

NEW SEEDS FOR A WORLD TO COME

POLICIES, PRACTICES AND LIVES
IN ADULT EDUCATION AND LEARNING

10TH ESREA TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE

edited by Laura Formenti, Andrea Galimberti and Gaia Del Negro

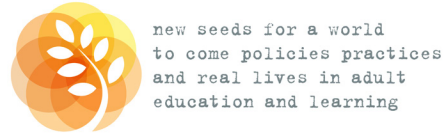
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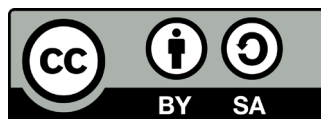
Proceedings of the 10th ESREA Triennial Conference
University of Milano Bicocca,
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29 September-1 October 2022

edited by Laura Formenti, Andrea Galimberti
and Gaia Del Negro

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New seeds for a world to come. Policies, practices and lives in adult education and learning. Proceedings of the 10th ESREA Triennial Conference, University of Milano Bicocca, Department of Human Sciences for Education, 29 September - 1 October 2022, edited by Laura Formenti, Andrea Galimberti and Gaia Del Negro

The invitation for preparing the texts for this book was made to the presenters of the ESREA Triennial Conference. The authors are responsible for the content of the chapters.

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FOREWORDS FROM THE BOARD OF ESREA

The ESREA community celebrated at the University of Milano Bicocca last year 30 years of ESREA. The 10th Triennial conference *New seeds for a world to come* was a great opportunity to gather together, look back with satisfaction, look forward with hope, and enhance a sense of belonging to this community.

Our Society connects around 200 members, both emerging and advanced scholars. It unites 13 research networks addressing different aspects of adult education and learning. These developments reflect the high dynamics in the field of adult education research, dynamics which led to enhanced knowledge production through journals like RELA, book series, conference proceedings and publications in academic journals.

In terms of theories and methods, adult education research has differentiated considerably in the past thirty years. Nowadays, the field of research on adult learning and education has opened. Related research is not conducted only in universities but also in extramural institutes and communities of practice. It involves different disciplines, different research paradigms, different approaches. All of them generate valuable knowledge, however, within a beaten path, they offer “partial truths”. But if we want to gain a better understanding of the phenomena, if we want to create non-standardized knowledge, we should be ready to leave the beaten path, to cross board, transcend knowledge territories. All great thinkers have done exactly that - from Einstein to Foucault - all innovative ideas have sprung from it.

What I would wish for the next 30 years of ESREA would be exactly that: motivated and inspired members who look at facts that at first glance do not belong together, who make connections, who leave behind outdated distinctions, who are able to transcend knowledge territories. And networks that generate socially relevant questions, cooperate closely with each other, and promote collaboration in interdisciplinary and intercultural research teams.

Alexandra Ioannidou

Secretary and board member of ESREA

In 2022 ESREA celebrated its 30th anniversary. The ESREA triennial conference held at the University Milan-Bicocca marked an important moment in the life of the ESREA community. Normally triennial conferences allow adult education researchers from across Europe and beyond to meet, present and debate ongoing research. However, the conference held in Milan was also an opportunity for the ESREA community to reconnect in presence, after the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to publicly celebrate the society's 30th anniversary. For the occasion the ESREA Presidium shared the results of an online survey that had been conducted in the spring among the society's members and friends. The results brought to light that most respondents have a deep interest in the activities of one or more of the ESREA's twelve research networks – and one more network was launched as a result of the discussions held at the triennial conference. The survey also reported on the different perceived benefits by its members, among which are trust, listening and critical dialogue that contribute to mutual learning and professional growth.

This proceeding, thus, reflects the plurality of themes that adult education researchers are concerned with, while being also the result of trust, listening and critical dialogue that characterized the 2022 triennial conference, and of the hard work that local organizers and colleagues at the University Milan-Bicocca put into organizing the conference and editing this book.

Marcella Milana, Chair of ESREA 2023-2025

These proceedings represent much of what ESREA is about. A community in which researchers across Europe and beyond can meet and converse on research on the education and learning of adults. The triennial conference of ESREA is one of the key moments in which all the ESREA research networks meet across networks, creating basis for cross-network conversations and potential collaboration. The conference held in Milan was special for many of us as this was the first time we, after the pandemic, once again could meet face to face. I'm grateful for the great organisation of the conference by the local organizers and colleagues at Milan Bicocca university.

Andreas Fejes, Chair of ESREA 2020-2022

INTRODUCTION – OF SEEDS, COMPLEXITY, AND A RESEARCH COMMUNITY

Laura Formenti
Andrea Galimberti
Gaia Del Negro
University of Milano Bicocca, Italy

The ESREA Tenth Triennial Conference took place in Milano, that had been the global epicenter of the Sars-Covid Pandemic in February 2020. We still remember the very first moments of uncertainty and distress, amidst the shocking news from locked-down Codogno and raging ambulance sirens all over the city. We felt the unknown, and it was scary. All was happening fast, we received phone calls and emails from bewildered colleagues – “what’s going on there?” - but soon the “thing” was everywhere. And any possibility to encounter and engage the ESREA community was gone, at least for a while.

Hence, our proposal to organize the Triennial Conference in Milano had a strong symbolic value for us. Even so, it was hard to imagine it, a year before, when we were still experiencing the distress of the protecting measures, the daily news of contagion, and the pervasiveness of online and distance meetings. During the lockdown, a refrain forged by a known Italian journalist - “nothing will ever be the same again” - gained wide popularity, both among catastrophists indulging in tragic scenarios, and in more hopeful discourses nurturing a desire for the new. Many of us felt the possibility of a crack, an opening that would have transformed, at least partially, the neoliberal agenda ruling our lives into some new policies and practices, more based on equalities and respect for people and the environment. However, systems theory warns us about the capacity of human, social and biological systems to keep the balance by using homeostatic forces to confirm the existent. Or, in other words – as Dardot and Laval highlighted (2010) – we can say that the dark side of neoliberal capitalism is a chameleon, quick to adapt and change, blurring or integrating emerging differences when they endanger it. Now, a few months after the conference, we are witnessing the unkept promises of the recovery process. It is a sad old story: instead of healing, we have war, and the biggest political crisis in Europe from World War II.

The pandemic crisis revealed another side of systems, related to contingency: when a certain number of circumstances align, they may trigger unexpected effects (Morin, 1995), not always the most desirable, as we have experimented. Complex systems are beyond our control, but there is a space for differences in any new scenario, an important lesson that we too easily forget again and again.

So, “New seeds for a world to come” is a naïf and bold title at once. In the conference call, we mentioned the “dramatic changes” that were (and are) going on in individual and collective lives, bringing unexpected revisions of common educational and cultural practices, and compelling us to deal with the experience of the pandemic, and its consequences. However, we also stated our desire to make the Conference “a positive reflexive moment to look at the future, to mobilize the best energies of adult education research and intervention, and interrogate the controversial, non-linear effects of the ongoing ecological, economic, and social changes”. The pandemic put ecology at the center of the debate, not only because “the big mess” was triggered by a non-human agent, but because of the interconnections that it exposed among the biological, social, political, and economic spheres of the human society. Hence, choosing an ecological metaphor for the title – the *seeds* – was meant to suggest that climate justice is relevant for adult education,

and vice versa, and there is a growing need to acknowledge the interrelation of the material and social aspects in adult lives. New landscapes were and are physically and metaphorically emerging and challenging the humankind, especially in its more vulnerable parts. What is the role of Adult Education and Learning (AEL) in it, as a practice, as an area of studies, and a political arena? Research should witness, question, maybe foster the emerging opportunities, the new possibilities for resistance and resilience.

For the ones who loved Ernst Bloch's "The principle of hope" (1986), a great book bearing the idea that communists are not allowed to be pessimistic, the author looks for material traces of hope all along history: in arts, in the natural world, and in political imagination. At a certain point, he reflects on the ancient seeds found in the Egyptian pyramids: after thousands of years, they were still able to germinate in the right soil. This conference took place not only after a pandemic but in the thirtieth birthday of ESREA. We have a history to celebrate, a history rich in seeds, in resources of hope – as Raymond Williams (1989) would put it. After 30 years of research in adult education and learning, across contexts, in different countries, and with a range of theories and methods, the ESREA community still connects different generations of researchers to "remember the past, reflect on the present, and re-design the future together". During the conference, we wanted to share research that would allow us, all together, to envisage "the world to come", not as a simply optimistic standpoint, but as a radical question about the possibilities and challenges of change in a complex world and society.

Like seeds, ideas from the past and the present need a proper context to thrive, that is a lively community to sustain action, to share values, and to offer mutual recognition. We know that the very idea of an agentic community has been really challenged during the last few years of top-down decisions, control, and discipline. Not least, by increased use of Artificial Intelligence, digital media, and online tracking. So, we asked the conference participants very basic questions: What was going on in adult education, in our institutions, in everyday formal and informal learning during the pandemic? What is going on now? Where are the seeds for change? Are there?

Exploring the contemporary territory of AEL is a way to enrich or maybe re-design our maps. We invited the twelve ESREA networks (today thirteen, as a new one on "Spaces, Times, and the Rhythms of the Education of Adults and its Movements" was launched right after the conference) to be active and participate with papers and symposia in order to represent their different commitments in taking care of a wide range of issues and topics related to adult education and learning: access and learning careers/identities, democratic citizenship, learning communities, older adults, gender equality, migrations and transnationalisms, transformation and emancipation, work, life histories, adult educators and professionals, policies, and history. The symposia were a huge part of the conference, partially represented here.

In this book, we have gathered a sample (almost 50%) of the overall papers and symposia presented during the conference. They have been sent by the authors after the conference, and represent a variety of topics, research methods and questions regarding AEL. They answer in different ways to the issues raised by the call for papers. We are pleased to stress the superdiversity of this group of authors: experienced researchers, early career researchers, PhD students, independent researchers, and professionals. They come from different disciplines, countries, languages, stories. Members of ESREA, newcomers, and occasional visitors. The ESREA family is big, diverse, and open. Each contribution is an expression of singularity and collaboration, of a local effort to answer universal questions. Each is a peculiar interpretation of the seeds of AEL and how research can be the proper terrain and nutrient to make them flourish.

Exploring the Proceedings: reading tracks

For practical reasons, papers are presented in the alphabetic order (first author's name), with symposia at the end of the book. The Index will allow you, the reader, a personal exploration based on your questions. Here, however, we suggest some reading tracks, not meant to be exhaustive, but as an invitation to explore some threads of contemporary research on AEL that testify diverse and complementary perspectives and ways of doing research in our community.

Policy matters

Thinking about the future of AEL and the contribution of research to a better society, the analysis of policies and their effects is especially precious. The conference hosted several symposia and papers on AEL policies. The ones here published offer valuable insight on questions, data, and hypotheses about the past, present, and future of AEL. Starting from the macrolevel, the contribution by Boeren, Elfert, Rubenson and Schuller analyzes the International Organizations' (EU, OESC, UNESCO) engagement with lifelong learning as a policy concept whose history "shows very uneven progress". They dig into three dimensions: the philosophy/rhetoric of lifelong learning in each IO, its policy grip and the resources entailed. They wonder how the *human capital model* (OECD) "overwhelmingly focused on the economy", has succeeded in pushing aside the *humanistic paradigm* (UNESCO), rooted in popular education and more focused on social justice and democracy. OECD "gained hegemony over the lifelong learning agenda" due to its capacity to "manufacture the common sense", identify key emerging issues and answer dominant pressures through usable knowledge. A blend of the two models could be a solution, maybe more aligned with "the ambiguous nature of lifelong learning", but can the two competing discourses on lifelong learning blend? UNESCO should learn to respond dominant pressure (i.e., the needs of economy), develop a better capacity to create valued knowledge and more effectively involve national civil servants. The bitter conclusion is that not many countries are able, in this moment, to hit the spot "where a coherent philosophy combines with realistic policies and adequate resource commitment".

In another vein, Cantero, Federighi, Mavrič, Operti and Torlone present a survey on the perception of current policies and practices by experts and stakeholders in 12 European countries. No country seems to have an organic and coherent system with shared values, functions, and priorities. Cooperation and coordination among stakeholders "are considered casual or weak", operating within changing conditions, having no structural support and poor attention for the learning needs of groups at risk. Perceptions are bound to sectorial fragmentation: teachers focus on teaching issues, managers on organizational issues, and so on. This hinders the development of a strategic view or common orientations.

Singh and Anand interrogate policies in the perspective of "crisis as a window of opportunity". Different answers to crisis in high, middle and low-income countries descend from the diverse combination of resources (finance, infrastructures and expertise) and political commitment to education. Did the Covid crisis open a window of opportunity for political change? The study shows that the lesson from 2007/08 financial crisis has not been completely learnt and most countries have not taken affirmative action for marginal categories, notwithstanding recommendations from OECD, EU, World Bank and UNESCO. The window of opportunity has not been used for lack of political will of the governments and relevant stakeholders.

Other authors analyze policies at a national level. With a comparative focus, Singh, Ehlers and Kosmerl show the interdependence of policy design and funding strategies in Denmark and Slovenia in the 1970s and 2010s. While Denmark mobilized funding through social partners, Slovenia used the European Social funds; hence, the authors claim, the provisions became demand-driven in Denmark and supply-driven in Slovenia. "A key factor in comparative studies of EA can thus be to follow the funding".

Zini reflects on the current Italian policies related to workplace learning. Other papers refer to policies in relation to the digital transition, work, family, youth, health during and after the pandemic. When doing research on AEL, the constraints and possibilities implemented in the system dictate the rules of the game through legislation, political will of decision makers, and resources allocated. They also depend on hegemony and discourses that shape and are shaped by those rules. The next track is about how research can ask challenging questions by using its critical power.

Criticality as an adult way of thinking, a feature of the learning context, and a framework for research

The word “critical” appears 300 times in the text. Research on AEL has roots in critical philosophies and social theories, emancipatory practices, and liberating pedagogies. Are these seeds still alive in the research community, or “critical” has become a mere adjective, a buzzword that is expected in our texts?

In the Proceedings, different strands of inquiry using this word are represented. One of them is research on how adults (especially students in higher education, teachers, or professionals) learn to think in a critical way, using reflection and reflexivity. Meeting the other in multicultural contexts seems an especially crucial experience; see for example Azadi’s work using a sociocultural perspective on culture contact among international students in Milan. Bove, Chinazzi and Moran implement a cross-cultural pedagogy to overcome ethnocentrism. Puge and Lindhardt discuss how Reflection Papers can support leaders in school improvement; reflection, they say, can be learnt, but it needs method, time, incentives, and consistency.

Faller, Lokhtina, Galimberti and Sanojca focus on *critical* thinking/reflection/skills in a multiple case study on framing employability in HE. Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is explored in relation to the development of identity, the process of critical reflection, and the transfer of learning. Slavutzky also quotes critical thinking, along with resilience, pluralistic dialogue, empowerment, and counter speech, as protective factors to prevent radicalization and violent extremism. On radicalization, Melacarne states that anyone “can potentially develop personal, political, religious, or ethical perspectives that could be considered extreme, at least from others’ points of view”. Radicalization can be interpreted as a distortion of thought or as an emancipatory process: a critical reading of this concept in transformative terms might help “to deal with the radical thoughts that we develop during our life journey as an adult”.

Following the connection between critical thinking and transformative learning, Bertrand, Sanojca, Eneau, Dorval and Lameul wrote a contribution on joint professionalization in higher education in their analysis of a Master program for the training profession. Training Action Research is proposed as a multidisciplinary and critical framework, using a cooperative and transformative approach to individual and collective learning. Critical thinking entails an autonomous learner, capable of questioning the legitimacy of actions, making informed judgments, and influencing the environment, hence “addressing transformation at the socio-political level”.

Another line of research about criticality addresses the learning context. Efstratoglou and Koulaouzides explore transformative learning in Greek prisons. Incarceration “seems to confirm and exacerbate what reality has already taught our students”, hence it turns out that “avoiding critical thinking, let alone openly questioning hierarchies” is more adaptive for them. So, what can educators do, to “practice anti-oppressive pedagogies” in these contexts?

Schulze examines the role of applied sciences universities in rural areas. Germany counts 210 of such universities, characterized by their “being in-between” professional and academic learning, applied research and theoretical reflection, state funding and contract research. A *relational network approach* based on critical reflection and stakeholders’ collaboration seems the most appropriate to foster adults’ participation in artistic and cultural events.

New media are a powerful and growing learning context. What is, and how can democracy flourish, in an increasingly digitalized and interconnected world? Giannakopoulou, Huber, Soeiro, Tolkas, Lattke, Zimmermann, Fritz

and Cieslak analyze power circumstances, digital politics, and experiences of adult learners, teachers, and educators. This coproduction of researchers from different countries aims to shift mentalities and empower people, by “offering access to digital outlets and building safe spaces for active engagement in international digital contexts”. In this respect, “learning should involve critical dialogue about acting on and in the world to be transformed”. Besides, critical discourse on digital rights is urgent to bridge digital gaps and promote democracy.

A further strand is represented by papers that use critical perspectives and theories in research. Using Critical Social Theory, Gouthro and Holloway explore how hope can be promoted “in a world beset by multiple global problems”. Based on Freire, who considers hope “an ontological need”, they challenge the neoliberal perspective with a creative imaginative approach, namely *multiliteracies*, a critical social theory born in the 1990s as an educational response to inequalities and *multimodalities*, a method that facilitates inclusion of learners from diverse backgrounds and languages. Mossman Riva reports on social mediation and community learning in Switzerland: through narrative and participatory methods, a documentary film was produced and screened in the community to trigger discussions about new practices of conflict resolution. Critical theory is here used to reveal social injustices and to sustain restorative and transitional justice. Wildemeersch and Koulaouzides reflect on “the paradox of exclusion through inclusion”. Their critical analysis illuminates how the deficit approach is a hegemonic discourse in policies for inclusion, so the rhetoric of promoting lifelong learning as a strategy for social inclusion, overly based on social assimilation and a binary discourse, turns out to reinforce, indeed, differences and social exclusion. In Zoletto’s paper, a postcolonial intersectional critical perspective allows to re-think lifelong education in communities with a strong presence of migrants; multiple levels of analysis are here used to re-imagine the meaning of the locution ‘educating communities’.

In the symposium “Spaces, times and the rhythms of critique and emancipation in adult education”, spatial and temporal configurations of adult learning and lives are critically explored. A new agenda of research, questioning the experience of time in adult education, is invoked by Alhadeff-Jones. “New research should inform how we envision and represent the temporalities involved in critical self-reflection, critical dialogue, actions that challenge the status quo, or the rhythms that compose an emancipatory journey”. The critical traditions of adult education should pay more attention to discontinuities, repetitions, and patterns of the emancipatory process and to emerging phenomena such as slow education, acceleration, temporal dilemmas, schizochrony. Finnegan proposes a reading of Bourdieu and Lefebvre to investigate the production of space. *Abstract space* - fragmented, hierarchical, quantifying and orientated to homogeneity – is an expression of capitalism with “lethal consequences”. “To have critical force, the idea of capitals [in Bourdieu] needs to be linked to the concepts of social space and field”, which are structured by domination, power, and conflicts, and feature processes of individual internalization. While this theory bears remarkable explanatory value, it fails to grasp the macrosocial mechanisms and powers in capitalism. Lefebvre’s heterodox reading of Marx and “multidimensional analysis of how space is lived, perceived, and conceived”, complements Bourdieu in building “a critical, multidimensional, spatialized theory of social reproduction and resistance”.

Dakka brings into this collective discussion her research on the ethics of rhythm in the academic world. “The making and remaking of social practice” is studied in “relation with the repetition of routines and the emergence of difference as critical moments that have the potential to re-orient and transform the everyday”. The pandemic accelerated “the dissolution of the physical space of the institution”, and the “collapse of boundaries between domestic/work spheres”, creating new rhythms of virtual and embodied presence. What is hyper-connectivity doing to our lives? What is gained or lost? What new modes of appropriation are emerging? Cappa works on time-subjectivation, in Foucault’s terms, within and through the educational *dispositive*, that is both a technology of space, time, body, and action, and a process

of internal subjugation. Formal education agencies are increasingly marginalized by “new places of learning and shared knowledge”; this ‘heterochrony’ might be emancipatory in contrasting pre-established rhythms.

The new ecologic imagination is creative and embodied

For many scholars, the new seeds for a world to come are embedded in imagination, creativity, and embodiment. Narrative, collaborative, performative, or sensorial methods are here used to explore and nourish understanding and relationships with oneself, the other(s), and the more-than-human world.

