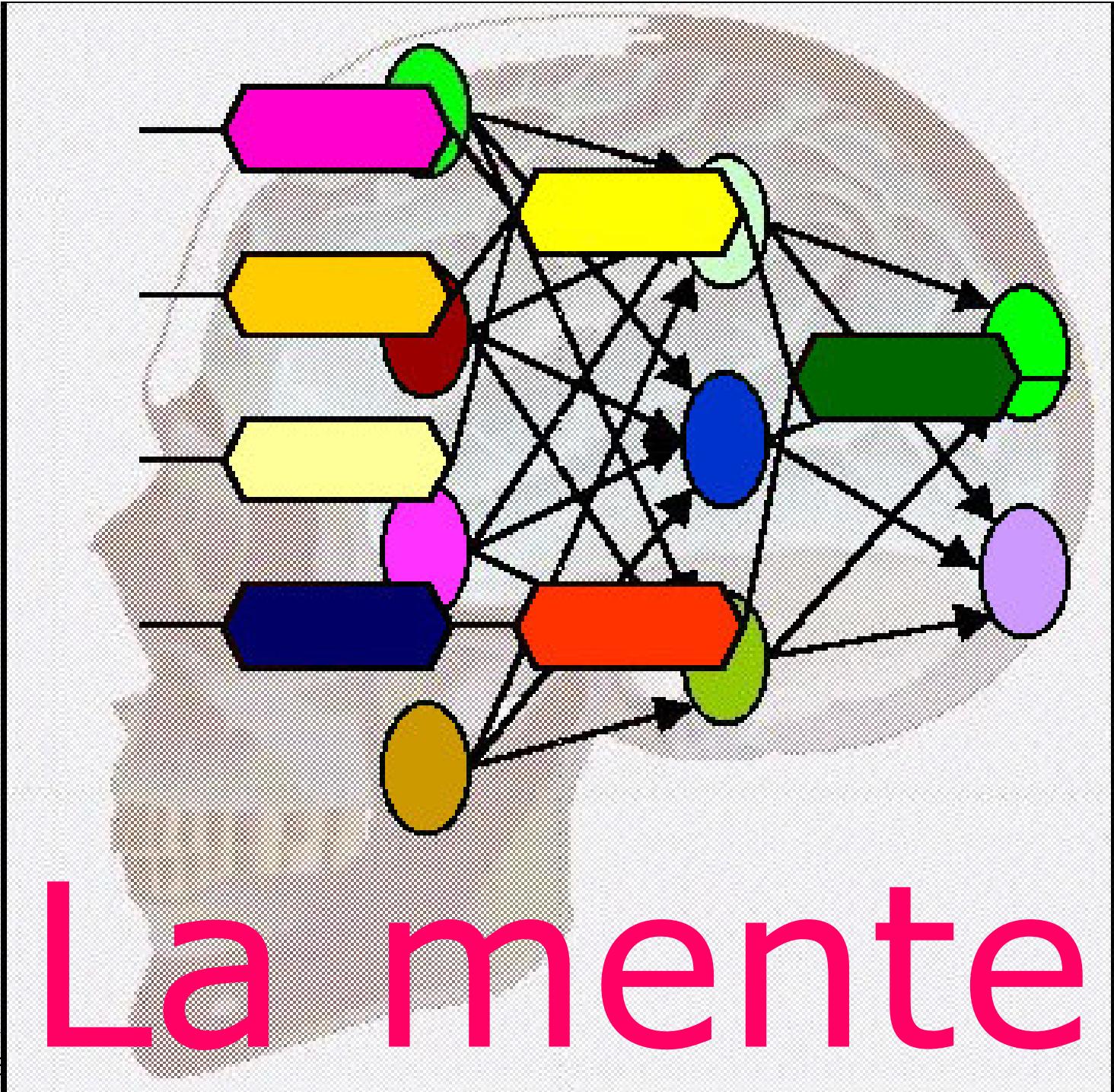
1. Ha senso il risultato?
2. L'ordine di grandezza del risultato è ragionevole?
3. Sono corrette le unità di misura?

Errori

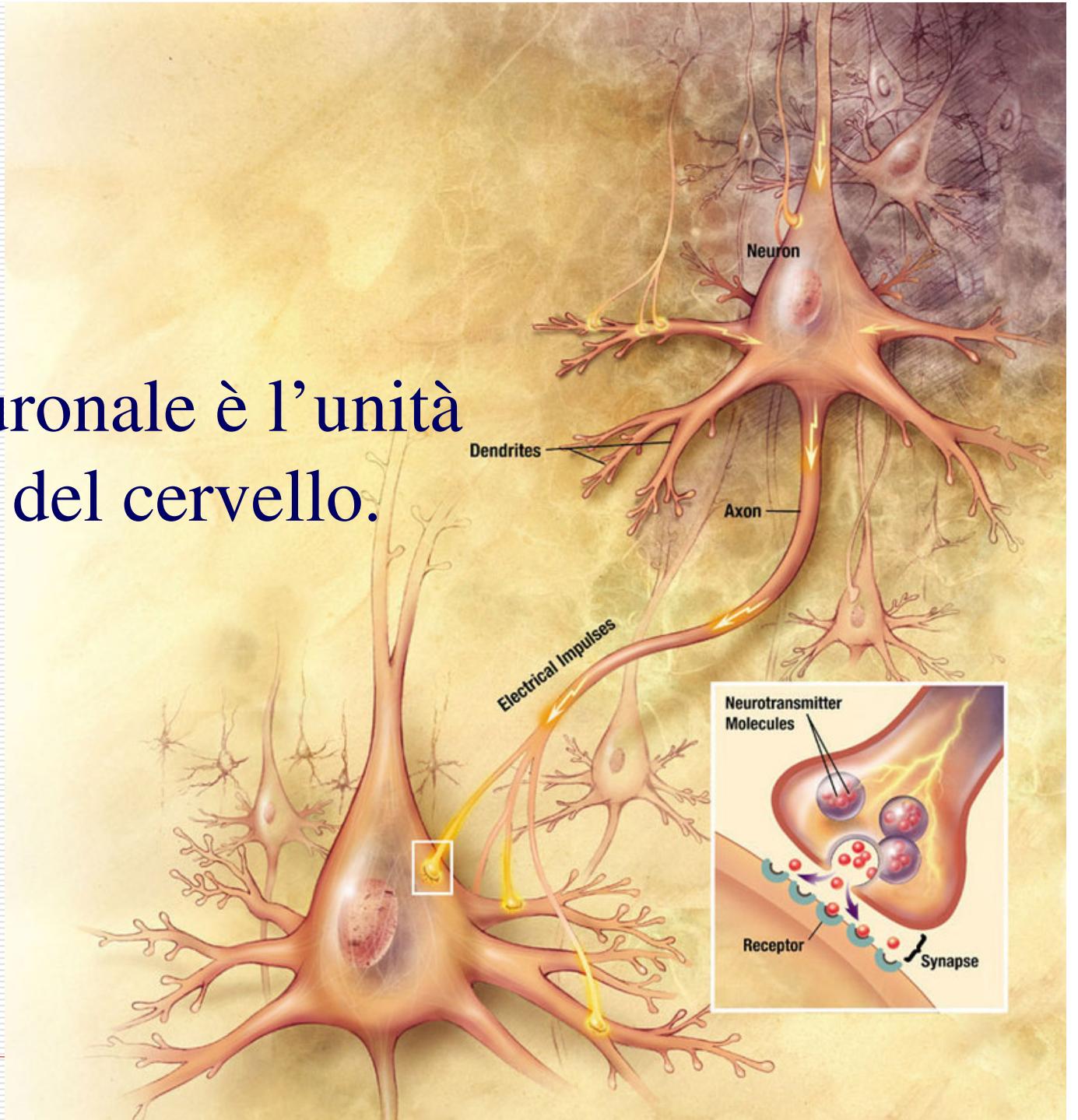
Tutti facciamo errori.

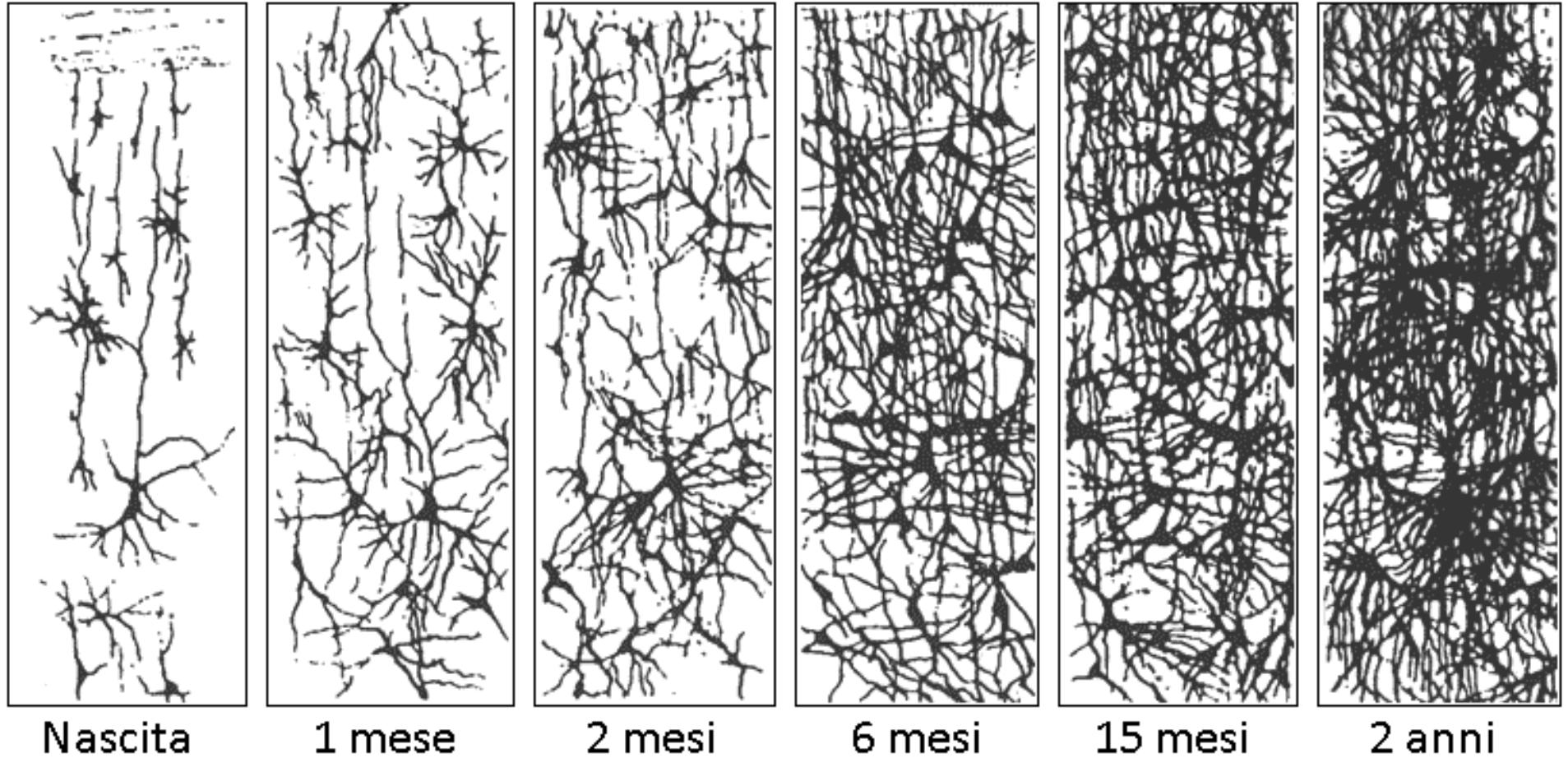
Gli errori sono un problema quando non vengono capiti. Se chi commette un errore capisce perché ha sbagliato, non farà più quell'errore.