Aula asks: “How to maintain and nurture resilience in our communities, when nature loss and climate extremities are threatening the very foundations of our existence?”. Her invitation to “consider the more-than-human components of our social world”, starts from “exploring sensory experiences of different generations”, drawing from artistic and methodological creativity, transdisciplinarity, and multisensory ethnography. Boaretto and Weyland are also interested in the human/environment relationships; their interdisciplinary lab offers teachers a learning space for ecological awareness and sensory-cooperative pedagogic design.

Then, we meet four Italian performative researchers: an actress, two dancers, and a Feldenkrais practitioner. Corbella reconstructs her own experience of becoming a researcher on (and by) improvisation, starting from her “uncomfortable position” as a student and teacher, then recovering “the actual experience of improvisation” within the theoretical framework of Embodied Pedagogy and the implementation of field experiences. In presenting her choreography “Arianna”, the final product of her PhD research, Cuppari elaborates on “dancing the process of crisis” as “an aesthetic and performative way of analyzing and interpreting” her research material. In doing so, she takes a distance from “the colonizing power of discourse” in academia, to explore new possibilities in telling and reading the pandemic crisis, and more generally as a way to challenge the prescriptive ontology of a “form that transforms”. Another dancer, Ferri, involved primary school teachers in reconsidering their way “to embody their profession in everyday working life”. The removal of bodies during the pandemic brought disruption as well as new possibilities; the paradigm of radical embodiment and the Italian strand of Embodied Pedagogy are helpful in sustaining adults and educators in developing their sensitivity and consciousness. A video-performance, here again, is a form of analysis of the teacher participants’ professional narratives. Luraschi presents her autoethnographic reflections about working with adults in Feldenkrais sessions during the pandemic; she analyses texts, drawings, and photographs sent by women participants, narrating the literal and symbolic/metaphoric experience of *lying down*. A better connection between mind and body and with the environment is proposed as a new form of ecojustice.

The arts enhance our understanding of adult learning. Using performative-visual arts and an autoethnographic approach, Maksimović considers embodied learning in reference to chronic pain, a liminal and lasting experience for many adults, who are called by it “to redefine their sense of self and place in the world” and build “a new spatial-temporal structure” that affects personal identity. By bringing “a sense of uncertainty and vulnerability”, the experience of pain “can catalyze significant learning”, as well as “disorganization, lack of coherence, and inconsistent insights and changes”. Arts-based learning can also support literacy: in their comparative case study, Holloway and Gouthro advocate in favor of multiliteracies and multimodalities in arts/community-based education, where the communicative and social meaning of all languages allows adult educators to move beyond traditional pedagogies. Matsumoto studied the power of music with imprisoned young offenders in Japan; the Musical Narrative Approach brings together a group of participants to listen and discuss music that is important to them; this opens space for sharing stories, meanings, and values that are not easily expressed in prison.

Some papers focus a new imagination of care and relationships, especially after the pandemic. Liberti speaks of “growing communities that care” in a digital world, and “the dream of a world in which everyone can thrive”. Her case studies analyze emerging experiences of dialogic learning implementing an ethic of care. Environmental interconnections, learning/caring spaces and regenerative narratives can question the role of education and prepare transformation and liberation. Tabacchi works on *accompagnement*, a French word (literally “walking alongside”) that identifies a specific relational practice of proximity and “mutual humanization” that encourages “a problematizing vision; the growth of awareness; the conquest of autonomy”. Educators’ “postures” and “gestures” are targeted to reveal interweaved actions, feelings, and thoughts: “the gesture is an action that involves a part of the body in view of a meaning”.

Learning communities, groups, and societies

The possibility for future transformations, as well as the analysis of the ongoing changes of adult social and cultural worlds were implied in the conference title. Several heterogeneous communities, social representations, and challenges are mentioned in the papers, ranging from the university as a multicultural community to online groups, from the local community to specific groups of adults facing the pandemic crisis. Questions about (new) didactics, formal and informal learning, or practices to enhance intercultural dialogue, social mediation, emotional education, school-community collaboration, parental learning, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and so on, draw a complex jigsaw of the present landscape of AEL.

Azadi takes a sociocultural perspective in her qualitative study investigating the learning experience of international students at the University of Milano Bicocca; they seem to learn to expand their views and actions from inter-cultural contact, although no specific elements of criticality are found in the interviews. Fabbri, Bosco, Romano and Giampaolo reflect on Culturally Responsive Teaching in higher education, using cultural knowledge, prior experience, and learning style from ethnically diverse students; their mixed method study suggests that responsive practices and diversified didactic strategies promote caring multicultural learning settings.

Online learning, training and education are the object of many contributions. They are discussed in relation to technical and pedagogical accessibility by Bédard, Pudelko, Kagorora, Psyché, Zaidman and Simard-Tozzi. Within an Erasmus+ project, they develop a portray of the regulatory landscape of accessibility and evaluate effectiveness for end users. Universal Learning Design seems a promising approach, despite limitations for adult distance education. Fernando investigates online reading groups to promote resilience and social capital recovery after the pandemic; interviews with a facilitator and adult learners from three separate groups bring evidence of regained community and social capital. Giannakopoulou, Huber, Soeiro, Tolkas, Lattke, Zimmermann, Fritz and Cieslak re-conceptualize democracy across different countries in a digitalized world and illuminate how digital outlets can sustain public decision making and personal development. Sanojca and Briand focus on the emergence of learning collectives in response to the pandemic in France; interviews and digital textual data from the innovation lab of a training center reveal the building of shared knowledge as a ‘commons’ and provides a fresh view on the evaluation of training. Ferro Allodola and Buccolo investigated social representations and forms of distress, exclusion and marginalization in different age groups during the pandemic in Italy; their questionnaire explored emotions, changes in lifestyle, fears and hopes for the future, interpersonal relationships, understanding of educational messages in the health emergency, and judgment on distance learning in schools and universities. The integrated data analysis draws on medical humanities, emotional and sustainability education. Lamoureux-Duquette, Thériault and Doray studied the impact of the Covid

crisis on student attendance in Adult General Education; a mixed methods approach has been used to analyze management events during the pandemic and illuminate the place of AGE in Quebec, Canada.

Rapanà, Lasi and Milana present a multi-case research on school-community collaboration to improve student's capacity for civic engagement; interviews with school personnel, stakeholders and students illuminate what prompts collaboration, teachers' perspectives and pedagogical approaches on civic engagement with adults. Sustainable welfare and training are the focus of Balzano's work, based on informal learning as part of prioritizing inclusion and participation in the local community; citizenship education can be a way to open schools to the surrounding territories. Mossman Riva illustrates how a community-based participatory approach can foster social change and citizen-centered policies; she analyses a process centered on conflict resolution and designed to bring together scholars, practitioners and politicians to cultivate locally a culture of mediation. Schultze's theoretical contribution on cultural adult education in rural areas sets the basis for a research project to be conducted in a regional university of Applied Sciences in Germany.

Sidaway reports on research conducted with ESOL adult learners and teachers in England to investigate motivation and the influence of the pandemic; a survey and interviews, analyzed according to self-determination theory, suggest that motivation was impacted by the student's response to changes in learning spaces and support received from teachers and peers.

Tabacchi interrogates pre-placement educational support for prospective adoptive parents in Italy; interviews with adoptive parents with different family configurations and adoption histories highlight some relevant educational categories that illuminate the choice to adopt and outline the kind of educational support needed. Cognitive development in learning a foreign language is the focus of a case study presented by Zeng, involving six Chinese low-educated older adults joining an intensive English learning program in Shaanxi, China. Cognitive assessment with tests, observations, and interviews shows a slight enhancement of cognitive skills, new meanings and wellbeing in interaction with others. Finally, a review of Artificial Intelligence in adult education research provided by Schirmer reveals a gap (especially if we compare the AEL area with the STEM); this would need more investment from AEL researchers in the future, since AI is becoming a dominant way to inform policies, decision making, and daily life.

Working life, education, and training

Several contributions interrogate changes in professions and professional learning at work and for work, not least related to digitalization and increasing uncertainty. The analyses span across different working contexts, from schools to companies, adult education centers, and football teams.

The transition from university to work is the topic of a psycho-pedagogical workshop held by Capo at the University of Naples Federico II. Creative autobiographical activities have been used to sustain students' awareness and reflexivity on employability, connecting self, knowledge and context, and to facilitate deliberate decision-making regarding future training and career.

Corbella uses improvisation to explore professional development of schoolteachers in public schools in Italy. Taking a reflexive stance as teacher and theatre performer, her study with eight teachers in primary and high schools in Lombardy highlights the paradox of pursuing standardization in a profession characterized by uncertain circumstances and proposes a strategy of improvisation to achieve agency by learning to cope with institutional and societal constraints.

Cousins and Jones investigate the currency and value of the Foundation Degree (EQF Level 5) in Early Years, in the light of government-funded apprenticeship programs in England. Questionnaires and interviews with recent graduates from two universities were employed to explore the impact of the degree on their confidence, competence, and quality

of work. The study found that the program continues to create enhanced levels of expertise, improved status, and teachers' commitment in early years settings.

Approaches for enhancing employability capacities of students is the common topic of a multi-case study presented by Faller, Lokhtina, Galimberti and Sanojca, convenors of the Workplace Life and Learning network of ESREA. The discussion revolved around work-integrated learning and identity, reflection, and transfer of learning in the post-pandemic workplace. Their collective reflection opens questions of how to play a critical role in developing digital literacy with the students in hybrid and blended higher education.

Gollob and Poopalapillai draw on organizational theories of adult education research to examine the impact of the pandemic on adult education organizations in Switzerland. A survey by the Swiss Federation for Adult Learning in spring 2022 explored relevant factors, scope and goals of change related to organizational structures, programs, and corporate strategies. Adult education providers signal uncertainty of demand as a major challenge and speak about digital adaptation and cultural change. Nanakova, Stanickova and Gigalova reflect on talent development in the workplace from a perspective of social facilitating environment; their study addresses the creation of playful spaces in a small software company in the Czech Republic, for selected employees to explore their ideas more freely and engage in creative conversations across different teams.

Banchetti applied a sociomaterial framework to investigate the training ecosystem and objects of an Italian company in the ICT sector; the socio-historical learning system is shaped by rules, tools, roles, community relations, and the perspectives of actors. This company values accountability, talent development, and management skills, and training objects are co-constructed with external stakeholders. In the same company, Banchetti and Slavutzky focus on training needs induced by the adoption of smart working after the Coronavirus outbreak. The new scenario forced companies to reflect on organizational learning and knowledge sharing; interviews and focus groups witness the challenges posed by disembodied communication, technology gaps, self-management, and corporate identity. Strategies include soft skills training and support to manage transitions.

Kukuk presents a study on resistance to digitalization in German vocational education and training, due to employees' growing awareness of misuse and risks of exploitation. Work and staff council members from various sectors were interviewed on resistances to the use of digital media, to identify intervening factors and the effects of resistance on adaptation. Training on digital adult education is the object of another study presented by Lüken-Klaßen and Kötting. They targeted adult educators as learners and providers of digital services, through a questionnaire related to training on digital education and counselling; while infrastructural issues and lack of familiarity seem to hamper digitalization, this study shows adult educators' motivation and creativity in working digitally with families and communities.

Niemeyer and Bellinger explored the pandemic experience at German adult education centers, interviewing eighteen directors about the social function of their institution, organizational structure, mission, and digitalization process. The pandemic disruption was experienced as a crisis that revealed precarity issues but also produced changes in the sector, opening space for revisions and redesign.

Nosari and Guarcello developed a reflective educational practice in training at the University of Turin, aiming to improve specific skills in questioning, evaluating, and decision making in complex educational contexts. The '3R' model - Reflecting, Researching, Replying - proposes a problematic situation then supports the participants in a process of evaluation based on a questioning approach. The 3R model was applied in training football coaches working with children, parents, and managers.

Another reflective tool was developed by Puge and Lindhardt, working in Denmark with school leaders involved in school improvement projects. Reflection Papers consist of a few broad questions for leaders to reflect upon the project, sent to them periodically to fill and return; the study in ten schools shows that offering a space/time to learn from experience effectively develops reflective capacities, and sustains in the long run the individual and institutional capacity for change.

Schuller examines gender inequality in professional lives; the Paula Principle states that ‘most women work below their level of competence’. He presents five explanatory factors of why women are more qualified, yet less recognized than men, and under-rewarded. The impact of the pandemic and demographic change confirmed the gap. A biopsychosocial model of life course analysis is proposed to look at careers in a full life context.

Complexity is the new normal, but what does it mean?

The pandemic crisis is often read through the lenses of “complexity”, but this word can take different meanings. We have identified four: epistemological, cultural, cognitive, and the ‘complexity’ of participation.

Epistemological complexity embraces a need to revise our perspectives of meaning and recognize the limits of knowledge. Amadini and Damiola reflect on the effects of the pandemic on educational services and workers at the university. Will the new knowledge, strategies, and attitudes last? A complex epistemology can inform dialogue and reflexivity to take stock from crisis; the Metalogue device is here offered as a narrative structure to compose dichotomies, voices, and struggles, and take different perspectives and resources from diverse people and contexts. Bertrand, Sanojca, Eneau, Galle Dorval and Lameul present an experience at the University of Rennes 2, France, where a Training Action Research framework has been used to design and conduct a MA degree program. Complexity, here, means interconnecting work, research, and training to interrogate “joint transformations” in preparing workers to creatively engage with the world; cooperation builds on diversity, criticality, and emancipatory perspectives.

“Ecologies of education” is the epistemological framework chosen by Ferrante, Galimberti and Gambacorti-Passerini in analyzing changes in school settings and educational services after the pandemic. A post-human viewpoint provides lenses to explore some basic assumptions: education entails ecosystems, consisting of interactions between networks of hybrid actors: natural-cultural, discursive, social, and material. This ecological perspective problematizes the existing practices and advocates for more sustainable educational settings.

Lim and Nicolaides also employ a socio-material orientation in designing a learning activity for engineers to reflect about the human-machine interactions. The dominance of an individualistic problem-based approach in engineering ethics education reproduces a linear logic of performativity and control; the participatory approach here adopted explores the embodied interactions in the human-machine entanglement of decision-making processes, allowing for the emergence of complexity related to ethical issues in professional enactment and development.

Interdependence of bodies and minds is at the heart of Luraschi’s interpretation of complexity. Her somatic approach offers a valuable entry point in education, to sensitize learners to the complexity of life by making space to a feeling of embodiment and contact. Vanini De Carlo offers ten “intuitions” about pre-school teachers’ training that emerged from analyzing their narrative reflective writings. In the struggle to achieve autonomy, these teachers learn how to embrace curiosity through biographical work; what can appear as contradictory inputs, issues, or experiences is then understood as compatible, complementary, and meaningful within a systemic epistemology.

Cultural complexity is invoked when realizing that unprecedented transformations and growing multiculturalism are revealing western deeply held assumptions about learning and education, that may be questioned in relation to language, space, and time. Bove, Chinazzi and Moran present a cross-cultural, inquiry-based project aimed at

promoting open-mindedness, self-empowerment and inquisitiveness in pre-service practitioners working in culturally diverse educational institutions. Sociocultural complexity is also a feature of contemporary communities in Zoletto's paper, who starts by analyzing Italian policies and suggesting that diversity is a process involving the entire population; hence, new ways to educate communities characterized by dynamics of urbanism and pluralization need to be explored.

A temporal perspective based on a new cultural understanding of adult education is the framework of three symposia organized by Michel Alhadeff-Jones. In the first, with Breton and Schmidt-Lauff, they discuss about how to access and describe heterogeneous temporalities in biographical research. Then, a symposium with Cappa, Dakka and Finnegan discusses on rhythmic and spatial configurations from a critical perspective. The third symposium with Maubant, Roquet, Biasin and Wittorski explores temporal complexities in professional development and vocational education.

In their symposium, Ávila-López, Fernández-Corbacho, Fonseca-Mora, García-Barroso, Lucio-Villegas, Rubio-Alcalá and Sánchez-Vizcaíno discuss around the diversity of adult literacies needed for migrant adults to integrate in multiliterate and multilingual societies, and how to support learning in diverse classrooms.

Cognitive complexity is invoked by Slavutzky in a study on education to prevent radicalization and violent extremism in Quebec; interviews to leading staff at the UNESCO Chair on Prevention of Radicalization and Violent Extremism, including three universities, show that cognitive complexity may be the most important skill in primary prevention activities, to be developed in context-specific and experience-based activities. Communities need to be *really* listened to, when we aim at fostering critical thinking, pluralism, resilience and empathy.

Last, but not least, Becker-Kurz, Bickert, de Greef, Ehmig, Figuera-Gazo, Juanijo Llanes, Leck, Mallows, Mulliez, Schemmann, Schmidt-Hertha, Sindermann, and Thalhammer discuss the conditions of participation in literacy and adult basic education. They present four studies referring to learners' behaviors and barriers to participation, that illuminate the complex dynamics of retention and drop-out and highlight factors that bring to success. These empirical investigations share a multiple perspective and multi-method research approach.

It seems, then, that theoretical and methodological pluralism is increasingly chosen by many researchers in AEL as a way to mirror and understand a complex rapidly changing world. Complex or complexity are not just buzzwords, or a synonym for 'something difficult': they remind us of entanglement, multiculturalism, ecology, and nurture our responsibility and motivation to go beyond the surface, when studying AEL.

Enjoy the reading!

*Laura, Andrea, and Gaia
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Papers

Shaping New Possibilities: The University as an Agora for Discussion

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Abstract - The pandemic has had a cascading effect on our existences and workplaces. Educational services have been transformed and educators have developed new knowledge, strategies, and attitudes. However, there is a risk of returning to the daily routine without taking stock of these life-changing events. In this perspective, we present a research-learning path by the Research Center CeSPeFI, at the Catholic University of Brescia. This path intends to support the educating community, providing an “agora for discussion”, in the territory of Brescia, dramatically affected by the first pandemic wave. We provide a dialogic and reflexive framework, specifically through the Metalogue device.

KEYWORDS: Community, transformative learning, reflexivity, vulnerability, metalogue.

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has had a cascading effect on our existences and workplaces: adult lives and learning processes have dramatically changed. Educational services themselves have been transformed: educators have significantly revised their practices by developing new knowledge, strategies, and attitudes. However, there is a risk of returning to the daily routine without taking stock of these life-changing events.

In this perspective, we present a research-learning path by CeSPeFI (Research Center of Family and Childhood Education) at the Catholic University of Brescia. Through this path we intend to support the educating community, providing an “agora for discussion”, in a territory, that of Brescia, dramatically affected by the first pandemic wave. With reference to the object and subjects involved, we provide a dialogic framework, specifically through the Metalogue device. This allows us to give voice and value to people's feelings and struggles, the resources employed, and the critical awareness acquired. Moreover, this relational and embodied approach enables each actor to be recognised as a bearer of meaning.

1. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework is based on the social-constructivist approach. Adult learning is seen as a process grounded in social dimensions, such as the cultural environment, previous life experiences, and changes in personal and social life (Bennington & Derrida, 1993; Illeris, 2002).

The main conceptual themes refer to adult learning theories, in particular to the adult learning process in professional contexts, focusing on self-awareness as a learner and adult educator. Self-knowledge is a crucial component in professional growth (Cranton, 2001) and in this study it is assumed in the perspective of “transformative” adult learning: personal transformation is indeed rooted in the context in which we live.

Therefore, this path of transformative learning is challenging and engaging for the practitioner, it involves the whole self (not only as a worker but also as person in a systemic perspective) and requires self-reflection skills. In turn,

reflective thinking is made up of many elements and reflects an individual's willingness to explore, be curious, and be assertive to gain self-awareness, self-knowledge, and new understandings of the world. It is not something that occurs easily for most of us and it takes time to develop (Eby, 2017 in Boyd, Boll, Brawner & Villaume, 1998: 62).

From a methodological point of view, we intend to support the learning process in professional contexts for adult educators by enhancing the processes of self-understanding and self-reflection (Barnett, 2000; Mezirow, 2000). Thus, with reference to the object and the subjects involved in the learning process, we provide a dialogic framework, specifically through the Metalogue device (West & Formenti, 2018). Originally introduced by Gregory Bateson, this tool combines reflexive processes with participative instances. It generates a broad process of knowledge co-construction, involving different actors and enabling plural, deeply contextualized knowledge. Metalogue is a device consistent with the perspective of “democratization of knowledge”, i.e., a paradigm that allows knowledge to transcend the walls of academia (Urquiza, Amigo, Billi et al., 2018). Indeed, it actively involves all social actors both in knowledge construction and in its dissemination and application in education.