Devono essere considerati come un'occasione per discutere in modo produttivo con la classe.

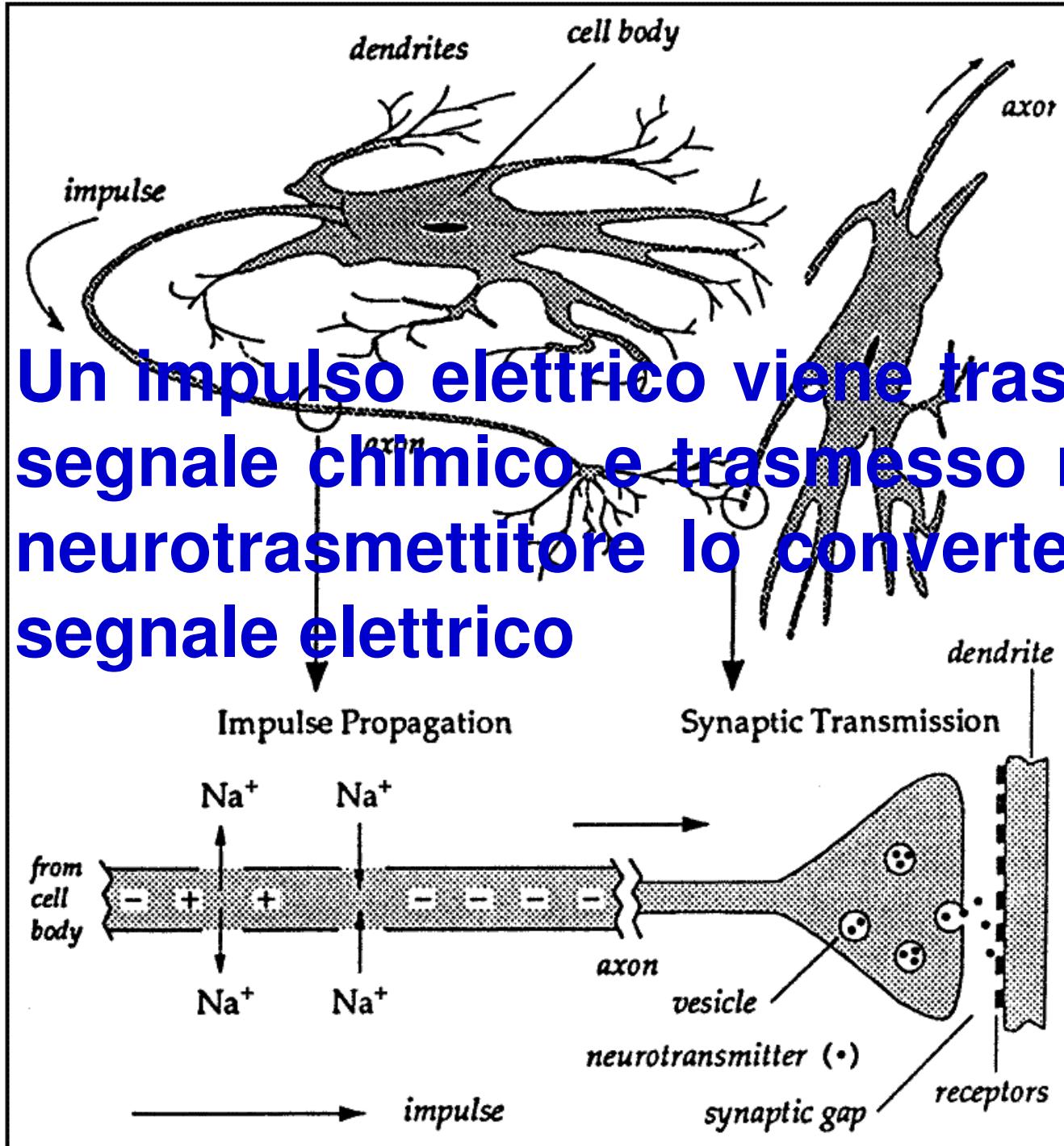


La cellula neuronale è l'unità fondamentale del cervello.

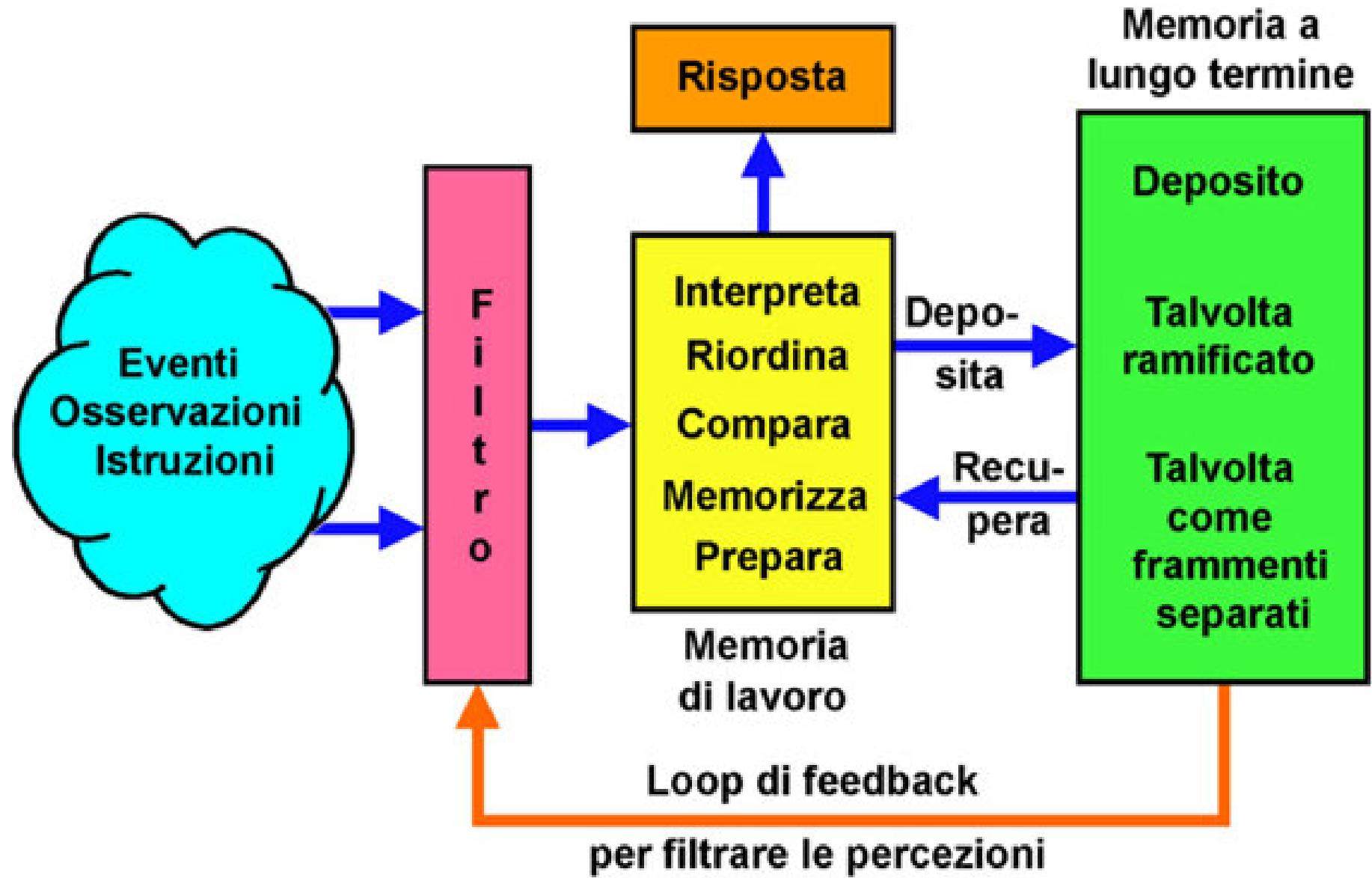




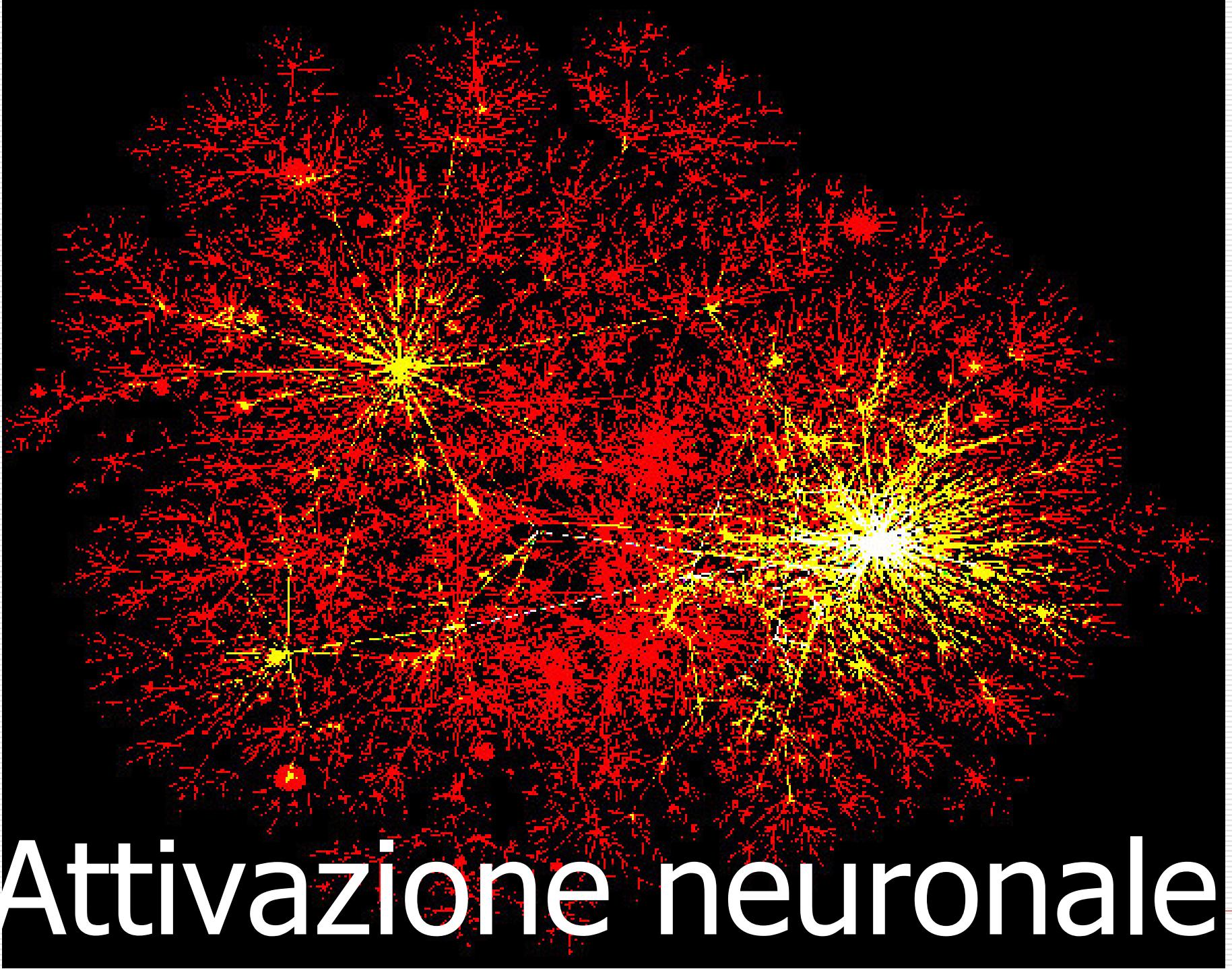
Nella nostra mente ci sono $\sim 10^{11}$ neuroni e $\sim 10^{14}$ sinapsi; il tempo per un ciclo è 1-10ms



Un impulso elettrico viene trasformato in un segnale chimico e trasmesso nell'assone; il neurotrasmettore lo converte in un nuovo segnale elettrico



Il modello dell'elaborazione delle informazioni



Attivazione neuronale

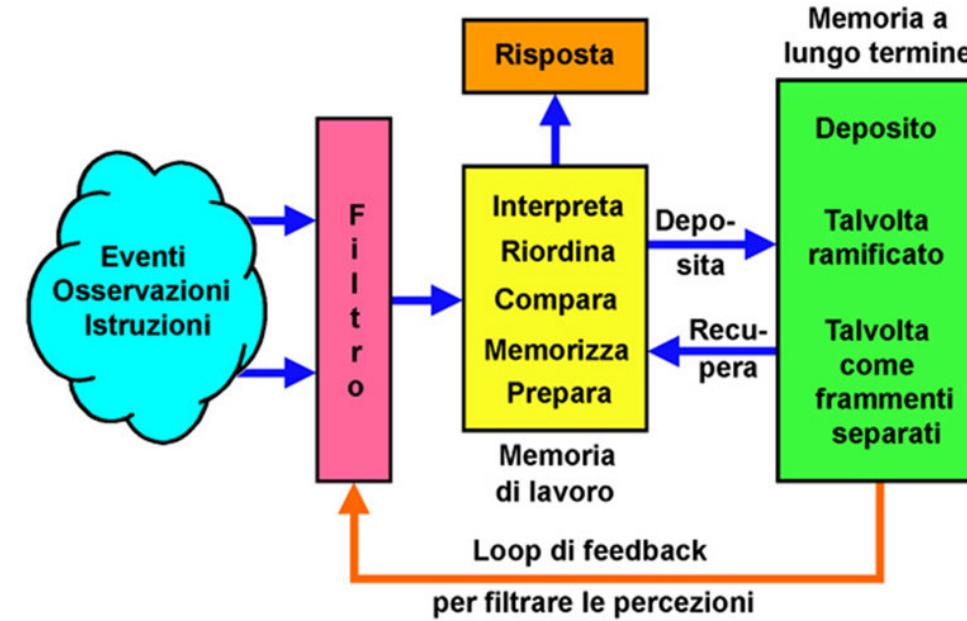
Modello della mente

È analogo ad un calcolatore in cui percezione = input (tastiera, ecc..), spazio di lavoro = memoria ad accesso casuale (RAM) e deposito a lungo termine = disco rigido.

La **percezione** è un processo di filtrazione attraverso il quale scegliamo di prestare attenzione a determinate parti del nostro input sensoriale e di ignorarne altre.

Questa filtrazione è controllata dal nostro deposito a lungo termine dove decidiamo dell'importanza, dell'interesse e dell'attenzione, basandoci su esperienze e su conoscenze precedenti.

Se qualcosa ci interessa o ci sembra essere importante, gli prestiamo attenzione.
Alla nostra percezione, aggiungiamo idee ed associazioni prese in prestito da esperienze precedenti.



Lo spazio di lavoro (Short-Term Memory, STM) è dove l'input filtrato viene trasferito per essere elaborato.

Questo spazio ha due funzioni: registrare le informazioni ed elaborarle in una forma comprensibile.

In STM l'input viene paragonato con quanto è memorizzato nel deposito a lungo termine e cerca i collegamenti che daranno un significato all'input.

Se viene trovato un collegamento, lo studente esclama: "questo ha senso!". Ma se non viene trovata una corrispondenza, le informazioni possono essere rifiutate e dimenticate o possono essere "distorte" per farle corrispondere.

C'è una complicazione ulteriore che riguarda lo spazio di lavoro; è di capacità limitata. C'è un limite alla quantità di informazioni che possiamo memorizzare ed elaborare in un certo momento.

C'è anche da fare continuamente un compromesso.
Se dobbiamo trattenere in memoria molte informazioni, abbiamo poco spazio o addirittura ci mancherà lo spazio per elaborarle. Similmente, se dobbiamo fare molta elaborazione, non possiamo trattenere molte informazioni in memoria.

Memoria a lungo termine (Long-Term Memory, LTM) è un ampio deposito di informazioni collegate in reti pressoché sconfinate di associazioni. Contiene cose che amiamo e cose per le quali abbiamo antipatia, credenze e pregiudizi, interessi e ripugnanze. Quando una nuova informazione entra in questo deposito può trovare dei collegamenti in parecchi modi:

(a) Si può collegare correttamente nella rete esistente, aumentandone ed arricchendone la complessità.

- (b) Può fare dei collegamenti sbagliati, spesso originati dal linguaggio.
- (c) Non può trovare alcun collegamento, e lo studente lo "parcheggia" in uno spazio dove in un secondo tempo sarà difficile da ritrovare.
Non è parte del suo "sistema di classificazione" e così viene perso facilmente.
- Questo è quello che viene imparato a memoria dagli studenti prima dell'esame; le informazioni non sufficientemente digerite verranno trattenute per qualche tempo prima di andare perdute.

Chunking

The recording of stimuli so that the information load per unit is decreased (for example, letters into words, words into phrases and so on).

R. L. Solso, *Cognitive Psychology*, 4th Ed., Allyn and Bacon: Boston, MA, 1995, p. 516.

PROCESSI DI CHUNKING

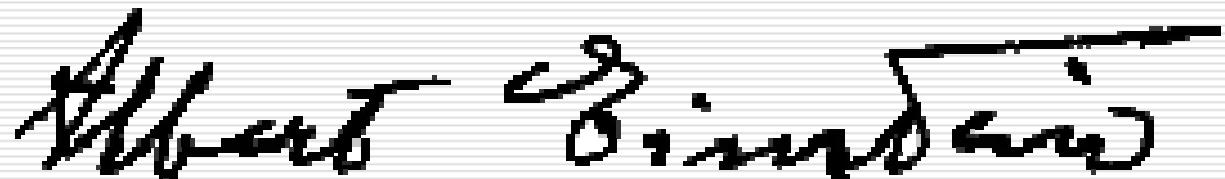
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

7 9 4 6 1 8 3 5 0 2

The approach

The approach

Insanity is continuing to do things the way we have always done them, and expecting to get different results

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Albert Einstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Albert" on the left and "Einstein" on the right, separated by a small gap.