In particular, the pandemic experience has posed specific challenges to educational services and professionals. These must be narrated in their complexity, including all the different dimensions. The Metalogue, indeed, “moves between intellect and emotion, subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and theoretical and practical knowing” (Coghlan, 2018: 386). It allows us to give voice and value to people’s feelings and struggles, the different perspective adopted to face this experience, the resources employed, and the critical awareness acquired. Moreover, this relational and embodied approach enables each actor to be recognised as a bearer of meaning, thus creating the conditions for each voice to emerge and be heard.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research and training path stems from the following objectives:

- Shaping generative memories, starting from educators' narratives;
- Generating new opportunities from a crisis, developing innovative learning, not merely absorbing the impact of adversities;
- Promoting the awareness of the value of sharing learning and experiences;
- Building networks between adults/educators and students, universities and services, thus promoting community links.

Between December 2020 and May 2021, three meetings took place to promote reflexive dialogue processes between key representants of childhood and family educational services in the Province of Brescia and undergraduate students in Sciences of Education. The series “Educational Dialogues” was structured as follows:

- 1) “Taking care of childhoods”
- 2) “Families during the Covid era”
- 3) “Coping with the crisis together. Being families in the community and for the community”.

The conference proceedings have been collected in the volume *Childhoods and families in the age of Covid* (Amadini & Zini, 2021): the volume contains the contributions produced by the professionals and representatives of the educational services of the city.

With reference to the emerging needs and challenges, we have proposed an agora for discussion (Fink, 2003), a learning space within the university, in which educators can reflect not only on the effects of the pandemic on the everyday life of educational services, but also on new opportunities and knowledge. Some leading questions guided the discussion: what are the effects of the pandemic on the everyday life of educational services? Could this crisis generate new opportunities? How? What are the means of education now? How can we imagine new practices?

During the meetings, adults and students discussed how to shape new answers to emerging problems, how to make learning from this experience possible and how to generate new forms of resilience.

In academia, conferences and seminars should be the ideal occasions to discuss these topics. However, the time and methods used do not generally encourage discussion. Indeed, there is a risk of promoting a frontal and passive transmission of knowledge (Meirieu, 1997: 10-11).

According to this more speaker-centered modality, the speaker expresses a thought, without a real dialectical comparison. Therefore, words lose their reflexive value and speech has a merely expressive function. The training process becomes an exhibition and not a metalogue. What is exposed thus runs the risk of seeking only confirmations and not welcoming any doubts.

In order to promote reflection and participation, the meetings between professionals working in educational services and students were conducted in a dialogical and reflective way, starting from doubts rather than from certainties. The comparison between educational practices and the clarification of decision-making processes promoted a more dialogic approach.

In this sense, the much less hierarchical online mode also helped. Sometimes the arrangement of chairs in face-to-face meetings, the perception of the real number of people and using a microphone or standing up, can make interaction difficult. However, effective learning is achieved if people are active and re-elaboration takes place. For this reason, we wanted to take advantage of the symmetrical and informal dimension guaranteed by the online webinar format.

As university professors, we played the role of facilitators between the professionals and students, without drafting our own report or summary. Rather, we favored the discussion and built the structure of the meeting in close contact with the professionals. Care was therefore given to the learning processes of both speakers and students, with particular attention to the “atmosphere” of the meetings.

It was not easy to dismantle the comfort the students usually experience when listening passively: it is much more challenging to get involved. Furthermore, this approach is more destabilizing and demanding for the speakers too: in some way they lose power and control over their own knowledge, allowing themselves to be challenged by the reflective questions of the listeners.

3. RESULTS

This research and training path has shown how research in adult education can sustain communities (universities and educational services) and individuals, by promoting knowledge and new collective and critical practices. Namely:

- Collection and sharing of reflections allowed students and educators to understand the essential contribution provided by local educational services, both formal and informal, to the development of new forms of social coexistence;
- The Metalogue approach, as a proposal for collective and intergenerational reflection, has allowed the participants to experience the value of building collaborative, co-responsible and participative networks;
- The collected narratives confirm the value of education as an undisputable resource to face emerging problems, risks and crises, but also to generate new ties;
- Educators discovered unexpected capabilities through a resilient commitment in critical conditions.

In particular, the results can lead to two deeper levels of analysis: the methodological process and the contents.

As regards the process, this path has facilitated the emergence of the following awareness:

- Firstly, the Metalogue provided a particularly effective methodological approach in reference to the prolonged health emergency, i.e., a suspension of a well-established routine to which there was a risk of returning without taking these life-changing events into account. As a matter of fact, the pandemic has been the ideal opportunity to improve

learning and acquire new awareness. This is particularly important because the effects of the pandemic have not ended with the easing of restrictions and an apparent return to normality. Rather, the consequences of these experiences in several areas of life will take time to be addressed and obtain transformative resolutions; in particular, the repercussions from an existential, relational and social point of view are severe. This emerges specifically in relation to specific ages of life or conditions of vulnerability as shown by recent research (see for example: D'Elia, 2022; Graupensperger et al., 2022; Solheim et al., 2022). It is therefore necessary for professionals to remain alert and to continue to carefully monitor educational and social contexts;

- Secondly, the *Metalogue*, as a tool for discussion, made it possible to experience a process of confrontation between multiple actors: not only educators, but also students and the University itself. Thus, the University became an “agora for discussion”, where a research-learning path took place: indeed, this critical dialogical process gained value both in terms of research, involving the actors in the co-construction of knowledge, and from a formative and transformative perspective for all of the participants;

- Finally, this approach encourages the ability to give voice both to constraints and fragilities as well as to opportunities and resources, provided by people and contexts. It allows for new forms of storytelling: non-dichotomous (and consequently partial), but rather regenerative and complex.

As for the contents, the present research-learning experience unlocked peculiar self-reflection pathways:

- vulnerability and frailty are constitutive aspects of personal and collective experience, which require a specific competence in order to be fully appreciated, namely, maintaining a reflexive attitude towards people and communities who are experiencing vulnerable conditions. The pandemic has strongly brought out suffering and frailty: not only physical pain, but also psychological and relational suffering related to loneliness. The COVID-19 emergency certainly has been an unexpected and unusually far-reaching event; however, vulnerability is an existential dimension hardly accepted in nowadays society and in people's lives. The philosopher Byung-Chul Han refers to a “generalized fear of pain”. The consequence of this fear is a “permanent anesthesia” (2021: 5-7): all painful conditions are avoided. A possible expression of this phenomenon is the exaggerated and uncritical search for well-being, happiness, optimism, thus removing any confrontation with life's difficult experiences. In the wake of this removal, negative thoughts must be removed or immediately replaced by positive ones.

- In the pandemic era, frailty and precariousness have become so distinctive that there seems to be no chance for any future and hope. The task of education is that of accompanying people and communities through existential bewilderment and suffering. Educators are thus called upon to support people so that they can face the questions of meaning arising from fragile life, shaping paths of reflection and existential research (Amadini, 2021). However, this task does not end with the health emergency: human life is inherently fragile, marked by risk and uncertainty. The existential trajectories (both personal and collective) pose the challenge of learning how to live within complexity by finding generative and regenerative trajectories;

- Educational work is constantly faced with the dimension of vulnerability and educators are exposed to difficulties impacting on their well-being. In this sense, narration and the practice of reflection, both individual and shared, make it possible to assign meaning to professional actions, to rediscover and renew the sense of commitment, to restore intentionality.

Such a process can also be valuable to students, so that they immediately become aware of the difficulties, but also of the opportunities of regeneration inherent to the educational work. Furthermore, they have the opportunity to immediately take a reflexive stance which will be a resource for their future work;

- A final awareness path concerns the transformative value of everyday life. The experiences and reflections shared by educators are not exceptional, but they have are rooted and expressed in the dimension of daily life. They relate

to single educational services, strategies and resources applied in a specific context, during an era of risk and complexity. How can these single experiences then have a regenerative value for the whole community? Indeed, these examples fall within the range of the “small” experiences: they slip by and do not have a particular echo or resonance. Yet they are transformative experiences, because of their ability to generate resources for people, families, professionals, and educational services. These responses are grounded in the individuals and community lives.

- Their transformative value, however, extends further when practices experienced during times of urgency find space for reflection. Nevertheless, there is a risk: returning, once the health emergency ends, to our previous daily lives, thus losing the creative and innovative impulse that, with sacrifice and effort, emerged from a time of uncertainty and resistance. Reflexivity could be the antidote to stagnation in daily life, giving rise to new perspectives and contaminations.

4. CONCLUSION

The research-learning path conducted through the Metalogue device made it possible to generate opportunities for reflective and transformative learning, which actively involved various actors. It is therefore significant to repropose this approach, by virtue of the awareness and educational gains it has brought both on methodological and content levels. These paths could be proposed with regard to other research and learning focuses. In this way, students could enrich their educational journey with new insights, thanks to the active and questioning confrontation with new actors and contexts.

Moreover, the choice of promoting awareness through a written narrative and the collection of contributions in the publication of a text, fostered opportunities for reflection, meaning-attribution and systematization of the contents. At the same time, it also facilitated the sharing of awareness in a community perspective. The testimony of professionals was able to go beyond the university context, spreading to educational services and associations and even reaching the institutions and communities themselves.

Therefore, the university indeed can, through such pathways, experience a new role and a new form of commitment: alongside the training and research task, it has the opportunity to play a role of mediation and facilitation of dialogue, fostering encounters and relations between different spheres and subjects pursuing educational objectives from an educating community perspective.

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Creative Methods for More-Than-Human Communities. Multisensory Learnings from Anthropology

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Abstract - How to maintain and nurture resilience in our communities, when nature loss and climate extremities are threatening the very foundations of our existence? We are immersed in the natural world with other life forms, so we should consider the more-than-human components of our social world from diverse perspectives. This paper suggests that exploring sensory experiences of different generations can help in developing wellbeing in our more-than-human communities. Creative methods, such as multisensory ethnography and artistic work, are needed to account for the co-constitution of our communal realities with animate and inanimate nature. There is much to learn from approaching sustainable wellbeing and resilience as a sensorial and a bodily question. With insights from anthropology, this paper proposes multisensory ethnographic methods, that are informed by the holistic approach and insights to alterity from anthropology of the senses, for creative and transdisciplinary community research.

KEYWORDS: Creativity, more-than-human community, senses, resilience, anthropology.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a prequel to finding ways of picking, sowing and nurturing “new seeds for a world to come”, a pre-conference day brought together anthropological and educational insights around the topic of “Making and re-framing communities”. The bringing together of education and anthropology can show alternate ways for making sense of contemporary realities.

Creative practices of using our senses are a part of our thinking and learning processes. During the ESREA triennial conference 2022, the need for embodied forms of knowledge and multisensorial learning was often agreed upon, yet, within the academic practice of sitting inside conference rooms with our laptops and notebooks. The standard activity ‘not minding our bodies’ was broken only by breaks for tasting delicious Italian food, and by additional cultural excursions. In this paper I claim that corporeally sensitive, creative methods are needed for finding ways to maintain and enhance wellbeing in our living environments, which we share with other species and with inanimate forms of nature. In order to succeed in this task, it is necessary to be mindful of our bodies and the affective atmospheres we work in. Before reading forward, I challenge you, and ask you to do the following exercise: (1) Stand up and find a viewpoint to as far outside as you can see. (2) Stand in a good, relaxed position. (3) Breath in, inhaling your lungs full and exhale slowly for three times.

This paper brings together several concepts that emerge from current trends in the human sciences. The aim is to point out connections between these notions and to provoke questions the reader might wish to pose to their own research materials. Maintaining and nurturing *resilience* is the general background context: as our communities are facing new ecological and other related challenges, resilience becomes a key question in organizing social life. Resilience refers broadly to the ability to stand adversities and to adapt to changing situations (Kałwak & Weingold 2022).

To maintain and to develop resilience *transgenerationally*, we need to consider communal diversity as an asset. The next sections will discuss the anthropological method and the tackling of difference through multiple senses. Insights on otherness will then be linked to transgenerational wellbeing in the more-than-human context. The notion of more-than-human actors has surged from diverse directions, such as ecophenomenology (Abram 1997) and STS (science & technology studies), directing attention to the materialities, entities and conceptions, other animals, and nonhuman nature which affect our reality both in an ontological sense of what there is, and in an epistemological sense of what can we

know. Human wellbeing is entangled with other forms of life nurtured by the ecological mechanisms of the Earth. People of different ages can share experiences and knowledge about temporal and environmental changes (Aula 2021; 2023). Community research, thus, needs to consider our relationality with more-than-human others such as trees and parks, waters, air, memories, everyday technologies, ghosts of the past, and dreams for the future.

In practice, tackling this diversity requires creative methods. *Creativity* has been defined as the ability to formulate new ideas and solutions, or new combinations of them, in ways that are applicable in a context (e.g. Kaufman & Sternberg 2010). The final section of this paper brings forth research methods, which leave space for creativity, and can approach sustainable wellbeing and resilience through the body and the senses.

2. HOW TO LEARN FROM OTHERNESS – LESSONS FROM ANTHROPOLOGY

2.1. Understanding alterity

During all its history anthropology has had at its core the purpose to understand otherness. By researching cultural complexes and systems of meaning distant to the researchers' own culture, anthropology has impacted on a relativized understanding of our own social organization, and our own cultures of meaning (Marcus & Fischer 1996). The classic method for researching alterity has been participant observation, formulated as the backbone of anthropological fieldwork already a century ago by Malinowski (1922), whose purpose was the holistic understanding of a culture. In decades of decolonial discussions Malinowski's practice in relation to these ideals has been questioned, in the same vein as the whole concept of culture and the biases of representation. Instead of staying on an imaginatively bounded community for years and constituting what was to be taken as a culture, anthropological research today can focus on phenomena that take place in different locations. In the 90's George E. Marcus proposed *multi-sited ethnography* as a response to the increasing mobilities in a globalized world: the people or the processes studied could be accompanied on their multiple routes (Marcus 1998). Nevertheless, Marcus still leaned on Malinowskian fieldwork ideals: participant observation, learning the language, staying a longer period in one place, openness to different forms of knowledge, and attempting to grasp the natives' points of view.

But how to grasp the "native's point of view", an alternate perspective to reality? This is both a practical and a deeply philosophical question, surrounded by long debates which every anthropological generation has contributed to. The propositions of a theoretical movement, the controversial 'ontological turn', have taken this question to an extreme, together with a political claim of decolonizing anthropological ontology and epistemology (Holbraad & Pedersen 2017). The ontological turn, following Brazilian anthropologist Viveiros de Castro (2014), claimed that different cultures are not simply culturally structured worldviews to the same physical reality, but instead, people in different locations actually do live in completely different worlds. Reality in an Amazonian rainforest community is something else for them, and the whole understanding of what it is to be human, or what it is even to be alive – or to be dead – is partially incomprehensible to the Western scholar (even despite rigid participant observation). Anthropologists' job remains in creating concepts that partially translate the local world in an academically understandable form, and thus broaden our perspectives on reality and its possibilities (Holbraad & Pedersen 2017).

When I researched the Afro-Brazilian art of capoeira in Northeastern Brazil, I got taken into a world of different Brazilian, African and indigenous heritages mainly in a bantu-based cultural complex (Aula 2017). In traditional capoeira the many sensory modalities, such as singing voice, movement, songs and rhythms enact a wide array of beings from snakes to waterfalls, from tides to warrior spirits. In the Afro-Brazilian cosmology of capoeira, human being is a multiplicity: different mythical entities describe different phases of life, characteristics and qualities that are simultaneously present in a person or in an interaction in a given moment. Ancestrality is present in the older capoeira

practitioners, who must be respected for their knowledge. But ancestors are also present in the game, not as invisible ghosts standing aside the live body, but in it: in the movement, in the utterance, in the rhythm (Aula 2020).

Alterity demonstrates that other ways of life are possible. As proclaimed in the 90's (Marcus & Fischer 1996), research of otherness can work as a cultural critique of our own customs. Understanding the presence of ancestors or mythological protagonists in the rhythmic circles of capoeira did not, however, require a concept of ontologically different worlds. Whether we take the stance of exploring an alternate, partially incomprehensible reality – a world of others – or the standpoint of interpreting socially constructed meanings of the same world we share, it nevertheless requires observation and participation. One should insistently question one's own presumptions on how others perceive the world.

2.2. Sensing otherwise

Tools for questioning perception can be found in sensory studies. How does perception work in different cultures is a classic problem in so-called anthropology of the senses (as formulated by David Howes). A linkage of eyesight with rational mind pervades European history, but this so called oculo-centrist hierarchy, as well as the customary notion of exactly five senses that correspond to five sensory organs, is in fact a contingent, Western cultural-historical construct, despite its apparent naturalness. (Howes 2019.)

There are numerous accounts for different cultural variations where other senses such as smell, or the sense of temperature, are central for communication and social organization. Kathryn L. Geurts (2003), for instance, has investigated the meaning system and sensory orders in southeastern Ghana. Among the Anlo-Ewe-speaking people, balance is a central sense and balancing an essential component of what it means to be human, in a physical and a psychological sense, as well as in literal and metaphorical ways. Much of perception in Anlo society falls into the category of *seselelame* ('feel-feel-at-flesh-inside'), in which sensory input comes from bodily feeling and the interior milieu (Geurts 2003). The mind-body dichotomy that haunts European and Anglo-American philosophical thought is absent.

Anthropology of the senses has researched such topics as the formulating of a sensory profile of a culture or how sensory phenomena are meaningful to a group. Classic approaches have focused on cultural and social systems, values and organization (of the senses). What more is needed, is reflection upon the experiential aspects of doing research. This has been brought up in sensory anthropology, which emphasizes the scrutinizing of sensory, embodied and emplaced forms of knowledge in participant observation (Pink 2015). As researchers, we do not gain knowledge because we are looking at the perceived world objectively from outside. We can know, because we take part in the same world.

3. TRANSGENERATIONAL WELLBEING IN MORE-THAN-HUMAN WORLD

Quality of life is entangled with the global environmental transformations. The wellbeing of our communities requires that social research takes seriously the co-constitution of our communal realities with more-than-human nature. This paper claims that we need to learn about and develop creative environmental relationships to promote resilience, and for this it is crucial to listen to the experiences of different people. Sharing transgenerational knowledge of the environment is a multisensory matter, and it is not easy, as testified by the following story:

A research project set to find out how to include nomadic people in Mongolia in higher education. The nomadic lifestyle included dismounting and mounting of yurts and moving long distances with animal herds, all of which required grasping of complex wholes. To the astonishment of the researchers, young people would receive from them tests such as a Rubik cube and solve them with minimal effort. The researchers' conclusions juxtaposed the reasoning in nomadic life with simultaneous perception of interconnected wholes. This complexity perception differs from causal analysis to such an

extent, that they can be mutually exclusive: in academic science education these perceptual skills might even be erased. Nevertheless, late modern society privileges academic education. (Personal communication with P. Dillon, see also Dillon et al. 2008.)

What there is, then, to learn by approaching sustainable wellbeing as a sensorial and bodily question, when our societies bear these difficult disruptions and discontinuities with other forms of life? At the very least, research should strive to understand how daily environmental knowledge is formed and how different people relate with their perceived realities. The sensing of nonhuman alterity can help research and communities to nurture life-supporting relations. Wellbeing and quality of community life can be researched with methods that consider the diverse materialities, technologies, interspecies relations and invisible affects involved. This is what more-than-human community means. The development of this line of thinking can be found in a wide array of posthuman studies, new materialist theory and processual research approaches in the works of such scholars as Karen Barad, Tim Ingold, Anna L. Tsing, Stacy Alaimo, Jane Bennett, Donna Haraway and many others. Here we also need the relativization of the senses (Howes 2019) and the sensitivity to embodied learning and sharing of knowledge (Pink 2015).

The temporal changes and ruptures in environmental relationships point out that while societies are rapidly ageing, transgenerational sharing is scarce. It is important to study the sensorial and embodied knowledge of those people who grew up before the concurrent nature loss and actualized climate emergency – but who can possibly still share knowledge about building ecological and social resilience. Transgenerational environmental relationships are constituted and maintained on close community levels (Järviluoma & Murray 2023). There is a sustained need for studies on sharing knowledge and experiences, by for instance walking together, by crafting, art, gardening, and so on. For this, we need more creative research methods.

4. CREATIVE RESEARCH

Creativity is necessary for attending to the interwoven problems of our time. Following a recent manifesto for posthuman creativity (Harris & Holman Jones 2022), we need to observe relationality in creative endeavors. Creativity can be expanded from the ideology of individualist innovators to creative “becoming-with” (ibid., 525).