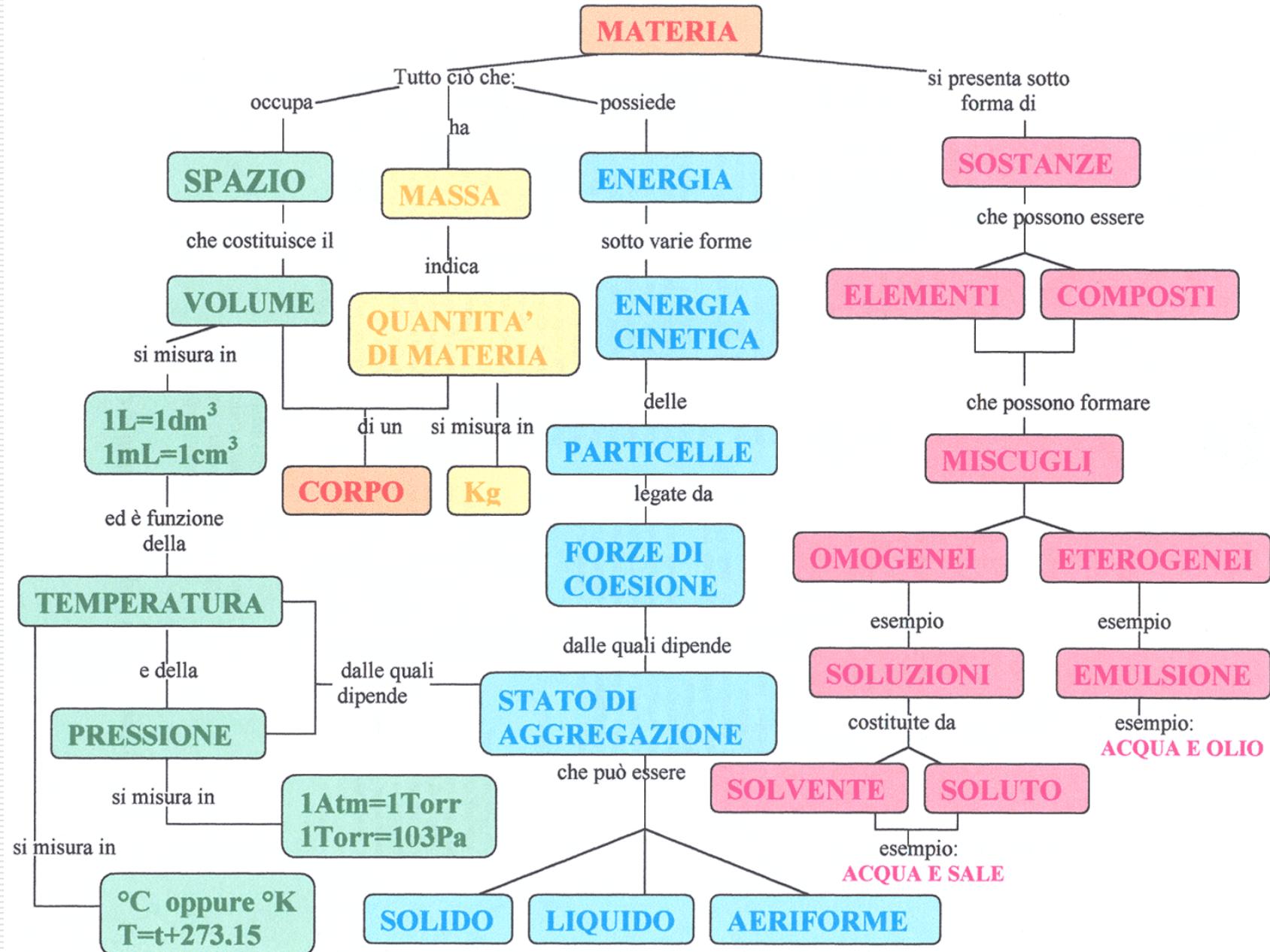
**7,000 solved
problems**

60 students: 4,106 solutions

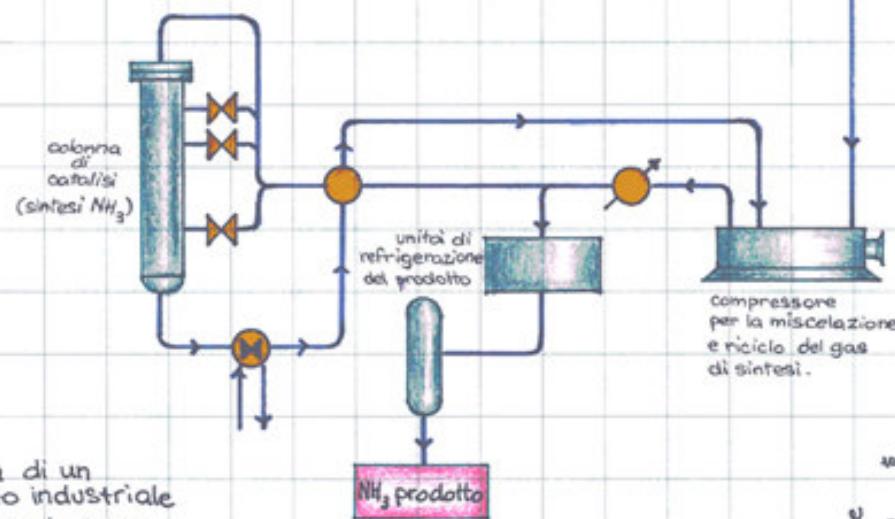
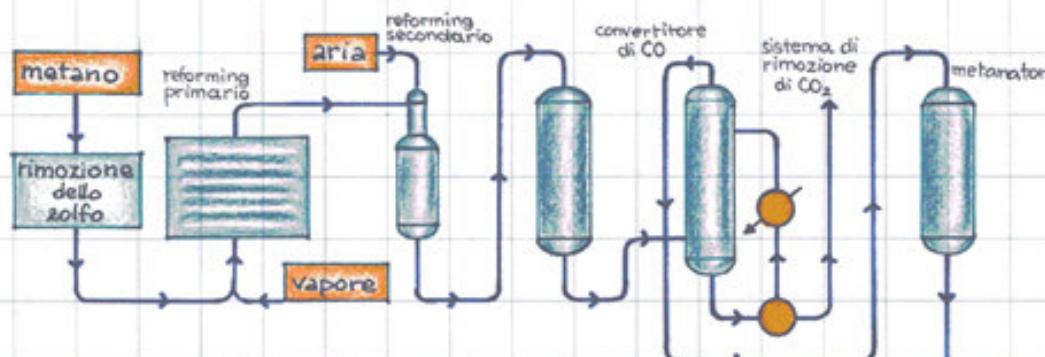


Concept Maps





SINTESI DELL'AMMONIACA

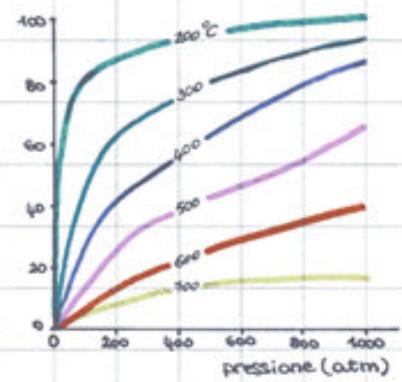
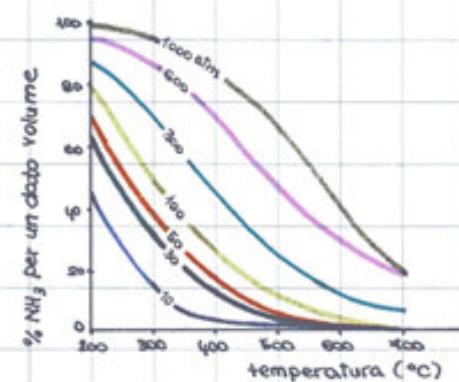


Schema di un
impianto industriale
per la produzione
di ammoniaca.

Nome:

Cognome:

- 1 CH₄ → desulfurazione Lo zolfo avvelena il catalizzatore.
- 2 H₂O(g) → reforming primario $\text{CH}_4 + \text{H}_2\text{O} \rightleftharpoons \text{CO} + \text{H}_2$
 $\text{CO} + \text{H}_2\text{O} \rightleftharpoons \text{CO}_2 + \text{H}_2$
- 3 aria → 10% CH₄
reforming secondario $\text{CH}_4 + \text{O}_2 \rightarrow \text{CO}_2 + 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$
 $2\text{H}_2 + \text{O}_2 \rightarrow 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$
- 4 ossidazione CO $\text{CO} + \text{H}_2\text{O} \rightleftharpoons \text{CO}_2 + \text{H}_2$
- 5 rimozione CO₂ Assorbimento su soluzioni alcaline
 $\text{CO}_2 + 2\text{NaOH} \rightarrow \text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3 + \text{H}_2\text{O}$
- 6 metanazione $\text{CO} + 3\text{H}_2 \rightarrow \text{CH}_4 + \text{H}_2\text{O}$
 $\text{CO}_2 + 4\text{H}_2 \rightarrow \text{CH}_4 + 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$
- 7 compressione La pressione passa da 25 atm a 250 atm
- 8 sintesi il reattore opera a 450°C ~ il gas in uscita contiene 15% NH₃



Cooperative Learning



La necessità di sfide adeguate

Gli studenti devono, per quanto possibile, operare nella "zona dello sviluppo prossimale"

Quando chiedono il nostro aiuto, il nostro compito non è quello di fornire la soluzione al problema, ma quello di dare dei suggerimenti sulle strategie generali problem solving.

La nostra funzione è quella di facilitare la loro personale acquisizione delle abilità cognitive.

Ad esempio, chiediamo ...

- ◊ Come è stato rappresentato il problema?
- ◊ Il problema è stato suddiviso in sotto-problemi?
- ◊ Cosa si può dire sul risultato?
- ◊ Quali relazioni sono applicabili?
- ◊ Ci sono analogie con problemi precedentemente risolti?

Le assunzioni

Spesso, per superare l'ostacolo nella risoluzione del problema non immediatamente risolvibile, gli studenti ricorrono a delle assunzioni che risultano quasi sempre sbagliate.

Se, chi ci chiede aiuto ha fatto ricorso a qualche assunzione, chiediamo di dimostrarne la correttezza oppure di confutarla, perché illecita.

Zona di sviluppo prossimale

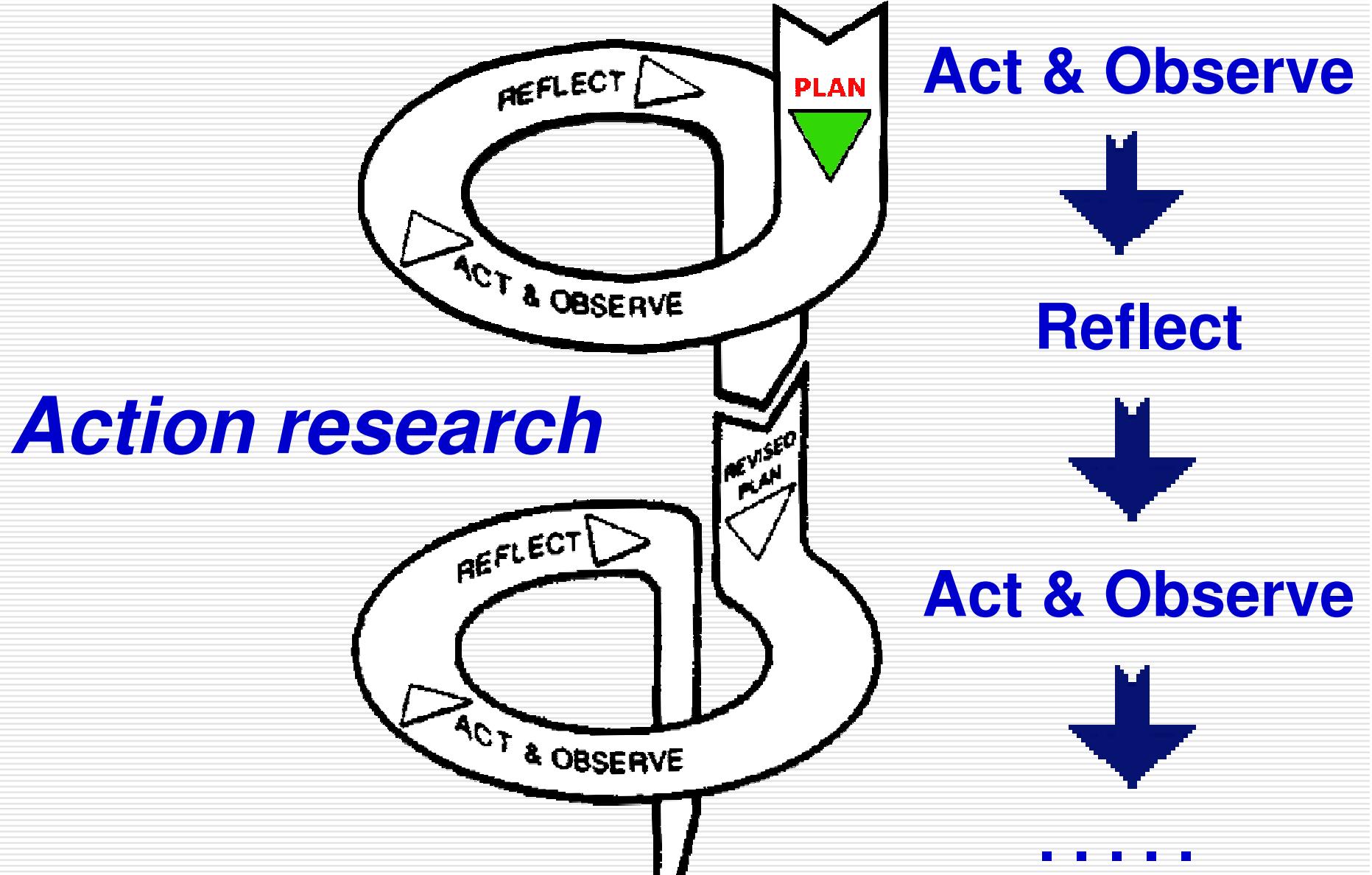
Spazio intermedio fra il livello di sviluppo attuale, determinato dalla capacità personale di risolvere problemi, e il livello di sviluppo potenziale, determinato dalla capacità di soluzione di problemi con l'assistenza di un esperto o attraverso la collaborazione con i compagni.

**L. Dixon-Krauss, Vigotskij nella classe, Erickson:
Trento, 1998, p. 35.**

The first lessons are crucial for establishing a supportive and positive learning environment in the class.

In the very first lesson,

- I collect the names of the students (to make CL groups),
- express my enthusiasm for learning,
- voice my expectations that all students will learn much
- learn their names and always I call someone by name
- they were promised that I would correct every single problem they solved



G. Bodner, et al. *University Chemistry Education*, 3, 31 (1999)

Shulman's Table of Learning:

- Engagement and Motivation
- Knowledge and Understanding
- Performance and Action
- Reflection and Critique
- Judgment and Design
- Commitment and Identity

L.S. Shulman, Making Differences: A Table of Learning, *Change*, 34, 36 (2002)

Some results

In my last course **84 students solved 6,200 problems.** 60 of them, solved **5,550 problems, each one from 41 to 221:** mean value = **92.55, s.d. = 37.1.**

I collected about **920 concept maps** and exchanged **300 e-mails with them.**

The majority of students enjoyed the course.

9 students solved one or more difficult problems discovering an original solution.

In another course this last year, about 40 students solved 3,740 problems;

At one student I have corrected 227 problems;

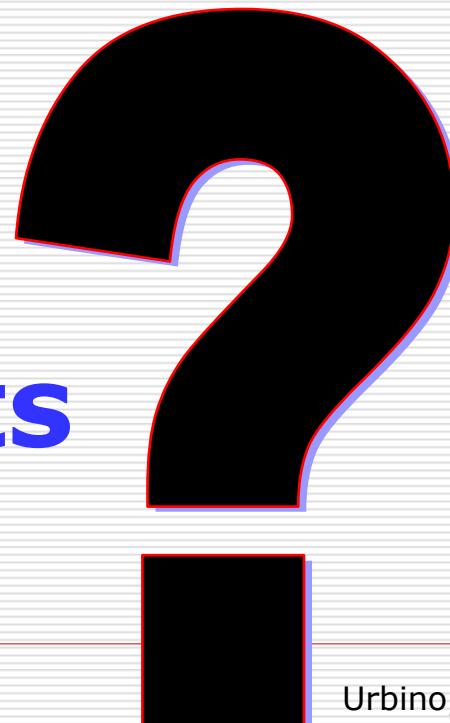
25 students solved 46 difficult problems in a creative way, discovering original solutions.

All the students increase their problem solving abilities and their own self-esteem.

93,6% (AT data, N=407) of the students that pass the chemistry exam with a mark $\geq 27/30$, they graduate with 110/110 or summa cum laude.

www.univpm.it/docenti/Cardellini

How these results can be obtained



What type of practice makes it more probable that students will engage in meaningful learning?

How is it possible to start a systemic approach to (chemical) problem solving?



Results from Word Association Testing

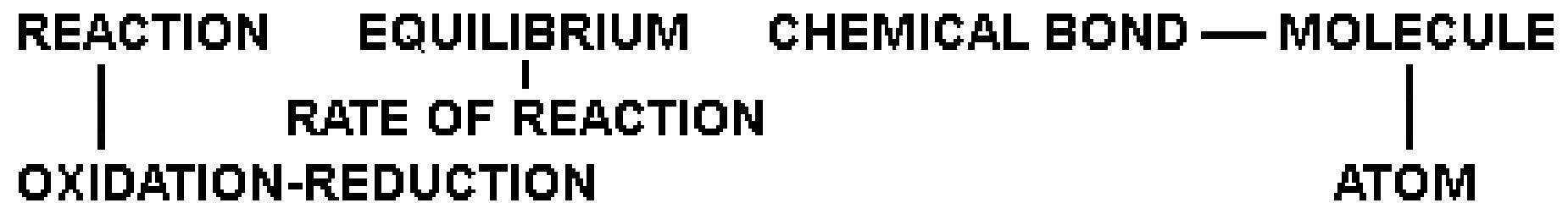
The test afford to map the cognitive structure of a particular area of study.

Ten key words from the main concepts of the curriculum:

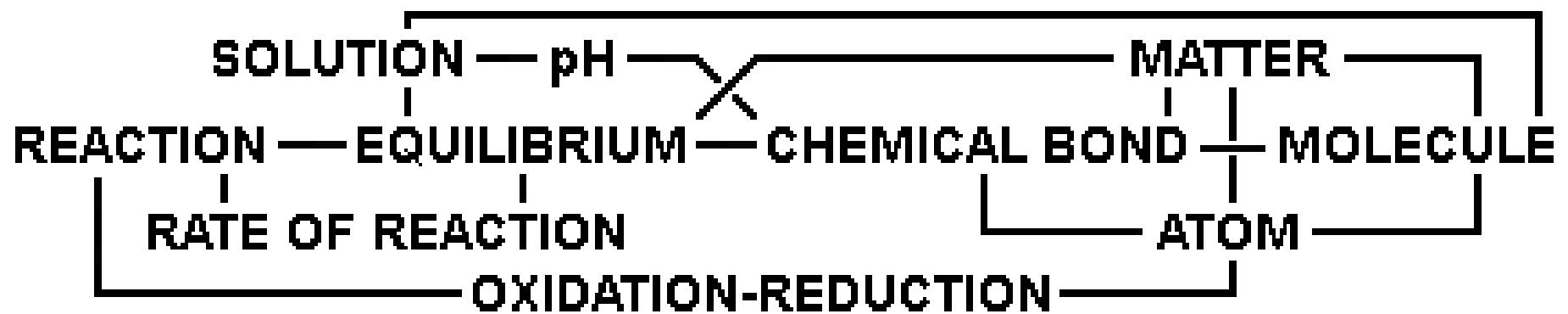
Reaction (1), Equilibrium (2), Chemical bond (3), Rate of reaction (4), pH (5), Oxidation-reduction (6), Molecule (7), Solution (8), Physical state of Matter(9), Atom (10).