There is already a wide array of research methods that combine artistic creativity to social research. A crucial matter to the wellbeing of our more-than-human communities are environmental relationships. One multi-faceted method I have participated in developing is sensobiographic walking interview, apt to studying this question transgenerationally (Aula 2021; Järviluoma & Murray 2023). This ethnographic method provides a way to study embodied and site-specific emergence of sensory remembering, and perceptions to be shared. First, a person is asked to select a route significant to them. They will walk this path with a researcher and possibly other participants talking about the sounds, smells and other sensuous memories they have from that environment. Memories and perceptions are shared in thematic conversation during the walk, which can be recorded on audio and/or video devices. The experience of walking together through transforming spaces can become a point for personal and social convergence of the present moment, the not-yet, and the affective presences of the past.

The sensobiographic method shows how a biographic approach can be both situational and relational, and also posthuman in considering a multiplicity of actors (Formenti & Lurachi 2020; Aula 2021). It also affords space for research-creation. According to Erin Manning, research-creation is a mode of activity that is ‘constitutive of new processes. [...] New processes will likely create new forms of knowledge’ (Manning 2015, 53–54). By exploring terrain in artistic collaboration, the author has applied the sensobiographic method in producing multimedia installations together with artists Jani-Matti Salo and Mark Niskanen (see Aula, Niskanen & Salo 2022). In research-creation, more

conventional content analysis or other methods of data analysis can follow. This artistic work also resulted in a case study on environmental change (Aula 2023).

Secondly, creative methods can be applied in reporting research: alternate ways of presenting the production of the research data and conclusions can inform new audiences and help in the surging of new research insights. These creative reporting or dissemination methods include artworks and virtual tours. Online examples can be found in the 3D virtual environments of SENSOTRA Tour presenting sensobiographic data in three European cities (SENSOTRA 2021) and in the Aula, Niskanen & Salo (2022) virtual platform *Garden of becomings*.

Creative collaboration can be approached as an open process, open to serendipity and the entangled interconnectedness of multisensory relationality, in a word, becomings. Creativity is necessary in organizing our lives, in pedagogy, and in fundamental research about what our communities are and how they change. This paper has indicated some possibilities for attending to the transgenerational wellbeing of our more-than-human communities through research methods that can produce better understanding of otherness.

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Culture Contact, Adult Learner's Critical Thinking, and Critical Thinking Use. A Sociocultural Perspective on Adult Education

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Abstract - The term "socio-cultural" comes from shared anthropology, psychology, and education research. From the socio-culture perspective, human learning is a dynamic social activity and a higher level of human cognition that is formed in social contexts. Considering the cognitive development possibilities, critical thinking is proposed as a cognitive strategy that may increase the probability of a desirable outcome (Halpern, 2003). In order to obtain a proper understanding of the present time and society, a qualitative study will be conducted to explore the relationship between culture contact and the development of critical thinking of adult learners, and how students use critical thinking skills in contact with other cultures.

KEYWORDS: Culture contact, critical thinking, critical thinking use, sociocultural perspective.

1. INTRODUCTION

Adult learning is a unique process that requires supporting processes to make it successful (Moor, 2010). Based on the complex nature of adult education and the fact that this area of research can be done by merging the meaning of concepts such as culture and critical thinking which is one of the most important 21st-century skills in education, along with creativity, communication, and collaboration (Lombardi, Mednick, Debacker & Lombaerts, 2021).

It is also widely accepted by educators and researchers that the development of critical thinking skills is a top goal of higher education (Browne & Keeley-Vasudeva, 1992) Despite the attempts to make educational policies that focus on the enhancement of critical thinking skills, there is still a lack of adopted guidelines for the promotion of critical thinking skills development that would address needs of students and the current policies need further elaboration. To provide effective guidelines for critical thinking skills development and use, understanding the factors which may affect critical thinking is necessary. Culture and culture-related factors constitute one of the debated factors that may influence students' capabilities in, and use of, critical thinking (Manalo, Kusumi, Michita, & Tanaka, 2013)

In a multicultural context, when different cultures come into contact, particularly 'distant' ones, individuals might change their views as a consequence of the contact finally (Bochner, 2003). According to Nisbett and Norenzayan (2002, p. 3), cultural differences affect beliefs about specific aspects of the world but also impact the nature of their cognitive process. A person with an advanced level of thinking is a critical consumer of information; he or she is driven to seek reasons and evidence and knows how to make and defend distinctions, and so on (Burbules, 1999), and arrive at decision and course of action where appropriate.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the current research specifically aims to identify how culture contact affects the critical thinking skills of adult learners, and how learners use critical thinking skills in contact with other cultures.

2. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION

2.1. Culture and culture contact from the aspect of this study

The present study utilizes the socio-cultural definition of culture which is "a system of meanings and practices, cohesive across time, which individuals carry with themselves place to place, students who study in international educational contexts are passive carriers of culture which is a set of beliefs and fixed traits (Nasir & Hand, 2006, p. 450). According to Ayisi (1992, p. 1) culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, cultural tools,

customs, and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.’’ The role of social experience in cognitive development and growth considers in its direct form people interacting with and supporting one another (Gauvain, 2001b, p. 127).

Societies differ in the cultural practices that they promote, affording differential expertise in the use of a cognitive strategy, or differential knowledge about a domain. The result is that a given cognitive process may be equally available in principle, but differentially accessible in different cultures (Nisbett & Norenzayan, 2002, p. 28). This implies that people may habitually rely on qualitatively different cognitive strategies to solve the same problems of everyday life.

2.2. Critical thinking from the approach of this study

While critical thinking skills relate to a certain set of cognitive skills that involve analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, interpretation, and self-regulation, critical thinking dispositions relate to consistent willingness, motivation, inclination, and intention to use such critical thinking skills (Kwon, Onwuegbuzie & Alexander, 2007).

Following the above introduction to clarify the aspect and definition of critical thinking that is taken into account in this paper, I refer to Siegel who asserted that the notion of critical thinking is importantly normative, in that episodes of thinking that meet its criteria are episodes of good thinking, the critical thinker must be able to evaluate the reasons that come in many varieties in all their many forms and strengths, the critical thinker’s beliefs, judgments, and actions must be epistemically justified or warranted, and that the critical spirit is an essential component of critical thinking (Siegel, 2015).

Siegel (1988) identifies two rather different conceptions of critical thinking running through the related literature: the 'pure skills' (p.6) and the 'skills plus tendencies' (p.6) conceptions of critical thinking. According to Siegel, the 'pure skills' conception of critical thinking concentrates firstly upon a person's ability to assess correctly. Siegel (1988) argues that critical thinking needs something more than skills.

Siegel (1988) calls the second conception of critical thinking the 'skills plus tendencies' (p.6) conception, based on the idea that a critical thinker has both the skills or proficiencies necessary for the proper assessing of statements and actions and also the tendency to exercise those proficiencies in their ordinary statement- (and action-) assessing activities (p.6). Following this view, a person is a critical thinker, if he or she is able and ready to think critically. As Siegel (1988) mentions this conception of critical thinking extends critical thinking beyond the skill of assessing statements and actions. There are also significant dispositions, values, and traits that a critical thinker needs to develop.

2.3. How culture contact influences critical thinking development and use

It is said that Perspectives that only concentrate on internal processes of cognitive development (growth and age related factors) and ignore external processes (cultural environment) and the interaction of the two, cannot give a complete account of the emergence of human intellect (Gauvain, 2001a). To understand cognitive development across time it needs to be viewed wider than just determined by biological and maturational capabilities. It must be seen deeply embedded in a social and cultural world of occasions, formalities, etiquettes, and dramaturgy (Gauvain, 2001a, p. 17).

Sociocultural perspective assumes that human cognition is formed through engagement in social activities, and that it is the social relationships and the culturally constructed materials, signs, and symbols, referred to as semiotic artifacts, that mediate those relationships that create uniquely human forms of higher-level thinking. Consequently, cognitive development is an interactive process, mediated by culture, context, language, and social interaction. Knowledge of the world is mediated by virtue of being situated in a cultural environment and it is from this cultural environment that humans acquire the representational systems that ultimately become the medium, mediator, and tools of thought (Johnson, 2009).

In the current study, critical thinking as an active cognitive process (Danczak, Thompson, & Overton, 2020), and a higher level of thinking is considered.

Furthermore, societies differ in the cultural practices that they promote which makes people use different cognitive strategies to solve the same problems (Nisbett & Norenzayan, 2002, p. 28). For instance using critical thinking that is considered an active cognitive process (Danczak, Thompson, & Overton, 2020), and a higher level of thinking based on some authors is not the same for all cultures. They believe that critical thinking is more difficult for some cultural groups. For example, some Asian student groups (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean) have been characterized as being more group-oriented, harmony-seeking, hierarchical, and non-critical thinking in comparison to students from Western cultures who are characterized as being more individualistic, adversarial, non-hierarchical, and critical thinking (Manalo, Kusumi, Koyasu, Michita & Tanaka, 2013). In another study, it is claimed that “enculturation, ... values and preferences you have now ... [which] were instilled in you since birth by your culture” can be a barrier to using critical thinking skills (Kirby, Goodpaster, and Levin, 1999) .

3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND CONTEXT

As it is mentioned above a person is a critical thinker, from this point of view, if she has the skills, abilities, or proficiencies necessary for the proper evaluation of reasons. The critical thinkers’ beliefs, judgments, and actions must be justified and warranted. The impact of these conceptions of critical thinking on the educational context could be less than promising if students drew upon critical thinking in tests only to get good grades in exams but not outside the testing context. Regarding this idea, this study adopted an ethnographic approach as a qualitative research method to build a deep understanding of some aspects of the social life of people in natural settings. (Leavy, 2020). The ethnography approach is concerned with what people are, and how they are; furthermore, it tries to reveal what lies beneath and provides many strategies for obtaining data that will enable the researcher to describe cultural norms, perspectives, characteristics, and patterns.

3.1. Participants

Based on the Purpose of the study, exploring possible changes in participants’ minds as the result of culture contact experiences, it is expected to listen to their stories, interview and observe them in a natural setting, a small number of four participants are chosen. All participants are international students who are participating in one international English course in the departments of Science at the University of Milano-Bicocca in Milan, Italy. While the participants are all non-native speakers of the English language, they are using this language for their communication since they come from different nationalities and languages and the interviews also were done in the English language.

3.2. Data collection

Due to the open-ended and interpretive nature of the method of data collection and analysis (Mertens, 2009) I used data collection tools like ethnographic conversations, narratives, and interviews for this study. I did the ethnographic conversation as the first part of data collection and to identify the participants’ cultural norms, perspectives, characteristics, and patterns. The conversations proceeded with a series of face-to-face, semi-structured, open-ended, and individual interviews to obtain the interviewees’ opinions, views, and intentions in detail (Thin, 2001) and any possible changes in students’ views. To complete the inquiry, I asked the students to tell narratives of their experiences with living and studying in a cross-cultural environment in contact with cultures. All the interviews were done on the university’s campus, where the students are living and studying. All the interviews were transcribed and coded manually.

4. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

I used ethnographic content analysis to document and understand the communication of meaning and to identify theoretical relationships. To this end, the concepts were reflexively developed, coded, analyzed, and interpreted (Altheide, 1987).

The analysis of the data is done based on the following elements:

- *The possible changes in student's views, thoughts, and beliefs*
- *The essential components of Critical thinking*
 - a) *Correct evaluation of the reasons*
 - b) *Justified and warranted beliefs, judgments, and actions*
 - c) *Tendency to use critical thinking skills, willingness, and desire to think and do reasonably*

In the presentation of my analysis, I will introduce the participants in brief to contextualize their conversations, narrations, and experiences. Then with a focus on the mentioned elements above I will provide the most significant parts of the transcribed data with my interpretation for each participant, and finally, I will discuss how the considered components reveal the main aims of the study.

Diana is a twenty-three years old girl from the Philippines. She has been in Italy for one year. She lives in the university's residence. Living in Italy is her first experience of living in a European country.

She narrated her first experience of contact with Italian people and with a different language which is odd to her.

The day that I came here, because at the reception there was a guard. He can't speak English and it was so hard and I can feel him shouting and I think I cried that day because I didn't understand anything and he was like and you have to stay in your room for 10 days. You can't go out, but I'm like how about to buy groceries? I think and it was hard. It took a while for me to understand. Yeah it was like it was a traumatic experience. it's a sad thing actually. uh. Because in the Philippines I've I, I never I I always thought of myself. I actually think so highly of myself like I was confident and my friends see me that. But when I came here, it's like all that confidence was crushed like since day one.

At the beginning of her attendance in Italy, she faced a kind of traumatic experience (as she mentioned) with a different language which is one of the basic categories to characterize culture.

In another section of the interview, she continues:

I'm thinking about everything now, I have to be careful about what I say about what I do, so I'm more cautious about that. I think I got personality wise.

She is feeling a variation in her personality. She says her current situation made her think about everything, things that she has never used to think about them. She thinks she is required to behave and do in a different way to live and study abroad safely.

It seems that now thinks more than before, but her thinking ability is not necessarily evidence for being a critical thinker. She tends to criticize different social and cultural issues since she described educational, social, and cultural issues critically. She evaluates behaviors well, but in the course of action, she doesn't take always the justified one, because she says that she found she should be careful, when she is with others, she prefers to be quiet, she prefers to stay in her room to feel safe.

John is a twenty-six years old boy from Guatemala. He has been living in the university's residence since one year ago. Living in Italy is not his first experience of living abroad. He achieved his bachelor's degree in the United States and he has lived there for four years.

I had a lot of chance to meet people from different places of the all over the world, I think it opened my mind to like further to to more outside of the world that I've never known.

Diversity from different aspects has been surprising for him. From his words, the way that he has been thinking about people of different cultures has changed and he has welcomed the changes. When he is asked about the new educational system, He compares it with the educational system in America and says here is completely different and harder than that, but I am getting used to it, I need time to get used to it.

I remember when I went to US, I was more shy, I knew this a new place but I didn't do a lot out of my comfort zone, I was insure about things, it would be hard to me to like decide, also I couldn't do things....., I had short plans .I met different people that the raised in different way, they raised different, they looked at things different, I was surprised look at them.

Again he describes differences in people's lifestyles and views that he faced, and he believes that he has changed in his own view , thought and lifestyle after he got in contact with other cultures, which is the result of getting involved in varieties of cultures belonging people who have surrounded him. He thinks he is able now to make the right decisions, to do things independently, and to ensure about them .He tends to do a proper evaluation of things that have been going on around him he has this ability and although he is doing some indirect reasoning by regularly comparing and contrasting the issues, it seems that he doesn't have one of the essential components of critical thinking which is having a critical spirit (Siegel, 2015).

Karolina is thirty five year old girl. She is from Brazil. Nina has lived in different countries like Japan, Australia, Brazil, and Italy.

In Japan, they live for the work, they don't have a social life, to enjoy, I've never accepted that but one I was working in Japan I realized that this is into their culture, For example, one day I had a training, I told boss I can't come because I have training was fine, he said ok but he was very angry with me, he made me feel very guilty, because I wasn't at work. I used to use very creative materials, like games, creative lessons, I could do everything in the best way but I was under pressure, I was really really really sick mentally, tired mentally, there was a kind of psychological pressure of culture was high.

She criticizes this aspect of Japanese culture, while she says about her attempt to improve her job skills to adapt to the work-oriented culture (as she introduced) of Japan.

In Italy, they always in group, especially in the university. Once, I went out to a bar with a group of Italian who we worked on the same project. They invited me but then they excluded me. 'Cause I was in the group, but suddenly they just

start speaking Italian. And they said let's do a party next week. And when I get in the circle, she the girls look at me like. No, you know they're not like you have not included. It's not like that.

She takes a critical strategy to describe the social and cultural issues that she has faced. Signs of criticism can be realized in all parts of her narrations and words. Karolina reasons all her claims and judgments about her different beliefs regularly, whereas, unlike critical thinkers' beliefs, they might not be warranted. She is able to make reasonable decisions when it comes to the course of action since she has been trying to solve her problems in any possible way. She believes that her personality and thoughts have changed effectively during the years in which she has been living abroad.

Maria is a 23 years old girl from Ethiopia. Living in Italy is her first experience of living abroad.

I need to adapt I need time to adapt for example is educational system. for oral exams we have to know. You study to learn the subject to know it really, that helps you, but also its too much, because stresses too much, I think most people here smoke a lot because of stress, because everything is too much. Because too much is expecting of them. In my country it's more common than the past, but it is not something that you do everywhere, especially older people and females they don't smoke that much, but here is common for everyone, young guys. I think it's because they are stressed . It might be. The education system definitely has some parts, it's not that, may some people out of education smoke but, because most people start smoking in the school most people start smoking in the school so that's the stress start and it's hard to get rid of it because they get used to it. And the stress doesn't reduce in time because when you get out of the education, there is work there is life. Education is the start, I'm not sure but I think so.

She criticizes the habit of smoking of Italian and European people in general and it made her think about the reason for this odd habit of smoking in her new context. At the same time, she has encountered a different educational system which is difficult for her. She is feeling the pressure of assessment by the university's assessment system and is trying to justify her opinion about the difficulty of education. While she is looking for the reason for too much smoking and justifying this evaluation, too much stress from the difficult educational assessment can be a reasonable reason from her point of view.

Something that is obvious about Maria is the way she states the problems and makes reasons for her statement and tries to support her reasonings and ideas, even not justified reasons. She easily evaluates issues that have priority for her and tends to justify them. If I consider her a person who has the main characteristics of a critical thinker, I can also express that she has a tendency to use her skills.

5. CONCLUSION

Whereas the small number of participants is a limitation for making a general claim about the goals of the research, the diversity of this small group of students can support the ideas behind that. By consideration of the reasons and factors that were mentioned and recognized in the data, it is probable that the student's thoughts, views, and actions change by contact with a new social and cultural setting. In addition, thinking more meticulously than the students used to think is possible, but to be a critical thinker as Siegel defines is something beyond thinking development. Regarding the main components of critical thinking that this study focuses on, the interviewed students have almost the capability of becoming critical thinkers in a different cultural context, whereas they are not demonstrators of all the required elements.

Furthermore, the other probable effective factors on the viewpoints and thinking framework of the students should not be ignored.

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Crisis in Adult Education of the Post-Pandemic Period. A Possible Model of Sustainable Welfare

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Abstract - The problem that is relevant today both political and social pedagogical is that the current historical moment has undermined the three main variables of the labour system: stable employment, the willingness of women to take care within the family, the potential for expansion of welfare state programs. This paper aims to reflect empirically on the contribution that educational sciences can make to policy in the post-pandemic period, starting from the interesting reflections contained in the UNESCO 2021 report on the responsibility of the adult sphere in the educational process of the young generations, in order to build a new sustainable welfare model.

KEYWORDS: Education, welfare, community, adult, sustainability.

1. PREMISE

Education, and especially the educational system for adults, which permeates the different spheres of knowledge and culture, must lead man to realize himself in dialogue with the world and in harmony with it; he must seek to make people aware of their roots and provide specific points of reference that allow them to define their place in the worlds and contexts with respect for human diversity and different abilities. Pedagogically understood values are always part of that filter that makes every interpretation possible, they are conditions and ways of access to the other and to his truth (Merrill, González Monteagudo, Nizinska, Galimberti, Ballesteros-Moscio, 2017)

In general, adult education, to date, represents the most interesting sphere of analysis of changes in professional identities, understood as a training process resulting from school and professional socializations. Here, the professional identity of adult educators began to be constructed during the socialization processes that took place over time. Sometimes, they were the result of socialization processes that occurred during their work as adult educators. In both cases, we are confronted with forms of education that traverse different contexts, from the formal to the non-formal and informal, tracing secondary socialization paths, or processes that are substantiated when a subject manages to integrate the formal social with the informal of groups, all within well-defined professional work contexts (Fraser, 2002).

The reference to the professionalism of the adult educator, here, looks not so much to the school context, which is certainly the most representative; it refers, instead, to the more practical social sphere, to the action of social cooperatives operating in the most complex territories. Their training, in fact, is characterized by well-defined university courses, and by an adequate apprenticeship training that puts them in a position to operate on the territory. Every educator should be able to understand the meaning of his/her action and why he/she is needed, in order to operate according to conscience (Bholinger, Haake, Helms Jørgensen, Toiviainen, Wallo, 2015). Training, however, is also based on profound socialization processes, which inevitably end up characterizing and differentiating skills and competences. One thinks, for example, of age differences, gender differences, and the historical moment in which a given context is passing through, as was the case in the pandemic period that has just passed. These are all elements that will be fundamental in our reflection.

2. ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION TODAY

As also highlighted by the 2021 UNESCO Report “Adult learning and education play multiple roles. It helps people find their way through a range of issues and increases skills and agency. It allows people to take more responsibility for their future. It also helps adults understand and criticize changing paradigms and power relations and take steps to shape a just and sustainable world. A future-oriented approach should define adult education, as well as education always, as an education entangled with life. Adults are responsible for the world in which they live and the world of the future. Responsibility for the future cannot simply be passed on to future generations. A shared ethic of intergenerational solidarity is needed” (p. 115).