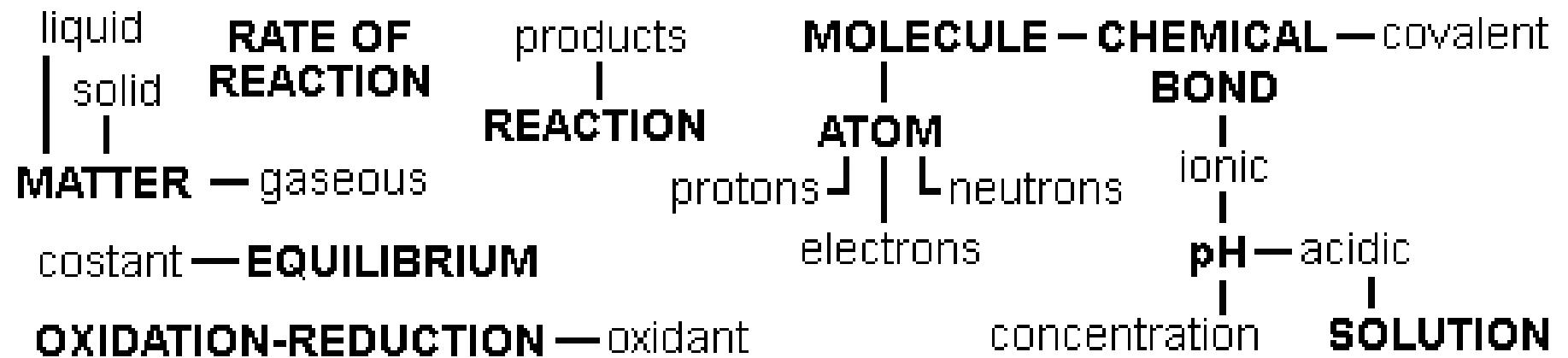
The cognitive structure at a cut-off point of 0.2.



The cognitive structure at a cut-off point of 0.1.

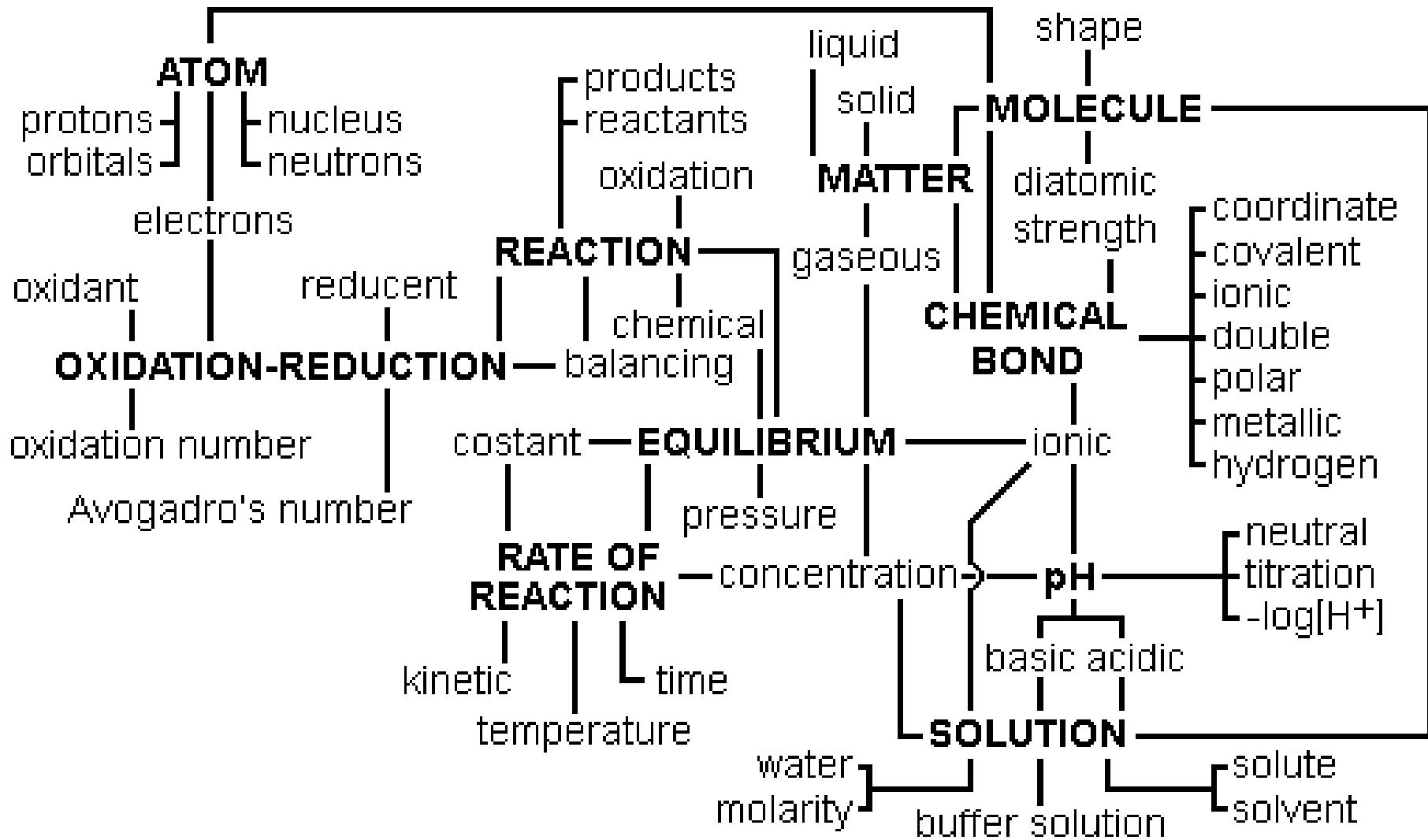


The cognitive structure at a cut-off point of 0.05.



The interconnectness between key and response words for 50% of students.

L. Cardellini, *Journal of Science Education*, 9, 48 (2008)

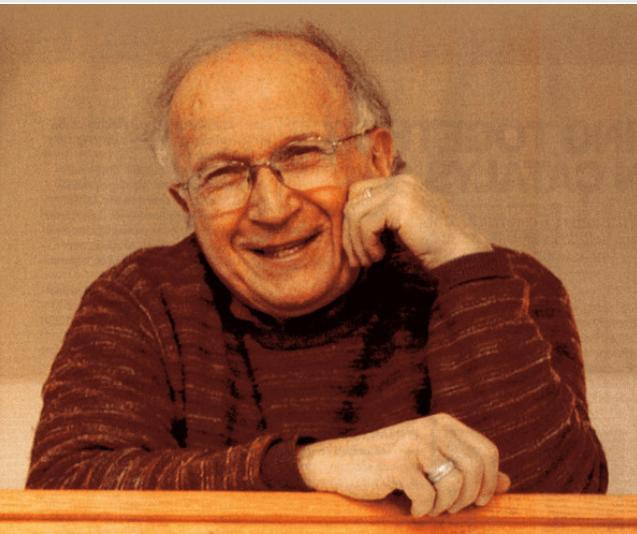


Only 20% of students have this interconnectness.

What emerges from these "maps" is that students store information in disconnected "islands" whereas teachers tend to have their information stored in a highly interconnected network enabling them to slip easily from one concept to another.

L. Cardellini, M. Bahar, *Australian Chemistry Resource Book*, 19, 59 (2000)

This is why we are good problem solvers.



***"It's the combination
of making connections
between different
parts of science and
being a teacher.***

***Teachers wake up the minds of people -
rather than teaching facts, they empower
young people to make use of the abilities
within them. I am proud of being a good
teacher and teaching in many ways."***

Roald Hoffmann, 2007

A community of teachers

As Shulman noted, we take something seriously when we profess it. And we profess something when we make it public. And we take learning seriously if we take the learning of our students seriously.

Shulman, L. S. (1999), Taking learning seriously, *Change*, 31, 10-17.

“We close the classroom door and experience pedagogical solitude”

Shulman, L. S. (1993), Teaching as Community Property: Putting an End to Pedagogical Solitude, *Change*, November/December, 6-7.

We need to communicate our ideas and solutions to certain pedagogical problems with our colleagues.

Even if our colleagues are not interested in didactic, we can give them the chance to reflect about their teaching too.

And this makes sense, because in improving the quality of learning, we are not alone, but members of a community of teachers.

Such a community can provide its members many perspectives, answers, questions, and experiences about teaching.

Another advantage of a community of teachers is that it can offer opportunities for enrichment for the community, with a great advantage for all students.

A joke says that one day God Almighty wished to invent the most beautiful professional figure on the earth and make the teacher. Why? ...

It can be difficult, but not impossible, to engage our colleagues in discourse about problems related to teaching and students' learning; but if we are successful, the benefits are relevant and significant.

Confidence will build awareness

Confidence is an important factor: **confidence and ability feed each other.**

He or she has to believe that success is possible: **Successful experience builds up confidence.**



E. Danili, N. Reid, *Research in Science and Technological Education*, 22, 203, (2004)

Intimate engagement

“The engager has had a history of success with similar problems; the dismisser has had a history of failure.”

M. Levine, *Effective problem solving*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall (1994), p. 4.

A problem solving method

“A method is a device which you used twice.” G. Pólya

The Analysis, Synthesis and Verification (ASV) method.

A succession of questions help students while they try to solve a certain problem.

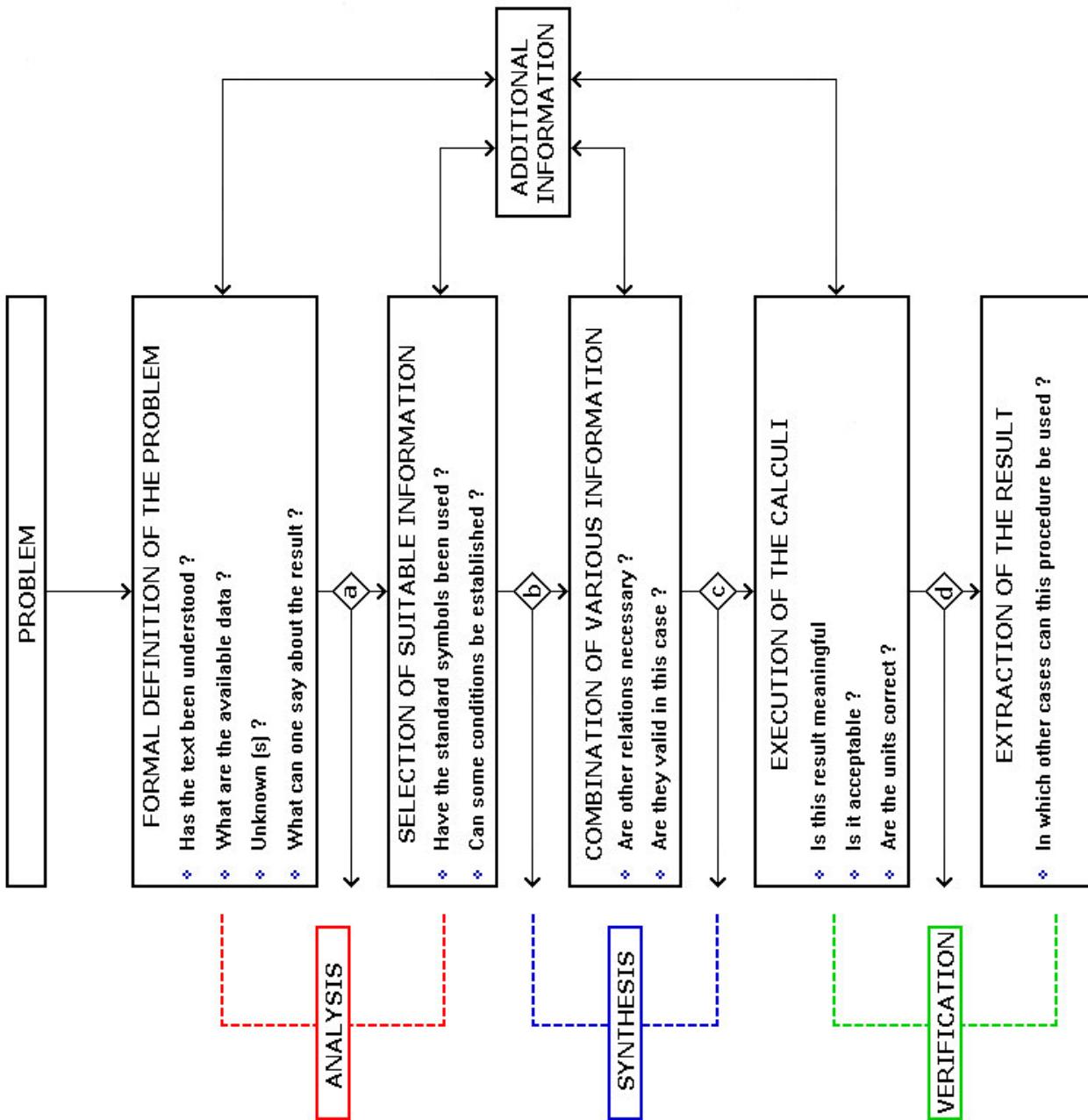
The problem solver's attention pinpoints to a single aspect of the problem at a time.

L. Cardellini, *La Chimica nella Scuola*, 6, 4 (1984)

In class, problems are solved using a cooperative learning approach where the students work together in small groups.

R.M. Felder, *Journal of Chemical Education*, 73, 832 (1966)

L.Cardellini, *La Chimica nella Scuola*, 6, 4, (1984)



- a) Is it a standard problem ?
- b) Are the available information sufficient ?
- c) Can one arrive to the result ?
- d) Has the problem been solved ?

Elements for successful problem solving

- Become obsessed with your problem
- Decrease the problem's complexity
- Divide the problem in more sub-problems
- If there is a problem you can't solve, then there is an easier problem you can solve: find it.

Suggestions & Useful strategies

1. Read the problem.
2. Write down the relevant information.
3. Now read the problem again working backward by *first* reading the question and then reading the rest of the text with the question/s in mind.

J.D. Bransford, et al. (1987). In J.B. Baron, R.J. Sternberg, (Eds), *Teaching Thinking Skills: Theory and Practice* (pp. 162-181). New York: Freeman.

Suggestions & Useful strategies

-  **Think about the problem and reason doing a qualitative analysis**
-  **Estimate the numeric result**
-  **Falsify the assumption**
-  **Explain why the step, the solution is correct**
-  **Verify the numerical result**

Students in chemistry courses find recurrent difficulties in solving quantitative problems.

H. Kramers-Pals, J. Lambrechts, P.J. Wolff, *Journal of Chemical Education*, 59, 509 (1982)

The expert spends time to construct an abstract representation of the problem to determine whether the qualitative solution of the problem is appropriate.

J. Larkin, J. McDermott, D.P. Simon, H.A. Simon, *Science*, 208, 1335 (1980)

An important difference between expert and novice problem-solving behavior is that the expert spends a great deal of time analyzing a problem qualitatively.

R.R. Glaser, M.T.H. Chi, Overview. In M.T.H. Chi, R. Glaser, M.J. Farr, (Eds.), *The Nature of Expertise* (pp. xv-xxviii). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, (1988)

If we want to help our students, we have to find a different way to teach problem solving, a way that obliges students to spend more time analyzing the problem.

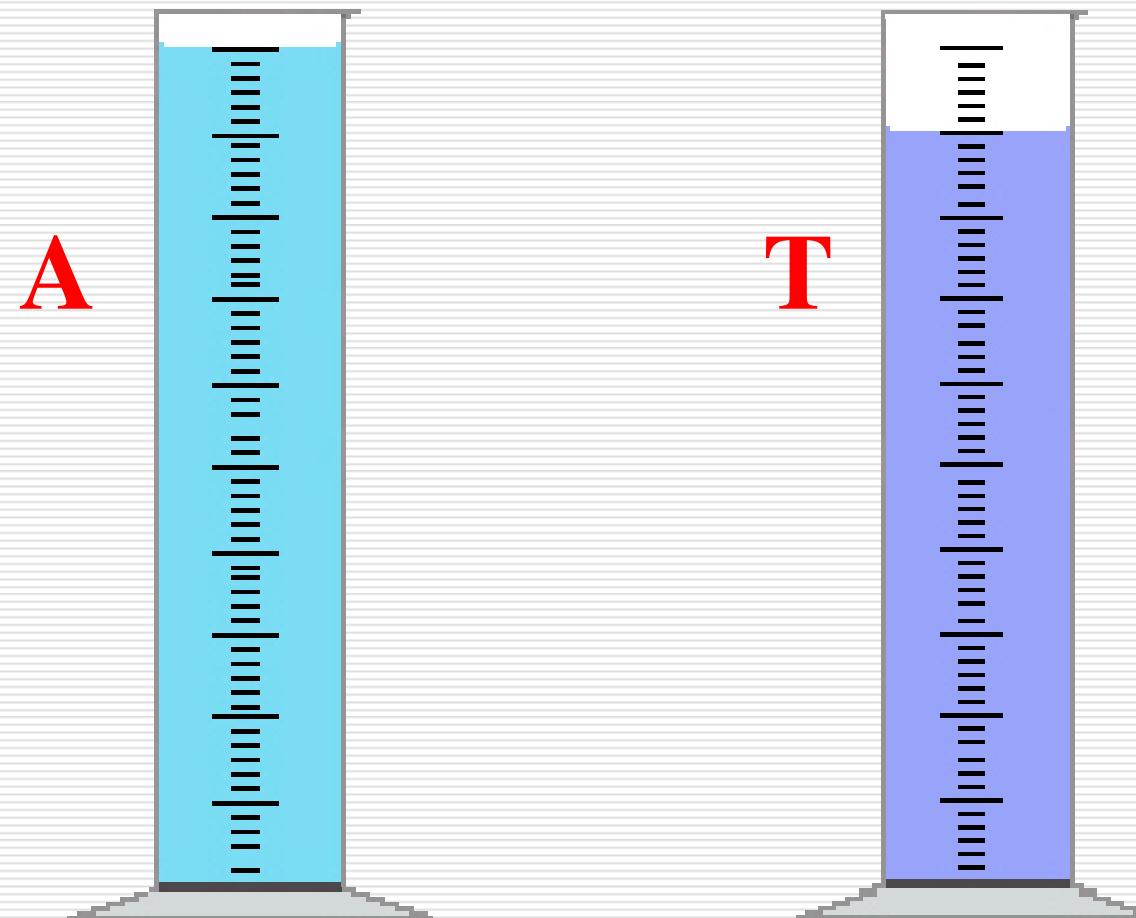
The initial problems tackled were non-chemical and non-algorithmic to emphasize the analysis and synthesis operations without the interference of chemical concepts which students may not have mastered yet.

In the second lesson, the groups, usually of three with the roles of *Problem Solver*, *Sceptic*, and *Checker/Recorder*, are formed and the drawing of concept maps is presented.

L. Cardellini, R.M. Felder, *La Chimica nella Scuola*, 21, 18 (1999)

Problem

Consider two cylinders, A and T. Cylinder A has 10 mL of water in it from the Adriatic Sea; T contains 9 mL of water from the Tyrrhenian.



Suppose that 1 mL of Adriatic water are removed from cylinder A and put into T.

After the liquid in T is mixed thoroughly, 1 mL of the mixture is removed and added to the contents of cylinder A.

Which cylinder now has the greater amount of foreign water, the Adriatic water being foreign to T, or the Tyrrhenian to A?

(Adapted from Case, 1975)

What is the best representation that make easier the solution of this problem?

Strategies

Strategies for solving problems

- The sandwich metaphor
- The Hänsel & Gretel's method
- The stoichiometric ratio
- The disco problem
- Ionic equilibrium calculations

An example:

10.00 g of Na_2CO_3 react with 10.00 g of HCl. Calculate the grams of every product and verify your results.