Looking to the horizon of 2050 and beyond it is possible to anticipate a set of profound changes in adult education. Some forecast that quite soon human lifespans could regularly exceed 100 years. Leaving the radical expansion of human longevity aside, the fact that so many already live longer lives further builds the case for continuing to rethink when education is meant to occur. In some areas four generations will be co-living in the same space-time in a way never seen in history. Cultural notions of adulthood and maturity will be tested. Habitual ways of living, and our relationships to work and leisure will change. Already, it is commonly acknowledged that jobs and the nature of employment can change dramatically over the span of a single individual’s working life. We need to recognize that civic and political life also change over a single lifespan and perhaps increasingly so in the future (Merrill, Vieira, Galimberti, Nizinska, 2020).

The new eco-consciousnesses and the reframed humanism called are examples of new educational concerns which need to be encountered by learners of all ages, regardless of age. As the twenty-first century progresses, educational policies will need to shift their focus to the whole of life and pay special attention to adults and the elderly. A second dimension, which is part of the best tradition of lifelong learning, concerns the idea of the participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups who are so often excluded from educational opportunities (Bode, 2007). Participation and inclusion go together with emancipatory visions of adult education, which includes an appreciation of informal learning – the knowledge and capabilities acquired outside formal schooling settings.

Adult education policy will need to recognize informal learning across the lifespan as part of prioritizing inclusion and participation. Finally, those engaging with adult education need to grapple with the ways that participation is increasingly mediated and enabled through digital means. While younger generations have exposure to the digital world from early ages, older generations will also need these tools to continue developing and building knowledge. Adult education should promote broad access to digital media and should strongly support open access and open-source movement agendas (Merrill, Nizinska, Galimberti, Eneau, Sanojca Samiri Bezzan, 2019). Strengthening scientific literacy and combating all forms of misinformation are central elements of any adult education strategy for the present and the future.

3. WHAT EDUCATION IS STILL POSSIBLE TODAY?

In recent decades, the principle of lifelong learning has become central to the formulation of educational policies around the world. SDG4, for example, calls on us to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (Grotlüschen, Nienkemper, Duncker-Euringer, 2020). There is a strong emancipatory tradition of adult learning and education, which is reflected in the potential it unleashes for individuals and what it means for citizen participation in general. However, in recent years this has been reduced by an over-focus on the professional dimensions and skills of lifelong learning. In essence, what was one of the most important “rights” of adults – especially those who had not had full access to education before in their lives – has become for many an “obligation” as people have become required to keep up to date and employable. The result is a permanent logic of skilling and reskilling.

Adult learning and education must look very different between a generation. As our economies and societies change, adult education will have to extend far beyond lifelong learning for labour market purposes (Boeren, 2019). Opportunities

for career change and retraining must be linked to a broader reform of all education systems that emphasizes the creation of multiple and flexible pathways. Like education in all fields, rather than being reactive or adaptive (whether to change in labour markets, technology, or the environment), adult education needs to be reconceptualized around learning that is truly transformative.

As more and more people live longer and healthier lives, the ways that education is entangled with life will change. Educational needs, priorities and modalities change when there are shifts in the balance between youth and the elderly, in the proportion of people in the working-age population, as well as in the kinds of caregiving and care work (waged and unwaged) that is undertaken, by whom, and when. In fact, these issues shine a bright light on the basic assumptions our societies make on what it means to produce value (Fejes, 2019).

The work carried out by a few social cooperatives goes exactly in this direction, that is, trying to chart new, and in some ways innovative, paths of action with respect to adult education. Entire generations of adults, today, seem to be increasingly harnessed in ways and attitudes that do not belong to them, caught in a vice that looks more to what they must appear than to what they must be. Children, in fact, are thrown into all kinds of activities that can occupy time that otherwise adults would not be able to fill (Ostrouch-Kaminska, Vieira, 2015). This is what some cooperatives do, with afternoon courses and activities of all kinds, to ward off the process of youth dispersion that characterises modern society.

All this framework, which acts as a pathfinder for proposing a new idea of sustainable welfare, sees a greater urgency today, in the aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing post-pandemic period that has defined a true global crisis in the educational spheres. Adult education has been strongly affected by this crisis, which has been repeatedly emphasised by professionals, and has looked to school and out-of-school institutions for a way out (Balzano, 2020). Where the state has evidently failed, unprepared for an unprecedented health and socio-economic crisis, some institutions have tried to put a stop to it. The sciences of education, however, can now provide tools and knowledge that are useful for politics to act concretely: the example of some activities here in Puglia is emblematic. With the University of Bari, in fact, we have started an activity of support and monitoring in the Capitanata area to try to understand which actions and which tools, in the field of educational support and welfare, can be sustainable. There are no definitive results yet, but we can certainly draw an initial reflection on what is happening, waiting to collect more incisive data as soon as school starts again.

4. A NEW SUSTAINABLE WELFARE SYSTEM

Improvisations and experiments in times of challenge and interruption – from the COVID-19 pandemic to education in times of other emergencies – have demonstrated the determination, commitment, and resourcefulness of adults, in many of the professions most involved. For example, because many school systems realized that personal needs and social well-being had to come first, testing was postponed, coverage requirements for curriculum content were suspended, and classroom interactions focused on authentic learning and well-being. During COVID, work has become more visible publicly, particularly to the masses. The high levels of specialist knowledge and pedagogical commitment required of adults were simultaneously assessed and examined by many.

Cultivating the social dimension of learning, for example, has also implied the sustainability of citizenship education in an increasingly interconnected world to enable individuals to care for each other, embrace other perspectives and experiences, and engage in responsible practices towards the environment and our shared natural resources. Digital media alone cannot achieve these ends. Participatory and engaged learning is needed in different contexts (Carretero Gomez, Vuorikari, Punie, 2017).

Starting from the 80s the “paradigm of standardisation” proper of Fordism has undergone a radical change which has contributed, following Kuhn’s interpretation of paradigmatic dynamics, to a ‘revolutionary transformation of vision’ not only of work but also of a person’s entire life. Starting from the working context, a person’s existence has been shaken and subverted by technological changes so disruptive to mark a discontinuity from the past and so deep to revolutionise the pre-existent paradigms. These changes, because of their disruptiveness and depth, have determined the beginning of a revolution which has the name of Fourth Industrial Revolution -Industry 4.0- and which has been defined through the paradigm of flexibility and innovation connected to the digitalisation of operative activities and to the remote control of production and of the flow of material.

This revolution seems to have left behind several areas of the human development sphere, and the social sciences have highlighted this very well. Welfare reforms, declined according to an idea of the welfare of the person, have clashed with economic difficulties, global crises, which have highlighted their profound limits. Welfare, although declined according to the socio-economic sphere, cannot today disregard the pedagogical datum, which becomes fundamental to support a new idea of welfare based on the person (Balzano, 2017).

Sustainability is always at the centre of the European agenda in the various human fields: from the environment to the economy, politics is invested with a responsibility that is often greater than the people who should implement it. Welfare is the tool with the highest sustainability, the one that could pull the strings of a new educational idea, starting with adult education: the individual citizen's sense of responsibility is built over the long term, towards that process of social citizenship to which each person should strive (Elfert, 2019 - Evans, Kurantowicz, Villegas, 2015).

In the current globalised world, distances seem to have been shortened by new technologies, welfare differences between states are such as to make the Western model of life appear as the only attractive one (Ferrera, Hemerijck, 2003). Recent trajectories do not necessarily imply the disappearance of the old, but rather overlap with them, giving rise to new and complicated intertwining models. In addition, the old and new factors of attraction and expulsion interact with each other. In this context, on the one hand it seems that a sovereignty current is prevailing considering political choices and personal behaviours, thus opposing the transfer of powers and competences from the national state to an international entity. On the other, as regards the migratory phenomenon, personalism and the desire to value others become the appropriate settings for recognising the intrinsic characteristics of man, humanity, and competences (Kettunen, Petersen, 2011).

It is therefore necessary to start again from a community work, understood as a proposal for a new model of community welfare and social intervention, has recently become a topic of great interest in the social and educational fields. In this perspective, community development is an approach that promotes the construction of social bonds within a given territorial context, in order to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the community and the people who live in it.

In this perspective, it is the context that should become capacitating so that it can express - and contribute to forming - the subjects’ internal capabilities. Since these coordinates, it is easier to understand why in community work great attention is paid to the social contexts in which to activate non-formal or informal educational processes (Sechrist, 2019). In other words, the aim is to cultivate contexts capable of fostering emancipation through the enhancement of relational resources. In this framework, emancipation and capacitation are the two key concepts of community welfare aimed at promoting social justice and democratic participation. The capacitation process in fact is a fundamental precondition of the capacity to aspire those fuels deep democracy.

In this perspective we find the sustainability of a new, different welfare that opens to the more practical social sphere, in the contexts of communities that daily face the onset of relational and training difficulties, the decline of the figure of the adult and the inability to react to the educational difficulties of our time.

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Learning Practices in Work Contexts: The Case of an Italian Company

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Abstract - The present work is situated within the theoretical framework of sociomaterial studies (Fenwick, 2008; 2010; 2011). In particular, the research aims to investigate what training objects are generated by a training ecosystem and how these objects are generated. The qualitative research design makes use of a case study that allowed the consultation of documentary sources and the collection of 11 semi-structured interviews (Cresswell, 2012). An Italian company in the ICT sector was investigated, within which a company Academy has been present for some years, studied as an example of a training ecosystem (Adner, 2017) that is growing and incorporates elements of innovation and training experimentation.

KEYWORDS: Corporate Academy, educational models, socio-materiality.

1. GENERAL FRAMEWORK

The relationship between organization, work and training has been a subject of debate and reflection for many years (Maggi, 1974; Quaglino 1995; Lipari, 2002; Fabbri, 2007). Over time, this relationship has reflected - and still reflects today - the social, cultural and economic transformations in which the two poles are involved: the organizational and the training poles. In spite of a continuous contamination between the organizational and training worlds, the arrival at an integrated vision has been a process that has followed an evolution that was neither easy nor obvious. From a (1) clear-cut separation between practical and theoretical perspectives, we have moved on to (2) interpretative configurations in which an interest emerges in combining the theoretical and practical dimensions, (3) up to the growing thought according to which training on the one hand is an integral part of organizational practices themselves and on the other is associated with the learning dimension of the professionals who inhabit the organization (Fabbri, 2007). In this regard, Lipari traces an evolution of organizational theories and practices articulating it in a succession of three paradigmatic perspectives: (1) Modernist approach, (2) Neomodernist approaches and (3) Postindustrial and Postmodernist organizational cultures and approaches (Lipari, 2002). Within the first paradigm - the Modernist approach - the individual is regarded as a kind of extension of the industrial machine. Corresponding to this is a pedagogy based on simple schemes of knowledge transmission linked to the promotion of the ability to perform elementary tasks. Education has the function of presiding over the organization's technical choices on the side of indoctrination and training (Mintzberg, 1983). Thus, what prevails is a training logic attentive to adaptation to the task (Lipari, 2002). The logic of determinism of the organization's machine is challenged by the neo-modernist approaches. Within the second paradigm, the perspective of the organization as an 'organized system' (Burns & Stalker, 1961) emerges and consolidates, which, like other living organisms, is strongly sensitive to the states of the environment. Individuals are called upon to fulfil roles necessary for the system to function, and training acts as the glue to best realise this encounter. On the one hand, the 'organizational system' requires from the individual skills and competences capable of achieving pre-established goals, on the other hand, the individual responds according to his or her motivations and expectations. The role of training, consequently, is directed at activating the motivations and expectations of professionals towards the demands of the "organizational system" (Maggi, 1991). The focus falls on the third paradigm - Post-Industrial and Post-Modernist organizational cultures and approaches - which supports theoretical training perspectives capable of generating and promoting new forms of awareness of organized reality and the ability to reflect on experience (Lipari, 2002). The logic here is that of learning. Training becomes a condition that enables individuals to develop not only capacities to solve certain problems but also to pose them, not to adapt to previously established roles but to orient and create them (Crozier, 1993).

From a training situated in the era of mass mechanization and industrialization of the last century, organizations have moved to one in the era of service management and the digital revolution (Nacamulli & Lazzara, 2019). Today, training

is increasingly called upon to respond to a pluralistic challenge: to find a meeting point between the interests of the professional, the organizational system and external stakeholders. Thus, a new scenario of training seems to be emerging, that of 'training ecosystems'. A training ecosystem is characterized by being an open, non-linear system, characterized by the plurality of a network of actors (university, organization, stakeholders and territory), by the conspicuous capacity to respond to feedback and continuous structural transformations, both exogenous and endogenous (Adner, 2017). Organizations are immersed in an environment that requires them to be open to value co-creation relationships through the development of mutually beneficial partnerships with other organizations with complementary knowledge resources and competences, with their customers and suppliers but also with institutions, such as universities and research (Nacamulli & Lazzara, 2019). For a long time, these contexts (universities, schools, organizations and local authorities) have operated separately; today, instead, they cooperate by weaving partnerships based on mutual interest (Tino & Fedeli, 2015). There is a shift from the traditional idea of a value chain "implying the reference to a well-defined sector to that of an ecosystem involving reconfiguration processes that imply the activation and dynamic monitoring of partnership relations for the production of value" (Nacamulli & Lazzara, 2019 p. 21). This paper is based on the idea that corporate academies can be considered as one of the most interesting examples to study in order to understand training ecosystems. We have focused on the study of corporate academies that increasingly incorporate typical training models with universities and other stakeholders (trade associations, external providers), developing and generating - in most cases - innovation between the universities themselves and third parties.

2. OBJECTIVES AND PROPOSED ANALYSIS

The current research adopts the Cultural-historical activity theoretical perspective (CHAT) (Fenwick et. al., 2008; 2010; 2011; Engeström, 1999). CHAT allows us to understand a learning ecosystem as a space shaped by rules (explicit and implicit), tools, everyday norms, division of labor, community relations and the perspectives of actors within them. An ecosystem, therefore, is not a neutral context; actors, objects, material, immaterial and technological artefacts are decontextualized and abstract (Melacarne, 2011).

The research intends to investigate what training objects are generated by a training ecosystem and how these objects are generated.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research lies within the qualitative approach (Creswell, 2012; Silverman, 2008). To conduct this research, we used the case study (Creswell, 2012) with convenience sampling. The case study is a company based in central Italy with approximately 530 employees. It deals with computerization projects within the public administration in the IT management of Italian mobility and has been a leader in the IT sector for over fifty years. The company has always shown attention and care towards the training processes of its employees, which is why the company Academy was officially established in autumn 2020; the implementation of the Academy structure is the result of a process initiated and matured over the years with and for professionals. Furthermore, the company itself and the University of Siena signed a cooperation agreement in October 2020 aimed at designing joint research actions between the university and the company.

The research process used was the circular and recursive one described by Creswell (2012): identifying the research problem; literature review; specifying the purpose of the research; data analysis and interpretation. The protocol established to perform the literature review study was based on a qualitative and comparative analysis of different studies:

1. choice of topic, delimitation of the research problem and formulation of the question;

2. identification of articles;
3. organization of articles and elaboration of an outline of main concepts;
4. selection of citation modes (Saiani & Brugnolli, 2010).

National and international databases (EBSCO, SBN On-Line, SCOPUS) were consulted for the literature review. The keywords used were as follows:

- Corporate Academy
- Organizational training
- Business school
- Corporate Campus
- Sociomateriality
- CHAT

The search was filtered by including monographs, volumes and peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals. The criterion for the selection of studies was adopted from the titles and abstracts by ascertaining that elements relevant to the research topic were present. All publications that were not national or international scientific publications were excluded (Creswell, 2015).

The data collection instruments were the semi-structured interview and documentary texts. The documents consulted were useful in understanding the organizational context. Formal documents internal and external to the organization of digital type were consulted (Cresswell, 2012.) The semi-structured interview was used with the intention of increasing the understanding of organizational phenomena by accentuating the representations expressed by the actors' perspectives on events, the organization and their practices (Scaratti, 2021). The data collection procedure was divided into two parts. The first part involved the collection of data through formal and informal meetings (with the resulting notes) and the consultation of documentary sources and texts. In particular, 11 meetings were held (of which 10 online, through the Gmeet platform, and 1 in person, at the company itself). The meetings were attended by the General Manager, 3 executives, the Training Manager - the gatekeeper (Creswell, 2012) - and 1 external consultant in charge of supporting the implementation of the Academy itself. Data were collected on the understanding of the training processes within the organization. In the second part, the outline of the semi-structured interview was drawn up. Based on the consultation of documentary sources and a pre-structured survey done with the organization itself, the outline of the interview was elaborated to collect data concerning the construction of the training object.

The track is divided into three sections:

- biography, to understand the path and professional experiences of the respondents and the activities characterizing the professional profile;
- training courses, to understand the type of training courses currently present and attended;
- skills, in order to understand the type of skills acquired through the training courses and which skills for the future.

No. 11 individual semi-structured interviews were administered via the Gmeet platform. The 11 interviewees were selected according to the two production macro-areas in the company. In addition, these professionals collaborate in the implementation of the Academy in the company.

Below are the sectors to which the interviewees belong:

- No. 1 professional Training Manager (M);
- No. 2 professionals in the field of Personnel Management (1 F; 1 M);

- No. 3 IT Development professionals (1 F; 2 M);
- No. 2 professionals in the PMO & Services sector (2 M);
- No. 3 professionals in the administration sector (2 F; 1 M).

The average duration of each interview was 45 minutes. Each interview was recorded by taking live notes, this was done in order to record as much information as possible in the moment and to expand on any information deemed necessary during the interview (Lucisano & Salerni; 2002). The period of administration was March 2021 - April 2022.

4. RESULTS

In the following, the data from the qualitative investigation will be presented; in the first part of the paragraph the data from the textual analysis of documents and sources will be reported, while in the second part the data from the administration of the semi-structured interviews will be reported. The consultation of sources showed that in-company training follows the classic phases of training design described by Lipari in the post-modernist paradigm (Lipari, 2002). Needs analysis is a process that is co-constructed with the professionals themselves by means of internal training needs assessment tools. Over the last three years, training has increased by an average of +60% for each course and +50% with respect to the number of courses attended. Teaching assignments can be carried out by both internal and external lecturers. In-house lecturers are professionals working within the company, identified by colleagues who recognize a certain knowledge and expertise of the topic to be covered in the training.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used for the data analysis of the interviews. Thematic analysis is particularly useful for identifying and systematically organizing and providing information on themes through a qualitative data set.

The analysis resulted in No. 15 categories that were grouped into No. 3 key themes:

Theme 1 - General Training

Theme 2 - Professional Training

Theme 3 - Training for future leaders.

The data analysis showed that training activity is on several levels: basic training; professional level training; and training for future managers.

Basic training, being general, is mainly aimed at all employees in the structure. The skills to be focused on are technical-specialist and transversal (Office package, basic work practice management and self-organization and communication skills).

There are basic skills that may trivially concern business tools [...] they may be the basic ones, the usual Microsoft ones in the platforms but also the internal tools that report procedures and tasks to be performed on the internal tools. (IT Development)

In my opinion soft skills are fundamental. [...] Human relationships are daily, regardless of the role one has, and it is fundamental in my opinion - from a good human relationship a good professional collaboration can arise; if the human relationship is poor, there will be problems. (PMO & Services)

In addition to the above-mentioned skills, a historical knowledge of the organization (birth and evolutionary path) and mission is also expected.

One would need to know the entire constellation in sufficient detail. (Administration)

The level training is broken down by job profile, includes a basic knowledge of all job profiles, advanced technical skills (program and software management) that are constantly being updated, and management skills (coordinating a work team, knowing how to work in a group, being able to prioritize and being able to communicate on several levels).

For my role, certainly all the soft skills were fundamental and decisive. In my opinion, being able to create an environment where there is empathy, the ability to listen, the ability to collaborate, to listen to the needs of employees and always try to put yourself in their shoes is probably as important as having the technical answers when required. (PMO & Services)

Good education from a legal, economic, project management point of view; use of word, excel, Access to a lesser extent, internet, writing skills. From a non-technical point of view: ability to manage work groups, colleagues, and interface with all areas of the company. (Personal)

Other skills and abilities include synthesizing communications, team building, and therefore for my role I don't see so much a competence to be trained in the field as soft skills, a character that is predisposed to work a bit with everyone, to adapt to do anything. (IT Development)

Basic accounting skills. (Administration)

Training for future managers is intended for all those figures currently identified by the top management team as 'talents'. Although the interviews revealed that there is no specific training and that experience in the field, through observation of working practices and dialogue with experts, is beneficial, the training provided enables young talents to acquire managerial skills (purely human resources management).

If they are talented tomorrow, they will have to go into positions of coordination and responsibility. I would look for training courses that can maximize their all-round managerial skills - planning, organizing and managing resources. (Personnel)

Across all three levels of training, it emerged that an important role is also attributed to gaining experience and that, training must always be accompanied by experience.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The survey of the object of training made it possible to develop reflective points to dwell on. As far as training models are concerned, while those that are developed within the ecosystem are mainly classic, the ecosystem itself develops and generates new training needs. One of these is the training of new talent. It is of particular interest because (1) the training ecosystem is configured to be a dynamic setting; as such, it is important for organizational actors to enhance the resources within it according to clear, transparent and public criteria. This leads us to make explicit that training increasingly enters into accountability processes. Secondly, (2) training for talents makes it possible to cultivate and grow the intelligences formed within the company. Thirdly, (3) from a strategic perspective, more and more professionals will need to possess

knowledge management skills and not only technical-instrumental functions. Like training practices, also training objects are characterized by being situated, socially constructed (Fabbri, 2007); negotiated on the basis of interactions between human actors (acting and operating at different levels and roles among them), material and technological artefacts, intangible artefacts, norms and rules, implicit and explicit (Fenwick, 2008; 2011). It is not something abstract and decontextualized, but is characterized by being a socially constructed artefact, as a process of cultural construction (Czarniawska, 2008). The organization constructs the objects of training within a training ecosystem, realizing them as products of joint research between the working world and the academic world; some objects may emerge from specific actions generated by needs analyses, others, emerge more as an indirect effect of research actions that have different objectives from those of training needs. Moreover, in today's era, that of service management and the digital revolution, organizations are situated in contexts that are open to value co-creation relationships through the promotion of mutually beneficial partnerships with other organizations and research bodies, with complementary knowledge resources and competences, with customers, suppliers, universities and research institutions. Consequently, the construction of what are the objects of training is also transformed. Unlike in the last century, organizations find themselves negotiating these objects: both with their own professionals but also with partners and stakeholders within the ecosystem.

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Smart Working and New Learning Patterns: A Case Study

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Abstract - This paper is part of studies in organizational and work pedagogy (Rossi, 2008; Costa, 2011) and presents empirical research aimed at surveying the training needs that emerged following the adoption of smart working within a company in the ICT sector. The research is qualitative in nature. The data collection instruments were semi-structured interview and focus group (Creswell, 2012). Data were analyzed by subject area (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The results reveal professional development needs on cross-cutting and not purely technical and specialized areas.

KEYWORDS: Organizational pedagogy, smart working, skills, training.

1. INTRODUCTION

The limitations imposed by the deployment of Covid-19 from March 2020 produced a significant acceleration in the adoption of smart working by private and public organizations. The lockdowns, made necessary to contain the Coronavirus outbreak, have generated unprecedented extensive experiments that "have broken down the walls of all kinds of physical offices" (Butera, 2020). Flexible or remote work, termed "smart working," was recognized as suitable for the emergency phase and therefore saw a rapid increase in its adoption throughout Italy. Prior to the Covid-19 emergency, there were significantly fewer companies that had adopted flexible forms of work; data from the Milan Polytechnic's Smart Working Observatory show that only 50 percent of large companies had adopted such forms of work, with an average of no more than two days per week. For SMEs and PAs, the percentage did not even reach 20 percent. In implementing or increasing this practice, organizations have been forced to rethink both production processes, ways of managing interactions between colleagues, and training practices. This new scenario has required new ways of organizing work, workspaces and on-the-job training. On the training level, this has resulted in a greater awareness about the dynamics that govern learning within an organization and the interaction between "intentional and systematic actions" (Rossi, 2011 p. 109) and informal and less explicit modes of learning, made even more relevant by the massive adoption of smart working. While, therefore, this new scenario has highlighted "the role of individuals as agents of organizational learning and innovation" (Ibid., p. 112) and of their experiences as a source of organizational renewal and increased adaptability, it has also brought out the need for the organization to imagine new structures capable of supporting, incentivizing, socializing, and institutionalizing the knowledge produced at the individual level. In addition, it also raised the question of how to eliminate possible new forms of discrimination from distance work and training experiences. It has therefore become crucial to make appropriate use of the knowledge and best practices produced by different professional communities. This has led organizations to idealize and manage new structures to support, share, and establish individual and informal knowledge acquisition. According to Moussa (2021), it is important to note that these new working models should be improved in the future and each company should strive to achieve its own best practices in work organization and training. Therefore, it is necessary to gather workers' ideas and suggestions and their experiences during the lockout to improve the profound changes that have been initiated for some time (Butera, 2020).

As the pandemic has acted as a catalyst for the wide spread of smart working, new challenges have been raised and new training models must be created in the face of sudden changes and transformations in the way work is done.

2. CASE STUDY

The case study is represented by a company based in central Italy with approximately 530 employees. It deals with computerization projects in the Public Administration in the management of Italian mobility IT and has been a leader in the IT sector for over forty years. The company has always shown care and attention to the training processes of its employees, which is why in autumn 2020 the company Academy was officially born; the implementation of the Academy structure is the result of a process initiated and matured over the years with and for professionals. Due to the containment measures of SARS-CoV-2 contagion since March 2020, the company has placed almost all employees (95%) in smart working. In this new scenario, the way of working and consequently training has changed.

The research was conducted following an agreement signed between the company and the University of Siena in October 2020, with the aim of analyzing any changes in training needs due to the new smart working situation. From an initial informal analysis, some critical issues emerged, such as the tendency to require more and more technical training as a result of the loosening of the relational realities of work; the increase in the technological gap between employee and employee, a consequence of physical isolation; the alteration of the perception of the reality of relationships due to a lack of "visual check/reality check" of daily relationship and informal communication; and phenomena of corporate isolation, due to the progressive reduction of interactions with colleagues.

2.1. Methodology

The research design adopted is qualitative, Creswell (2012) states that this methodology is distinguished by four characteristics: the exploration of a problem and the development of a detailed understanding of a phenomenon; data collection based on the words of a small number of participants to gain insights into their experiences and viewpoints; data analysis through descriptions and themes and interpretation of a broader sense of these; and report processing through emergent and flexible structures.

Within the broad category of qualitative research, the Collaborative Management Research approach was used; it is distinguished by being:

An emergent and systematic inquiry process embedded in a partnership between actors with an interest in influencing a certain system of action and researchers interested in understanding and explaining those systems. The Collaborative Management Research process integrates scientific knowledge, methods and values with practical knowledge and ways of working. One goal for the knowledge generated through the collaborative process is for the knowledge to be practicable by those who actually intend to influence the system. Another goal is for researchers to be able to claim that the knowledge generated is scientifically relevant and useful for the development of their disciplinary field (Shani, Guerci, & Cirella, 2014, p. 15).

The proposal to conduct collaborative research was enthusiastically welcomed from the beginning by the management and the training manager. In fact, during the research, six validation meetings were held in which the training manager, the company's external consultant, and professionals involved in the research were present, and all decisions, such as the choice of the sample and the development of the semi-structured interview outline, were shared. Data collection took place in two main stages: the conduct of six semi-structured interviews followed by two focus groups. Both were organized into three thematic cores: history of learning and practices; incidental learning (Covid-19); and training.

The sample was chosen to represent the two major production cores of the company: it consisted of three professionals pertaining to the IT services area (two male respondents-including one executive-and one female respondent, all between the ages of forty and sixty) and three professionals pertaining to the non-computer services area (one female executive

respondent and two male respondents, all between the ages of forty and sixty). After sample definition, six individual interviews lasting about an hour were conducted based on a pre-structured survey design. Subsequently, two focus groups lasting 30 minutes each were conducted - one with the three professionals pertaining to the Information Technology Services area and one with the three professionals pertaining to the Non-Information Technology Support Services area.

Thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used for data analysis. In this context, thematic analysis refers to a methodology for identifying and analyzing patterns in qualitative data. The analysis was used to systematically identify and organize and to provide information on themes through a dataset, which will be described below.

3. RESULTS

The use of thematic analysis made it possible to organize the data sets into four main themes: altered perception of the reality of relationships due to a lack of visual check, an increase in the employee-to-employee technology gap, changes in coworker interaction, and the importance of training.

- Altered perception of the reality of relationships due to a lack of visual check

To avoid misunderstandings due to a lack of face-to-face discussion within the company, communication strategies, such as writing short, concise emails and a pre-announcement of the email itself with a phone call anticipating its content, are implemented to avoid communication errors and misunderstandings with the recipient: "I am a proponent of two things, brevity in emails, I always tell my colleagues 'when you have written an email, rewrite it with half the lines', second thing, 'always help yourself with emoticons, with signals" (Interview no. 4).

- Increasing technology gap between employee and employee, a consequence of physical isolation

Emerging is the need to maintain and strengthen the sense of belonging to the company, both among experienced and novice workers, especially at this particular time when most employees are working from home:

The sense of belonging that we need to make feel strong at this time that we are all far away, everything about these aspects here and so it goes hand in hand with communication and the need to clarify, to convey to listen, to be proactive. It's very important to keep alive the concept, the practice of organizing, of being a group despite the distance, of being able to not lose those contacts and those links to those operational relationships that make us feel like part of a whole of something that is there before us, after us and that from the interaction brings forth something that is an added value compared to what the individual at home, me at home alone can do (Interview no. 5).

As of March 2020, only a small percentage of colleagues appear to have marginalized themselves with respect to work practices; it turned out that these colleagues already had peripheral participation well before the health emergency due to Covid-19 and that this situation only accentuated their marginalization.

- Interaction among colleagues

In early March 2020, work routines were reorganized, as was communication between colleagues. Formal communication has been replaced with telematic meetings, exchange of e-mails, phone calls and messages on cell phones: "Before maybe we used to meet in a meeting room now we meet in a virtual meet" (Interview No. 5). Telematic meetings turn out to be sufficiently comprehensive in terms of verbal communication, but not so in terms of nonverbal communication. What is achieved in terms of relationship in a face-to-face meeting is not the same reality as what is

achieved in a telematic-type meeting, as the maieutics of communication are almost completely zeroed out. In fact, the reduction of face-to-face interactions represented the greatest criticality:

The biggest loss was the physical relationships [...] from the professional point of view we were already structured, we had grasped all the benefits of the Google world, shared folders and files, already the fact that we could continue to take advantage of these made the physical distance less distant, we clearly tried to replace, to compensate for the physical lack with a series of video meetings, we have a WhatsApp group, everything non-verbal is missing. (Interview no. 2)

Presence in the office-at least for a few days a week-was said to be essential so that physical contact with the place, the role held, and colleagues is not lost. In addition, it was found that physical presence in the company, as opposed to "virtual" presence, stimulates more dialogue, confrontation between professionals and sometimes generates more immediate solutions: "It's different to make the phone call [...]there was a contact, there was a much more immediate presence" (Interview no. 5).

Informal spaces, such as the hallways and the coffee machine, have been reorganized into a virtual space, created to communicate informally:

In this virtual room you enter to stand in front of the coffee machine, I'm in there in the morning, if someone talks about work they are censored, they talk about everything [. ...] there are those who enter, there are those who never enter [...] there is a lot of fluidity, a lot of fun, a little bit it helped, there are some who even isolated themselves, there are some who are very social, because then you can put pictures there (Interview no 4).

- Training

Training was said to be crucial, with all respondents believing that it is relevant to train and update constantly to maintain a high job profile. The six respondents say they have good and up-to-date technical training (software management, tools and packages) and some training in soft skills. An interest was expressed toward acquiring and consolidating certain spendable skills in the management phase of remote work, both purely technical and soft skills (Moussa, 2021): "I think there are both technical aspects and more relational and management aspects that all need to be probed, how to run a meeting, how to manage communication" (Interview no. 4).

The shift from working in the office to working from home has brought a reorganization of the way of working, a rescheduling of the day has been necessary to achieve a good work life balance, so that work, personal, and family needs can be combined; work is organized by objectives: "Before we used to punch the clock, now we work by objectives" (Interview no. 6). Against this statement, interviewees expressed the need to acquire skills and knowledge that lead to optimal organization of work by objectives, such as time skills and project management

Sometimes I get people who are dedicated to doing a task that is priority three while maybe I am waiting for priority zero, or at this specific time when we are working in such a different way than usual I realize that even organizing the day for a person who maybe does not have too much established professionalism already [. ...] it can be disorienting to have the whole day to be alone at home." (Interview no. 1)

In addition, developing good leadership is considered relevant to conveying good motivation to colleagues, managing conflicts that may arise, team building, and developing appropriate human resource management.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The massive spread of smart working has confronted the company with singular issues and new questions have arisen regarding how to think, design and do training within the organizational setting. In this regard, training challenges have been identified for each of the four dimensions mentioned in the previous paragraph. Regarding (1) the alteration of the perception of the reality of relationships, the need to deepen the use of different communication channels (how can one communicate, in what way, where and when) was identified; (2) the increase of the technology gap between employee and employee, the challenge concerns maintaining and strengthening the sense of belonging to the corporate community; (3) the interaction between colleagues, the reorganization of spaces, formal and informal, in the era of smart working was mentioned as challenging; (4) the area of training, the emerging challenge is to increase project management skills (work organization and planning, working by objectives, prioritizing assigned tasks). To meet these challenges, two levels of intervention have been developed: the first level concerns the organization's internal stakeholder group; the second focuses on interventions involving the corporate Academy structure. Regarding the first level - internal stakeholder group - two macro areas were identified to work on. The first, called the "managerial skills area," aims at the development of training strategies that enable the interception of training needs that are not necessarily technical-specialist. The second area of development aims at the elaboration of qualitative and quantitative indicators that will enable the interception and, in the future, prevent processes of isolation among professionals. In the second level of intervention, the focus is on how to build, design and plan training for those who have been defined as "experts," i.e., professionals working in the company and already structured within the Academy as teacher-trainers. Such an intervention would enable the training of internal mentors with knowledge and skills to support and support people in managing the transitions between role and presence/distance working modes and to rethink what new organizational culture can manage smart working.

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Articulating Technological and Pedagogical Accessibility for Adult Learners in Distance Education

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Abstract - Online training and education for adults was forced to reinvent itself throughout the covid-19 pandemic context. Recent studies have shown that nearly half of all learners have experienced problems linked to technological or pedagogical accessibility, even with reliable internet access and sufficient bandwidth (DARES & Réseau CARIF-OREF, 2020). Normative frameworks are gradually being implemented in Europe (WCAG) and Canada (SGQRI-008) to provide technological accessibility for adults' distance learning. For inclusiveness, Universal Learning Design (ULD) seems like a promising approach (Rogers-Shaw, David & Choi, 2018). However, our ongoing analysis shows limitations from the ULD model, applied to adult distance education.

KEYWORDS: Accessibility, inclusion, legal norms, online instructional design, universal design for learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

This draft paper presents a perspective developed in the context of a research project funded by the Erasmus+ European agency. IDEA (Implementing a Digital E-learning @lternative) is headed by the GIP Formation continue et insertion professionnelle de l'Académie de Créteil (France), in partnership with Université TÉLUQ (Canada), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain), European Certification and Qualification Association (ECQA, Austria) and Koena, a French organization specialized in Web accessibility.

The analysis and results presented here draw mainly from the work done by Université TÉLUQ's team. We take the occasion to acknowledge previous work done by Faustin Kagorora, Béatrice Pudelko, Anna Maria Zaidman and Geneviève Simard-Tozzi, bringing a major contribution to our current standpoint in this project's work in progress.

Our presentation aims at portraying the regulatory landscape of accessibility and inclusion in relation with distance training, comparing Canadian and European rules. We add a contextual analysis through evaluation of effective access by users in Quebec, which leads us to a discussion about the difference between compliance to rules and its effectiveness for end users. We also discuss nuances between the application of such rules and an inclusive approach to distance training. Finally, we evoke Universal Learning Design (ULD) and comment on its relevance to implement accessibility and inclusiveness in distance training.

In the context of the containment related to the Covid-19 pandemic health crisis, adult educators found themselves obliged to rapidly transfer their training to distance learning (online or in hybrid mode), encountering numerous

difficulties generated by the need to ensure the digital and pedagogical accessibility of vocational training for adult learners.

1.1. Accessibility, Technology and Learning Environments

According to the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), web accessibility, also called digital accessibility, ... "means that websites, tools and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them" (see <https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/fr>).

The implementation of digital accessibility is guided by the international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), recommended by W3C. It is important to note that these international rules on digital accessibility are in line with human rights and disability rights laws, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

According to W3C, compliance with the WCAG "will make content accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these. Following these guidelines will also often make your Web content more usable to users in general" (<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>).

Globally considered the benchmark for ensuring accessibility of web content, these rules have become an international standard (ISO/IEC 40500:2012), applying to both web and multimedia content. The WCAG compliance rules are classified according to four main accessibility principles: Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, Robust. To date, there are two versions of the international accessibility standards: WCAG 2.0, dating from 2008, and WCAG 2.1, dating from 2018. The revision of version 2.1 is underway, and a new version 2.2 is expected to be finalized in December 2022 (<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag>).

The WCAG 2.0 standards consist of 12 rules, while WCAG 2.1 contains 13 rules. For each rule, WCAG proposes compliance criteria, corresponding to one of three levels of compliance, ranging from the lowest level identified by the letter A, through the intermediate level identified by "A" to the highest level, that of triple "AAA". Each level includes the lower levels. For example, in order to achieve compliance level AA, which is the level generally targeted by national legislation, it is mandatory to comply with all the criteria of levels A and AA. These standards and rules can be adapted by countries and associations of states.

2. CANADIAN LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK OF ACCESSIBILITY

2.1. Federal legislation and regulations

Digital accessibility is addressed in several legal frameworks in the Canadian federation, including

- the Accessible Canada Act;
- the Policy on Service and Digital;
- the Directive on Service and Digital;
- Government of Canada Digital Standards: Playbook;

a) The Accessible Canada Act (S.C. 2019, c.10) (Minister of Justice Canada, 2019) is a broad accessibility law, covering all sectors of society including digital accessibility, based on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

The purpose of the Act is to "make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040", and to do so it proposes to remove barriers to participation for people with disabilities and prevent new barriers in many areas of activity, including information and

communications technology and the design and delivery of programs and services. It applies to Government of Canada departments and agencies, as well as private sector organizations such as banks, and those operating in the federal transportation system.

It defines disability as “any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment – or a functional limitation – whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society” (p. 2).

The barrier to participation is defined as “anything - including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice - that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation (p.2-3).

An Accessibility Commissioner, appointed under the Act, is required to receive and deal with complaints from individuals about non-compliance with the Act by federally regulated organizations. The Commissioner has the right to examine any document or data to determine whether there is a contravention and has the power to order that the contravention cease.

b) Accessibility Standards Canada is the organization mandated to support Canadian society in achieving the highest level of accessibility. Led by people with disabilities, it works with people with disabilities to create and revise accessibility standards in priority areas; conduct research to identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility; and provide accessibility guidelines and resources. The organization’s website (<https://accessible.canada.ca/mandate>) states that its Technical Committee on Accessibility Requirements for Information and Communication Technology Products and Services: "will work towards the adoption in its entirety of the European harmonized standard “EN 301 549: Accessibility Requirements for ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Products and Services”.

c) The Government of Canada Digital Standards: Playbook (Treasury Board of Canada, Secretariat, 2021) are "the foundation of the government's shift to becoming more agile, open, and user-focused". Among the ten standards specified is "build in accessibility from the start", specifying that "Services should meet or exceed accessibility standards. Users with distinct needs should be engaged from the outset to ensure what is delivered will work for everyone".

d) The Policy on Service and Digital and the Directive on Service and Digital (<https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-fra.aspx?id=32601>). See also <https://www.cspc-efpc.gc.ca/tools/jobaids/digital-standards-eng.aspx>) came into force on April 1st, 2020. They include digital accessibility among other aspects of digital. Based on the Digital Standards, they aim to support the design and delivery of digital services that are customer-centric, considering several factors, including access, inclusion, and accessibility. In particular, the Policy on Service and Digital states that deputy heads should "ensure that, for newly procured or developed information, communication, and technology solutions and equipment, applicable requirements or standards regarding accessibility, official languages, protection of personal information, the environment, and security are addressed by design".

e) The Standard on Web Accessibility (<https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-fra.aspx?id=23601>) came into force on 1 August 2011. It applies to all Government of Canada web pages that are intended for the public. Each web page should meet the level AA compliance criteria (with some exceptions, see below). These criteria should be met throughout the page, not just in one part of the page, as well as on all pages in a sequence of pages that are part of a process (e.g., the process of choosing or selling a service).