1. Formal definition of the problem

Chemists represent the problem writing the balanced chemical equation: [General figurative model]



2. Selection of appropriate information

Atomic masses: 1.008 g H/1 mol H; C = 12.01 g C/1mol C; 16.00 g O/1 mol O; 22.99 g Na/1 mol Na; 35.45 g Cl/1 mol Cl

We have:

$$10.00 \text{ g Na}_2\text{CO}_3 \equiv 9.435 \times 10^{-2} \text{ mol Na}_2\text{CO}_3$$

$$10.00 \text{ g HCl} \equiv 2.743 \times 10^{-1} \text{ mol NaCl}$$

3. Combine the various information

If r moles of reaction take place, we have:



b	9.435×10^{-2}	2.743×10^{-1}	0	0	0
a	$9.435 \times 10^{-2} - r$	$2.743 \times 10^{-1} - 2r$	$2r$	r	r

Where a and b mean respectively ‘after the reaction takes place’ and ‘before the reaction takes place’

We can calculate r imposing the physical conditions:

$$9.435 \times 10^{-2} - r \geq 0 \quad 2.743 \times 10^{-1} - 2r \geq 0$$

$r \leq 9.435 \times 10^{-2}$; $r = 9.435 \times 10^{-2}$ mol rct (moles of reaction (rct) that takes place)

Limiting reagent: Na_2CO_3

After the reaction we have:

$$(9.435 \times 10^{-2} \text{ mol rct}) \times (2 \text{ mol NaCl}/1 \text{ mol rct}) = \\ = 1.887 \times 10^{-1} \text{ mol NaCl} = 11.03 \text{ g NaCl}$$

$$(9.435 \times 10^{-2} \text{ mol rct}) \times (1 \text{ mol CO}_2/1 \text{ mol rct}) = \\ = 9.435 \times 10^{-2} \text{ mol CO}_2 = 4.152 \text{ g CO}_2$$

$$(9.435 \times 10^{-2} \text{ mol rct}) \times (1 \text{ mol H}_2\text{O}/1 \text{ mol rct}) = \\ = 9.435 \times 10^{-2} \text{ mol H}_2\text{O} = 1.700 \text{ g H}_2\text{O}$$

Verification

The checking of the result is based on the mass conservation:

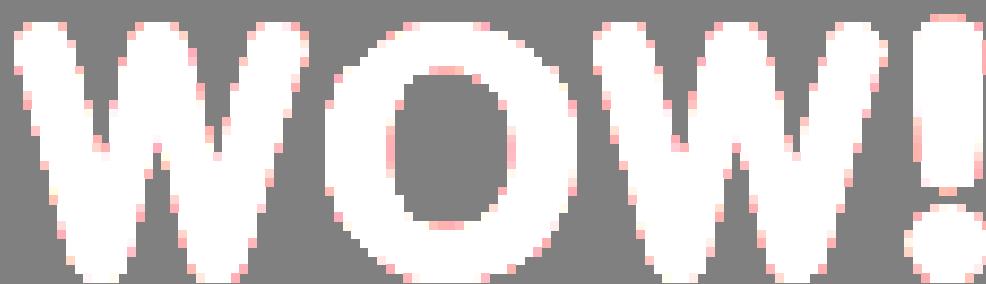
mass of the products formed =

$$= 11.03 \text{ g NaCl} + 4.152 \text{ g CO}_2 + 1.700 \text{ g H}_2\text{O} = 16.88 \text{ g.}$$

$$\text{mass of HCl reacted} = (9.435 \times 10^{-2} \text{ mol rct}) \times (2 \text{ mol HCl} / 1 \text{ mol rct}) = 1.887 \times 10^{-1} \text{ mol HCl} = 6.880 \text{ g HCl}$$

mass of the reactants that have reacted =

$$= 10.00 \text{ g Na}_2\text{CO}_3 + 6.880 \text{ g HCl} = 16.88 \text{ g.}$$



The sandwich metaphor

Let's consider this problem:

You have 10 slices of bread, 10 slices of cheese and 10 leaves of lettuce; you can make a sandwich using 2 slices of bread (B), 3 slices of cheese (C) and 1 leaf of lettuce. How many sandwiches (S) can you make?

You will reply 3 point something. OK.

But, what logical reasoning you have done?

What is the number of rolls that make 0 one (or more) ‘reagents’?

L. Cardellini, *La Chimica nella Scuola*, 17, 19 (1995)

Let's call r the operation for making a sandwich, for every r a sandwich will be formed. We can use the symbols:

$$2 B + 3 C + L \longrightarrow S$$

before	10	10	10	0
--------	----	----	----	---

If r are the number of sandwiches made, we have:

$$2 B + 3 C + L \longrightarrow S$$

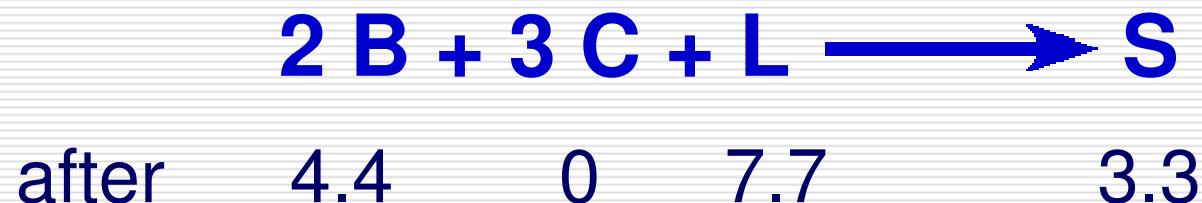
before	10	10	10	0
after	$10 - 2r$	$10 - 3r$	$10 - r$	r

We can calculate r imposing the physical conditions:

$$10 - 2r \geq 0; \quad 10 - 3r \geq 0; \quad 10 - r \geq 0$$

The value $r = 10/3$ satisfies all the inequalities.

Therefore we can get 3.3 sandwiches ($r = 3.3$); after we have:



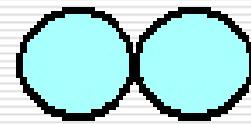
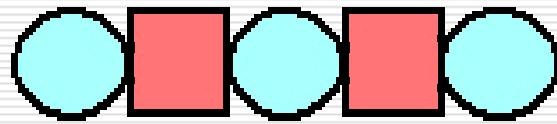
In a chemical reaction C is called limiting reagent and r are the moles of reaction that take place.

The stoichiometric ratio

A number of students fail to solve the problem because they use wrong logical relationships.

Let us consider the mass of oxygen contained in 10.00 g of Fe_2O_3 . To how many molecules of oxygen is it equivalent?

The error that many commit is a wrong relation between O_3 and O_2 . More students can solve correctly the problem if they use this representation:



We have:

1 mol Fe_2O_3 contains 3 mol O;

2 mol O correspond to 1 mol O_2 .

So the stoichiometric ratio (sr) between Fe_2O_3 and O_2 is:

$$\text{sr} = 2 \text{ mol } \text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3 / 3 \text{ mol } \text{O}_2$$

The Hänsel & Gretel's method

- Problems are presented in a reverse form.
- Problems that we perceived very difficult.

The Hänsel and Gretel's method suggests to solve an easier problem to infer a possible logical reasoning useful to solve the difficult problem.

L. Cardellini, *La Chimica nella Scuola*, 18, 58 (1996)

A tough problem

A mixture formed by NaCl, NaClO and KClO contains 16.64% of oxygen and 21.52% of Na. Calculate the percentage of K in the mixture (mxt).

L. Cardellini, *Chemistry Education Research and Practice*, 7, 131 (2006)

An easier version of it

A mixture contains 16.39 g of NaCl, 48.80 g of NaClO and 34.81 g of KClO. Calculate the percentage of K in the mixture.

Problema



Un miscuglio di CH_4O , C_6H_6 e $\text{C}_7\text{H}_6\text{O}$ del peso di 44,37 g dà all'analisi elementare: C = 68,74%; H = 8,905% ed il resto ossigeno. Quanti sono i grammi di C_6H_6 nel miscuglio?



Conclusions

Is it meaningful what students learned?

Yes, because at the +2 many still remember some theory.

Is it stable?

Well: yes! In the +2 we continue to solve stoichiometric problems and ionic equilibrium calculation: almost all are quite successful.

Conclusions

Improving the abilities of
our students is possible.

**We will be successful if
we are prepared to work
more.**



**“Inspiration is more
important than
information”**

Dick Zare

Is it possible to improve education

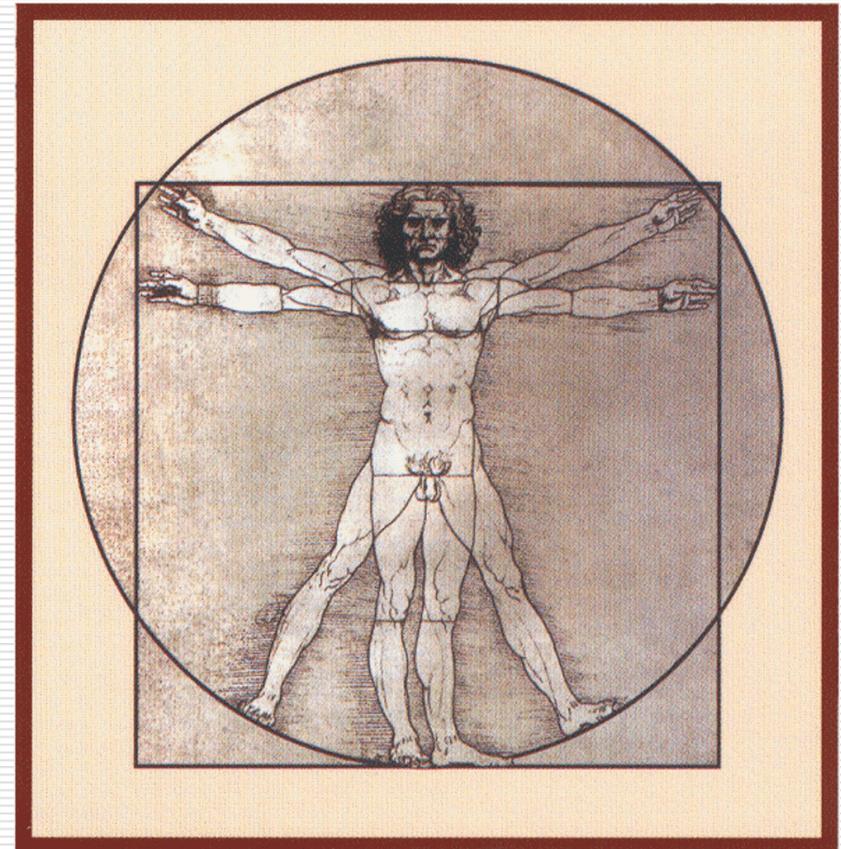
For improving education we have to ask more engagement to our students

Authentic learning, and problem solving in particular, requires the interest, motivation and engagement of students.

We can ask more if with our example we express enthusiasm for learning, and we work a lot for helping them to learn.

Thank you

for your
attention !



Questions