Furthermore, the technologies used should always be compatible with accessibility. If this requirement cannot be met, the technologies used in one part of the page should not prevent the user from accessing the rest of the page presented in an accessible manner.

There are three permitted exceptions, that we summarize as complex diagrams, live audio content, and audio description of pre-recorded videos. Software and systems purchased by departments should allow websites and web applications to comply with these requirements or to modify them to comply with these requirements. Remedial action will be taken in the event of non-compliance. To help make Canadian government websites compliant, an open-source toolkit for digital accessibility (BOEW) provides resources and guidance for meeting the AA criteria of the WCAG 2.0 standards.

3. QUEBEC: PROVINCIAL LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK ON DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

In 2011, the Conseil du trésor of the Government of Quebec, based on the Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration (chapter E-20.1), and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (R.S.Q., c. C-12), developed three standards aimed at ensuring the accessibility of websites, namely:

- the Standard on the accessibility of a website (SGQRI 008-01), of a downloadable document (SGQRI 008-02), and of multimedia in a website (SGQRI 008-03).

In 2018, these three standards were modernised and replaced by a single standard, the Website Accessibility Standard (SGQRI 008 2.0), which applies to all web content (intranet or extranet websites), including downloadable documents and multimedia (Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor, 2018).

A person with a disability is defined as "a person with a deficiency causing a significant and persistent disability, who is liable to encounter barriers in performing everyday activities", according to the Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration (R.S.Q., chapter E-20.1).

As for accessibility, it is defined, according to W3C, as "the ability of Web content to be used by a person with a disability, regardless of the disabilities of that person and the means used to mitigate them". It is about considering "the needs of people with motor, visual, auditory and cognitive disabilities, including older people with a loss of autonomy. In addition, it facilitates better universal access for people who experience technological limitations due to outdated or less capable equipment or for people who find themselves in an environment that does not allow them to use their full physical or sensory capabilities." Accessibility integrates the four main principles mentioned above: perceivable, operable, understandable and robust.

The SQQRI 008 2.0 standard applies to all public bodies and government enterprises (ministries, commissions, councils, boards, institutes, museums, and corporations) to public establishments related to health and social services (hospitals, child and youth protection centres, residential and long-term care centres, rehabilitation centres) and to the educational environment, to all levels of education, from primary to higher education. Private companies, associations, and non-profit organisations, including those operating in the educational sector, are not subject to this accessibility standard. The SQQRI 008 2.0 standard is based on the WCAG 2.0 standards, with specific criteria to be met.

Finally, every web page must include a hyperlink, named Accessibility, leading to a "web page listing the main provisions taken to comply" with the standard (Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor, 2018, p.3, our translation). For content to which an exception applies, "a warning must mention the possibility that the content may not meet the requirements" of the SGQRI 008 2.0 standard (Conseil du trésor, 2018, p.3, our translation). Some website content may not meet the requirements of the Standard and yet be deemed compliant.

The SGQRI 008 2.0 standard is applicable to all new websites and content as of July 17, 2020, and to all websites (including legacy websites) and content as of July 17, 2022.

4. EUROPEAN LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

In 2016, the European Union issued Directive (EU) 2016/2102 on the accessibility of websites and mobile applications with which all EU Member States are required to comply (European Parliament and Council, 2016).

The Directive requires that "Member States shall ensure that public sector bodies take the necessary measures to improve the accessibility of their websites and mobile applications by making them perceptible, operable, understandable and robust" (European Parliament and Council, 2016, p. 10, our translation).

The minimum requirements to comply with the directive are explicitly detailed in the harmonised European standard EN 301 549 (ETSI, CEN and CENELEC, 2021), Annex A, which are based on the rules of WCAG 2.1, of level AA. As the Directive does not apply to live broadcasts, criterion 1.2.4 Subtitles (live) is excluded.

Each EU Member State may choose to go beyond these requirements in its national legislation (ETSI, CEN and CENELEC, 2021). It is responsible for transposing this legal framework into national legislation and for ensuring its implementation.

Member States should periodically monitor compliance with accessibility requirements, using the methodology adopted by the Commission (European Commission, 2018b), and report the results. They should also encourage and facilitate training programs on website and mobile app accessibility and raise awareness of accessibility requirements.

Public sector bodies should provide an accessibility statement for each website and mobile application and put in place a feedback mechanism for users to report accessibility issues or request information published in non-accessible content. The current template that public sector bodies must use to declare the compliance of their websites and mobile apps with the requirements of the directive came into force in December 2018.

The EU Web Accessibility Directive is complemented by the EU Accessibility Legislative Act (Directive (EU) 2019/882), requiring that products and services from the private sector, used by people with disabilities, are also accessible. The directive covers products and services that have been identified as most relevant to people with disabilities, including computers and operating systems, smartphones, banking services, e-books, e-commerce and access to audio-visual media services. It applies to products and services that will be placed on the market after 28 June 2025.

Member States should ensure that products and services comply with the accessibility requirements of the Directive and put in place appropriate monitoring mechanisms.

The EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive also emphasises that Member States should ensure that media service providers "actively endeavour to make content accessible to persons with disabilities, in particular those with visual or hearing impairments", through sign languages, subtitling, audio description, among others (European Parliament and Council, 2018, our translation).

5. USERS' ANALYSIS IN QUEBEC

In 2018, RAAMM conducted an extensive study on the accessibility of nearly 1,000 French-language websites in Quebec (RAAMM, 2018). The results showed that less than 18% of the websites evaluated achieved a "fair" accessibility rating. Only 33.3% of government websites achieved a "fair" rating, even though they are subject to the Web accessibility standards adopted by the Quebec government in 2011. In the case of municipalities, the situation is catastrophic, with only 2% achieving a "fair" level of accessibility.

From these results, there are at least two scenarios of explanation. On one hand, it can be stressed that with these relatively new rules, there is a lack of enforcement, despite the legal framework. On the other hand, one can interpret these results as a sign of a weak prioritization of accessibility issues among the more general challenges facing distance

training among adults. In other words, the issues at stake here could be suffering from a lack of political relevance, which might reflect the parcellation or fragmentation amongst organizations acting as activists for adult education.

6. UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL) AND INCLUSIVENESS IN DISTANCE LEARNING FOR ADULTS

There seems to be a growing consensus about Universal Design for Learning's (UDL) validity. Therefore, it appears as a solid basis upon which one could base the conception of distance training for adults, with an inclusive and accessible approach. We lack space here to further develop our critical approach. However, preliminary analysis leads us to question the relevance of this approach for inclusive and accessible learning, in view of our design mapping of distance training conception under the ADDIE sequence (analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation). This mapping shows that UDL is well articulated in the design and implementation phases but has fewer links in ADDIE's other steps (analysis, development and evaluation).

7. CONCLUSION

Accessibility has gained ground through various national legal frameworks, but it remains to be seen how easier it is to access, beyond the technological barriers. Applying an inclusive approach to distance learning for all adults entails further adaptations. By looking at the ADDIE steps for distance learning and how UDL covers some of these steps, we suggest that this points to areas that need to be looked at for further development towards accessible and inclusive approaches to distance learning for all adults.

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The Joint Professionalisation of Adult Education in Higher Education, from a Critical and Transformative Perspective

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Abstract - This article is based on the experience of a team of researchers from the University of Rennes 2 (France), responsible for a Master's degree program preparing students for the training profession. It presents and analyses a joint professionalization approach that seeks to connect the fields and practices of work, research, and training. First, it explores the epistemic and praxeological interest of a Training Action Research (TAR) theoretical framework. This framework draws on multidisciplinary, multi-referential, and critical approaches to reflect on the professionalization of actors and professions as processes and also on what "joint transformations" really mean. Second, based on case analyses, it sheds light on the heuristic connection between these three types of activity. Third, it proposes a meta-reflexive review of the work undertaken and presents future perspectives. In doing so, this article explores contemporary issues in work and training: how should one approach adult education in the face of the transformations affecting the professional sector in which adult learners work (or will work), their working conditions, and the different types of employment?

KEYWORDS: Training approach, cooperation, professionalisation, transformation.

INTRODUCTION

As the theme of the ESREA network's triennial in 2022 suggests, adult education in Europe is a field of practice and research that presents several opportunities which may make it possible to transform today's contemporary crises into opportunities for collective development in the future.

Sharing a similar vision, the team responsible for the Master's programme at the University of Rennes 2 (France) has, over the last 10 years, been proposing adult education programmes (training manager, learning designer, consultant, etc.). As a result, studies have emerged focusing on the process of the "joint transformation" at play in academic and professional training *for* and *through* research (Eneau et al., 2012; 2014). This joint professionalisation is based on a simultaneous and reciprocal movement that connects, over the long term, a transformation of: 1/ professional fields, 2/ professions, 3/ actors (primarily students, but also the organisations in which they work), and 4/ training policies and approaches that support this professionalisation (in professional fields and territories). Our research therefore revolves around issues of professionalisation in training. Specifically, it falls within the framework of a work-study training programme at the Master's level and focuses on the career trajectories of adults in the training profession.

The programme seeks to enable learners to develop a capacity for critical reflection. It aims not only to respond to the legitimate demand for employability, but also to promote learners' reflexivity and, therefore, their emancipation (Albero et al., 2015). To this end, the training approach revolves around learners' work experiences and aligns with the activities of our research team, the Center for Research on Education, Learning and Didactics. This has led to the emergence of a

new relationship to training, i.e., one that is coupled with critical theories of transformative learning and which has adopted the TAR model. We posit that this model contributes to the professionalisation of actors and to the evolution of professions and working conditions via a process that is both cooperative and transformative. An analysis of two cases of vocational training will allow us to test our hypothesis. We will therefore analyse the Master's programme in Strategy and Design in adult education (SIFA), developed by the Rennes 2 team, and the experimental training undertaken in 2018 with and for masons from the *Compagnons du Devoir* (skilled workers guild) and the *Compagnons du Tour de France* (French organisation of craftsmen and artisans, dating from the Middle Ages).

First, we will explore the epistemic and praxeological interest of a "TAR" theoretical framework, drawing on multidisciplinary, multi-referential, and critical approaches, to reflect on the professionalisation of actors and professions as processes and also on what "joint transformations" really mean. Second, based on case analyses, we will explain the heuristic connections between these three types of activity. Lastly, we will present a meta-reflexive review of the work undertaken and present future perspectives. In doing so, this article will explore contemporary issues in work and training: how should one approach adult education in the face of the transformations affecting the professional sector in which adult learners work (or will work), their working conditions, and the different types of employment?

1. CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN THE JOINT EVOLUTION OF RESEARCH, WORK, AND ADULT EDUCATION

In our research and training practices in the field of training professionals, we are aware that relating practice and research can help to shed light on the complexity of the world around us. The need for cooperation between actors to create knowledge has emerged as an important issue in the face of the multiple crises of the last decade (ecological, health, social, economic, etc.).

1.1. Transformative and cooperative approaches: an epistemological and epistemic issue

Our current research shows the extent to which the "traditional" model of research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (which attempts to understand how the world works before transforming it) remains dominant. Barbier and Wittorski (2015) suggest that three characteristics define this classical approach:

- knowledge of how the world works is presumed to be a prerequisite for its transformation;
- knowledge becomes autonomous based on disciplinary boundaries;
- the knowledge produced is generally applicable.

Regarding its relationship to learning and work, research is therefore viewed as an immutable process offering the possibility of making sense of knowledge production, its transmission, and its application in professional fields.

Our approach, oriented by cooperative and transformative approaches, has led to the development of a critical research paradigm, i.e., accepting its aim of social transformation and emancipation. This vision is consistent with the trends arguing that processes of research and processes that seek to transform the world are inseparable: action research, intervention research, research and development, and professional research. The cases explored "support" a model that still associates the three spaces and activities described above: work, research, and training "but in a new way, this time tending to explicitly relate action, knowledge production, and human construction" (Barbier and Wittorski, 2015, p. 9). Our research approach views the link between actors (collaborations/practitioners/researchers) as valuable and considers the unique and situated nature of research findings. We view situated research as closer to the realities and to the actors who should be revealed and acknowledged. We therefore seek to adopt a holistic, multi-, inter-, or transdisciplinary approach (Bertrand *et al.*, 2017).

1.2. The issue of work in instructional design

Instructional design has always focused more or less on the changing face of business sectors, workplaces (the construction sector of the *Compagnons du Devoir*, the support measures for Master's students enrolled in the SIFA programme), professions, activities (which constitute core professions), and, more generally, work as a whole. Work may be defined as:

- 1/ the activities that constitute a profession understood in its socio-political, economic, and cultural dimension;
- 2/ the content of prescribed and actual activities associated with professions (culture) and functions (places);
- 3/ working conditions that relate to situations and contexts, and the conditions of work that relate to issues such as remuneration, duration, and so on;
- 4/ organisational forms and methods of work coordination (Mintzberg 1982).

While cooperative and transformative design lies at the crossroads of three fields, work and its evolution are a central theme in instructional design. This design remains a sensitive subject because it is linked to the evolution of work, to the terms of working conditions, and – lastly – to the organisational modes that promote work but sometimes act as an obstacle to it.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE TAR EDUCATIONAL DESIGN

Based on this understanding of the issues, we will present the theoretical approach used to analyse a training approach with a specific instructional design, i.e., TAR. The formalisation of the dimensions of this instructional design is based on the intersection of the fields of research, training, and ongoing professional activity. It is based on the TAR model, developed at the University of Rennes 2 from 2009 by researchers associated with the Master's SIFA programme. This model was initially adopted from Charlier (2006) and then gradually adapted (Eneau, Bertrand & Lameul, 2012, 2014). It does not seek to comply with, nor to completely break away from, a normative institutional framework. Nor does it seek simply to consider the demands for professionalisation or employability, or even to create “toolkits” that workplaces or learners themselves may request, especially when they are expected to learn to create or manage complex systems and to respond to demands in ever-changing contexts. On the contrary, for the various partners, the training approach developed within the framework of these programmes seeks to create conditions for mediation through dialogue, in which inner thoughts are expressed, developed, shared, and transformed, while practices and uses are also transformed. The figure below illustrates our approach:

Communication system for training development

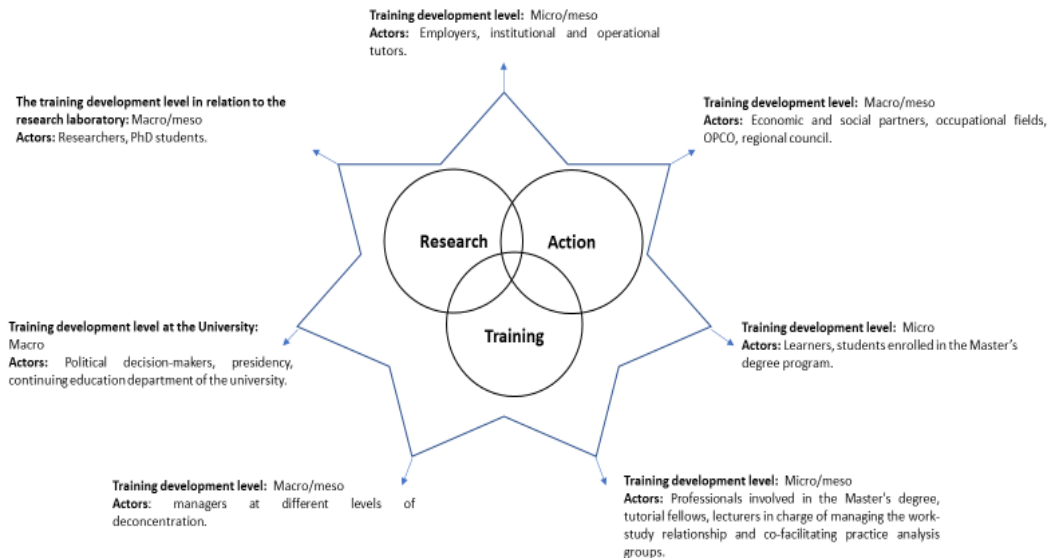


Figure 1: Communication system

2.1. The facilitation of mediation spaces through dialogue in TAR as a cooperative experience

Henri Desroche's studies are particularly useful for characterising the educational approach at work in TAR in these spaces/times, a "cooperative experience" in the words of the author. In one of his last articles, Desroche (1994) reaffirms the fundamentally cooperative dimension of the approach: our practices have clearly shown that individual development is inseparable from a collective dynamic through which such development is revealed and takes shape. From this perspective, therefore, one cannot reflect on the development and transformation of the experience of subjects from a purely individual dimension. They must also connect it to its social dimension, both as a condition and as a goal. Cooperativity is learned and developed between the various "project persons" and "resource persons" (Desroche, 1982). The educational process is based, in our case only in part, on the development of autobiographical reasoning in the pursuit of recognition, a process of social self-study and a means to help the authors to become more aware of their experiences. This process also involves the transition to writing, marking the advent of the "author-actor". TAR therefore associates self-, co- and hetero-learning, a three-pole process, according to the Pineau model, in which the principles of reciprocity, parity, and mutuality produce the modes of educational, political, and scientific cooperation. Concretely, in training approaches for and through research, the dialogue and analysis of experiences in a collaborative learning and development group occur in a context that Desroche refers to as a "knowledge production cooperative".

2.2. Methodological characteristics of the TAR: from the co-constructed object to the implemented object

The dialogue mediation spaces in the TAR approach are aimed at ensuring that the three-way relationship, and the ensuing conflicts at the heart of the three poles, are based on heuristics, i.e. that they are potentially knowledge-producing. The order of the terms chosen (training, action, research) indicates the key objective that connects these three poles. When a system, such as the SIFA programme in which the approach was implemented, leads to research or produces knowledge useful to the researcher, when it allows learners to develop a research project associated with their profession and based on an object whose “existential” origin it identifies, then – as Barbier (1996) suggests – the three phases of object construction can be said to be similar to what Bourdieu, Passeron, and Chamboredon define in sociology: the object is captured, constructed, and validated. In the TAR model, this translates into “an object accessed, co-constructed and completed.”

In the case of training *in* and *through* research, based on practice and action (Eneau, Bertrand, Lameul, 2012), while the training objectives naturally dictate the main starting point, the five functions of the classical research process are already at work for students and the teaching team: 1) formulation of the research question; 2) analysis (including field analysis) through the production of data on action and practice; 3) conceptualisation; 4) formalisation through the writing of a research report or a dissertation; and 5) heuristic production resulting from the transformation of the practice or action that contributes to the production of knowledge. These are, in a somewhat mixed-up manner, both technical (mastery of processes, methods, etc.), cultural, and social (development of professional socialisation as the ability to understand and act in different social worlds, helping individuals’ abilities to evolve to work in inter-professional groups, as in group projects). This knowledge also relates to subjects themselves (knowledge of oneself, one’s obstacles, and one’s capacity to overcome those obstacles).

2.3. Epistemological characteristics of the TAR: transdisciplinarity and complexity

The TAR is at the heart of a paradigm that is both “transdisciplinary” (Galvani, 2014) and “complex” (Morin, 1999). From this perspective, cooperation is aimed at going beyond the coupling necessary for its effectiveness and accuracy – theory/practice, practitioners/researchers, reflections/actions, techniques/clinical approaches, mastery/ emancipation, reproduction/transformation – in order to align with a three-way, creative, or even heuristic dynamic. As Galvani (2014) highlights, the principles of the epistemology of complexity characterise the training-action-research model and bring colour to its modes of cooperation, which inherently possess an “enhancing” principle.

3. TWO CASES TO ASSESS THE INTELLIGIBILITY OF THE TAR MODEL

3.1. The SIFA Master’s degree: progressive professionalisation in adult education

At Rennes 2 University, the SIFA Master’s degree receives 20 to 25 students per year (i.e., there are approximately 50 students if we combine first- and second-year students), the majority of whom are professionals resuming their studies to validate their experiences and obtain a degree. The programme therefore pursues the instrumental aims of accessing and protecting jobs by helping students to acquire the skills required to obtain a degree, while aiming – above all – to support them in their personal and professional development. It therefore helps them to develop a certain “posture” and a professional identity by proposing a dialogic space for personal, social, and institutional transformation (Eneau, Bertrand & Lameul, 2012).

It takes the form of a work-study training programme with various courses focusing on the development of the professional project and the analysis of practices. A professionalisation booklet (a shared information tool involving the process, the expectations, the role of the various actors, the schedule, and the evaluation tools and process) makes it possible to lay the foundations of a contractual approach through which the student's project (and their priorities in terms of their career), the university's project (relative to its training framework), and the host structure's project (in relation to its institutional project) must converge in and through dialogue and exchange. To promote this dialogue, various periods of collective discussion are organised, involving meetings between internship directors, tutors, and students. Professional tutors participate in the co-construction of the project that the students undertake by helping them to establish their training guidelines. Based on the "contract-based learning" model, and inspired by tools used by professionals in the sector, these guidelines enable students to negotiate objectives, means, and the "deliverables" expected at the end of their project. Tutors therefore participate in this form of dialogue, which is a problematic encounter between different experiences, with their different interests that are strategic, communicational, and occasionally emancipatory.

3.2. The case of the Compagnons du Devoir: The essential elements of the approach

In 2015, the masons of the *Ouvrière des Compagnons du Devoir* and the *Tour de France* associations sought to undertake a prospective approach to identify the actions that would help them to improve broad themes and functions such as training, the image of the profession, community life at the Tour de France, and more generally, instructional design.

The Masonry Institute (*L'institut des Métiers de la Maçonnerie*) is the department dedicated to the evolution of training and to the analysis of the future of the profession. For this project, the institute called in a specialist external consultant. This expert borrowed from the French Foresight Institute to implement an approach based on the modalities of morphological analysis. It is worth mentioning that the principles of foresight, as conceived by Gaston Berger in the 1950s, are to "think broadly and deeply" and to put humans at the heart of the approach (Berger, 1957). The prospective design project that was implemented primarily sought to define a socio-political project for the development of the profession within the workers' association of the *Compagnons du Devoir* and the *Tour de France*. It also sought to design initial and continuing education courses that would prepare students for the profession. This project was then translated into road-maps applicable across the entire country.

Overall, the collective work undertaken led to the emergence of a political project among the *Compagnons du Devoir* masons who sought to promote a more frugal approach by 2030, a "happy" degrowth, aiming "to do better" with less. This project had significant consequences for reflections on the evolution of the culture of the profession, its skills, and the initial and continuing education programmes necessary for the professionalisation of masons. The democratic process at work revolved around both experience and expert knowledge. It also reflected some form of individual and collective "power to act" regarding both this profession's future and the evolution of access to professionalisation. Several courses of action were also proposed and implemented, including: 1) the establishment of a youth group; 2) the promotion of the image of the profession; 3) the updating of training courses; 4) the establishment of a group to work on the future of the profession; and 5) broad and large-scale communication around these actions.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIFICITIES OF COOPERATIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN: META-ANALYSIS AND FEEDBACK ON THE THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

While each case highlights different processes, approaches, and groups of actors, the concept of a collaborative and transformative training design is reflected in the desire to create spaces that make it possible to question, to consider multiple perspectives, and to undertake critical reflection where the socio-political, economic, and cultural dimensions associated with those training issues encountered are integrated. Another feature common to both cases is the desire to transform all the associated actors into “researchers” and “authors” of the design process. Let us now turn to what we perceive as common dimensions in the training design implemented.

4.1. Identification of the key dimensions of the instructional design implemented in both cases

In both cases, the project aimed at transforming the profession was driven by political bodies (at the macro level) in contexts of transition or even crisis. The instructional design process brought together heterogeneous actors involved in both the meso (organisers) and micro (support persons) dimensions. The educational approach was strategic (it was not treated as “separate”). According to Mezirow (1997), all actors have what it takes to ensure the success of a transformative process (a desire to question their presuppositions, etc.). This refers not only to the participants (students, masons), i.e., the target audience, but also to the tutors, training designers, and researchers. Crisis is a common element in both cases. It is multi-referential and simultaneously affects subjects, groups, organisations, and institutions. The subjects and social groups concerned view this crisis as a challenge, or a dilemma, to overcome.

| Dimensions of transformative and cooperative instructional design | Prospective approach of Les Compagnons du Devoir | SIFA Master’s programme |
|--|---|---|
| Sociocultural and economic context elements | Identity transition, multifactorial crisis: a political project and instructional design to support the evolution of the profession (mason, manager, and training professionals), notably through training and research. Legal framework associated with professions that are constantly shifting (ecological and digital transition). | |
| Actors of instructional design | Heterogeneity of experiences (politics, actors, professions, learners, researchers, consultants, trainers, learning designers, tutors). | |
| Questioning assumptions and considering multiple perspectives | At work within training management bodies at Compagnons (The future of professions). | At work within networks such as RUMEF and GRAFE. |
| | At work (assumptions) in the construction of the prospective system: thematisation, expression of possible scenarios, development of Régnier’s Abacus. | At work in the production of models (teaching staff, students, tutors, and representatives of the professional world). Also at work in the activities of the laboratory (CREAD), during study days and seminars, to which the SIFA is affiliated. |
| Transformation processes (macro/meso and micro): objects and meaning of transformations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Also involves language: actions at the political level of organisations (group of influence). - Common project (common identity). - Organisation of controversies (Latour). - Intermediaries/translators. - Transformations of collective representations. - Socio-cognitive conflict process (group). - Meaning is also impacted in the transformative process: common strategy through the expression of a political project by the Compagnons du Devoir (here, the idea of the mason profession by 2035). - Meaning also involves participants’ patterns and perspectives of meaning in the prospective study | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involves language, the encounter of social worlds within dedicated spaces: research activities, performance improvement commissions, educational reviews. - The approach shapes controversies (Latour) through the intermediary/translator. - Transformations of progressive collective representations via a process of socio-cognitive (group) conflict. - The object of the transformative process is meaning as a common direction (in the fields of research and of the evolution of professions). - Meaning as perspectives and meaning patterns of the participants in instructional design (questioning presuppositions) and in the management of the approach (tutors, learners, and teaching staff). - Meaning perceptible through the redesigning of models, the product of the encounter between researchers, tutors, learners, and learning designers. |
| Transformative effects | Development of individual and collective power to take action. Real impact in terms of transforming the profession (project) and undertaking a collective definition of its new forms (frugal model). This is followed by the redesign of courses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Development of individual and collective power to take action. - Development of cooperation at the macro, meso, and micro levels, of a socio-political movement and its instructional design practices in terms of the professionalisation of training actors and the professionalisation of the training offer (SIFA). |

Figure 2: Summary of the main components of the training programme

The cultural dimension of the sector and the professions (Compagnon du Devoir masons, training actors) undoubtedly impacts the methods of cooperation underlying instructional design, and the primary objective of the transformations observed is to define the meaning at the macro, meso, and micro levels. The same applies to the research culture of the researchers and experts involved (classical approaches and/or approaches combining understanding, transformation, and learning objectives). Both cases reveal a pragmatic approach in which the past experience of the trainers, such as those experiences revolving around the design and implementation of the approach, plays a central role, albeit with a different status. In both cases, the training's design activates the same instruments – experiential self-learning, significant role of the collective (co-learning) – and is a highly ritualised process filled with challenges to overcome.

Naturally, knowledge and its production do not have the same status within the two groups observed. The masonry profession mobilises knowledge from physics, geometry, and all the disciplines at the core of the profession. On the other hand, soft skills mobilise less formal resources and knowledge, drawn from the fields of relationship management, consulting, and governance.

Communicational competence (Bertrand, 2014) is at the heart of the two approaches analysed. This involves both the condition and the objective sought within the spaces of mediated dialogue. This competence may be defined as the scientific process through which inter-comprehension, in the terms of Habermas, takes place. This skill can be learned and developed, but the process is quite time consuming. It is a collective competence that is both a condition and an intended goal.

Communicative learning involves bringing together the social worlds of professions (masons, political actors, networks, consultants, and researchers). There is a “system implementation” in communicative action that is aimed at:

- emancipation (involvement of subjectivities, kept at a certain distance by the inter-comprehensive process in discussion spaces: decentralisation and reflexivity);
- constructing a “fair” project: collective understanding of the evolution of shared social worlds (masons, researchers, and consultants), i.e. the rules, norms, values, and practices that constitute these;
- gaining some form of control (collective destiny, the project, etc.) and seeking “truth and efficiency” in the management of projects.

4.2. Main lessons learned and new avenues for reflection

While each case is specific, there are numerous common foundations: co-construction of meaning through communicative action between multiple actors; consideration of micro, meso, macro, historical, and psychosocial contexts; an approach targeting autonomy and socialisation; and the role of lived experience and its dilemmas as drivers of transformation.

Co-construction of meaning through communicative action between multiple actors

In cooperative and transformative instructional design, the processes of producing knowledge about the “functioning of the world” and its transformation are not only iterative but also work against each other. In each of the cases presented, the exploration of the issues, interests, and conditions of the experience, through the participation of a large system of actors, is one of the foundations in the exploration, design, and implementation phases.

Multiple mediations are intentionally sought in the various phases of analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation (Bertrand et al., 2019). A hermeneutical perspective gradually arises and a state of common meaning around transformation projects emerges. These cases reveal that there are multiple fields in which meaning is co-constructed:

- work (changes in professional sectors, professions, organisations, skills, etc.);

- training approaches;
- self- and co-learning of the actors involved (politicians, decision-makers, training operational frameworks, trainers, and the learners themselves).

Meaning is not a “given”; rather, it is a social construct that suggests that the different parties involved have an axiological background as well as possessing policies and skills (translators, intermediaries). Instructional designers must also adopt an epistemological stance to reflect on and produce training. This training is conceived as an ingenium based on a creative, transformative, and collective practice that sets an example, mobilises knowledge, and potentially participates in its production. In other words, it is not merely to be imposed (Brémaud & Guillaumin, 2010). Perceived as a “direction” based on values, meaning appears to be the “ideal” basis of the training system for the *Compagnons du Devoir* as well as for the actors of the SIFA programme. The axiological dimension is dominant in the meaning of “transmit”.

Integration of the psychosocial context

The majority of adult learners enrolled in the SIFA Master’s degree programme experience “existential” transformations. They connect the socio-political and strategic dimensions, the functional dimension (network, operating principle), and the socio-educational dimension of the approach.

Among the *Compagnons du Devoir*, the culture of the “profession” is acquired by viewing both the professional activity and learning/development as essential. The same is true in the SIFA programme. The educational design of a learner’s career path is thus based on different types of activity: professional activities (design, professional accomplishments); social activities for the *Compagnons du Devoir* (the keepers); trips (cultural encounters); initiatory activities at key moments in one’s career; and “pivotal” moments (Lesourd, 2008). In the case presented above, there is a clear pursuit of self-awareness, openness to others, and openness to the world. This is reflected in the desire to bring together the perspectives and thoughts of various actors such as policymakers, operational managers, researchers, and consultants. The *Compagnons du Devoir*’s tradition of transmission is also reflected, in reference to an anthropological conception of education (Wulf, 1999). The *Compagnons du Devoir* apprentice is both the subject matter and the tool: learning the profession is synonymous with the construction of oneself in the pure Socratic tradition (know thyself), but also with becoming more aware of the world in order to find one’s place in it, and to make it “a better place”. The world is understood both in its social, ecological, and material dimensions, but also, more symbolically, as “collective work” to which each individual contributes.

Empowering through socialisation

In the two cases presented, individual emancipation is understood as a never-ending psychosocial process through which subjects in a work environment decide whether or not to commit themselves or whether to maintain relationships of mutual dependence. This capacity is reflected in the coupling of two qualities or joint dispositions: autonomy and socialisation, which are present in both cases. These qualities may also constitute skills (i.e., resources that can be called upon in specific situations) that are developed when one gains a better understanding of themselves (autonomy), of the social codes, and of how to decode them (social skills). This capacity also involves an integrative process in terms of one’s profession. From this perspective, autonomy is collective, meaning that it is the result of participatory, democratic, and “instituting” practices (Lourau, 1970).

Experience and its dilemmas as drivers of transformation

We mentioned previously the importance of the psychosocial context. In each case, the integration of the psychosocial context led the different actors to encounter complex and often ambiguous questions where the knowledge already acquired proved “limited” and required revisiting or updating. This is close to Mezirow’s (1997) vision of transformative

learning, where the learning process begins when individuals experience a “disorienting” dilemma that causes a rupture (often uncomfortable) in thought structures, forcing them to re-examine their presuppositions in order to change how they think and act.

Among the *Compagnons du Devoir*, the invitation to go beyond one’s frame of mind involves a process consisting of apparent paradoxes (Morin, 1999) and the potential encounter of lived worlds (Bertrand et al., 2019). The shared culture (socialisation, challenges, etc.) of the *Compagnons du Devoir* is undoubtedly a key driver that makes it possible to support actors in this type of process, a process that can be destabilising. This principle is present in the SIFA programme which involves learning about observing and analysing one’s professional situation as well as raising awareness through an approach in which the Master’s students are their own “learning object”. The “lived” dimension of the approach is very clear in this case (Albero, 2011). There is an ongoing transformation process within spaces of reflexivity and dialogue between peers, promoting inter-subjectivity and the co-construction of meaning, as discussed earlier.

Present in workplace actions and thoughts, the guiding of this “awareness-raising” reflective process can be seen in the support approach of the *Compagnons du Devoir*. We “learn by doing”, without always knowing what is happening, or what “goes by”, and yet successful careers seem to be associated with a singular knowledge that Lesourd (2008) refers to as “past knowledge”. The various phases of prospective work revealed that a majority of participants were able to put on hold their ready-made thinking. This, however, was not because of the qualities of the facilitators alone, but also because of their willingness to “learn” and to question. We believe that this ability is a necessary condition, a prerequisite for the development of instructional designs that are transformative and cooperative.

5. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES: TOWARDS ANOTHER TAR RESEARCH PARADIGM

As mentioned earlier, learning design activities in general, and in training in particular, are inseparable from research activities. The two cases presented here adopted a cooperative and transformative approach that sought to enhance the link between actors (collaborations/practitioners/researchers) and which paid attention to the unique and situated nature of its results. This approach also calls for the recognition of the value of the experiences of learners, trainers, and other actors (these experiences are understood here as “capital, challenges and projects”, cf. Bertrand, 2014) and to compare them. Such a comparison can promote the co-construction and co-production of meaning and may lead to individual and collective changes. In other words, such an approach may help to connect self-learning and co-learning dimensions, thus leading to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997; Mezirow & Taylor, 2009).

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, this research paradigm is thus more holistic, more multi-, inter-, or trans-disciplinary, than the classical paradigm that views research as an immutable process for ordering the production of knowledge, its transmission, and its application in professional fields. This paradigm is also close to the North American “participatory” action-research paradigm, where the aim is to produce knowledge with – and not “in the name of” learners – as well as to promote consideration of the diversity of the knowledge of those people who participate in the research process, and to help learners to take ownership of the knowledge produced during this process (Heron & Reason, 2008; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Yorks, 2005). It is also aligned with the “emancipatory learning” theory, as developed by Mezirow (1997), where the role of knowledge is not only to make learners and the actors involved more autonomous in their capacity to act from an instrumental and situational point of view, but also – and above all – to make them more autonomous from an epistemological point of view, meaning that they are capable of questioning the legitimacy of actions, of making informed judgments, and lastly of influencing the environment in which they act in terms of values, deontology, and even ideologies (Eneau, 2005).

The need to pay greater attention to methodological issues from the research and design phases of training design projects is therefore clear. Transformative and collaborative instructional design, as we understand it, requires researchers and actors to be capable of epistemological vigilance and to be conscious of shortcomings, for instance in cases where research is content to produce knowledge that does not go beyond what is judged as useful. It also implies taking into account research findings when designing projects and recognising that any research focusing on adult education and training must be able to go beyond socio-technical applications that are inevitably simplistic and must consider the relationship between research and policymaking. This is what we are undertaking at Rennes 2 in our various research fields around the instructional design for the SIFA Master's programme. For instance, we have chosen a "design-oriented" research approach (Sanchez & Monod-Ansaldi, 2015), drawn from design-based research (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012), in which all actors are invited to participate in the various phases of designing a training approach or a tool such as the prospective approach.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that, in the two cases analysed, occupational issues far outweighed – and incorporated – training issues, with the aim of addressing transformation at the socio-political level. From this perspective, and in this specific context, we agree with Honneth (2000; 2013) that communicative action may be considered as a valid social theory, as a theory of action for reflecting on work and its evolution. Work goes beyond mere "instrumental", manoeuvring rationalities and can be considered as an object of "emancipation" on the condition that subjects are led to reflect on it and to accomplish it within dedicated democratic communicative spaces.

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EDEN. Educational Environments with Nature

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The authors agree with the overall structure of the article. Paragraph 2 is by Beate Weyland and paragraph 3 is by Giusi Boaretto.

Abstract - This paper presents the birth of EDENLAB - an interdisciplinary lab for designing educational environments with nature, which documents and stimulates research and teaching activities on the topic of Educational Environment with Nature, and the doctoral research project EDEN - Toward an interdisciplinary green curriculum. To educate the future citizen of the planet, teachers must be educated in ecological thinking. This study seeks to examine whether 'green classrooms' can trigger reflection on indoor green education that develops relationships with plants and 'GreenComp'. It explores the effects of the green classroom on well-being and an educational relationship based on sensory-cooperative modes of teaching that stimulate intimate relationships with plants. In particular, it analyses the effects of developing a transversal green curriculum on the ecological awareness of future teachers and the link between these and the development of sustainable educational actions.

KEYWORDS: Nature-based intervention, well-being, place attachment, university laboratory, ecological development.

INTRODUCTION

The words of UNESCO's 2021 Report "Reimagining our future together" encourage humanity to maintain hope but, as Frumkin (2022) underlines, hope in the times of the Anthropocene is under pressure from apocalyptic narratives of the future. Corresponding to such narratives is the development of states of loss of hope, for example in the words of Frumkin: "some young people are forgoing higher education, believing that impending catastrophe makes education pointless" (p. 3). In reporting this condition, the author states that those who are hopeful have a greater perception of well-being and are more likely to act.

By enriching Goleman's idea of ecological intelligence with suggestions from the anthropologist Eduardo Kohn (2021), we can reflect on how humans are interdependent with other living beings and their thoughts. Making room for another kind of thinking is an invitation that plant neurobiology offer, discovering how innovation, cooperation, and sustainability are constructs that characterize the plant world. These constructs are part of those strategies that Frumkin identifies to face the challenges of the Earth. In order to achieve this, the world of education must be the first promoter, starting with tertiary education, by its responsibility in recognizing how "Knowledges - in the plural - should be recognized as assets to be developed and used for the shared well-being of all (UNESCO, 2021, p.75). Thus, through the active encounter with diversity, such as that of plants, the world of education can experience a creative and resilient way of looking at the world to rethink educational environments and promote Earth.

1. EDEN LAB: A LABORATORY TO INTERLINK EDUCATION, ENVIRONMENTS, AND NATURE.

EDEN Lab, Educational Environment With Nature, is an interdisciplinary laboratory that aims to operate between pedagogy architecture and design, interacting with other disciplines to create educational spaces in which to learn while experiencing well-being. As such, it deals with stimulating educational research on the theme of appropriation and the

creation of educational space, including those with plants. The focus on the development of green landscapes to promote well-being and sustainability, interactive didactics with plants based on playfulness, and sensoriality, have an added value: the ecological dimension of the dialogue itself, aimed at cooperation between the university, school, and nature.

The reason for this focus matured during the lockdown, when several teachers were wondering how to prepare environments for a safe return to presence. We proposed to include plants in the classrooms as spacers, but also as teaching mediators that could generate well-being and resilience. Indeed, it has been revealed in many studies that contact with nature has a positive impact on human health and well-being (Mancuso, 2021; Kuo, 2015). Since people spend up to 90 percent of their time indoors, the indoor environment becomes crucial to their health.

Historically, sustainable education started with a focus on improving the natural environment. Recently, as evidenced by the principles promoted by the UNESCO program, efforts are moving towards considering issues related to the well-being of people from a "shift of interest" perspective (Clément, 2014), focusing on enhancing educational relations, and cultural activities related to people and nature.

The educational environments most common in schools are often poor, 'non-places' according to Marc Augè. The LAB aims to intervene in the educational environment by proposing a revolutionary action: inserting plants together with the school community and studying together how to generate an organizational-didactic system to sustain the interventions.

The research entitled "Clever Classroom" by Peter Barret (2015) shows that learning improves by up to 16% if the environment fulfills three conditions: naturalness, stimulation, and individualization. In this study, we note that design comfort conditions that emulate natural conditions and that are stimulating, influence the quality of learning. The possibility of experiencing well-being in a place seems to be guaranteed by the possibility of appropriating the space and experiencing it as 'naturally' as possible. This fact is enhanced if plants are found in the environment, so much so that studies on the quality of working environments confirm that they contribute to reduced psycho-physiological stress and improved performance and well-being (Bringslimark et al. 2007).

Raith and Lude in 'Startkapital Natur' (2014) also suggest that plants affect the mental, social and physical development of children. In addition, the presence and care of plants seem to have an effect on environmental awareness. Other scientific studies indicate that the development of close relationships with nature is beneficial, not only for the humidification and exchange of air in rooms, but also because it promotes children's attention. While these studies often focus on nature experienced in outdoor spaces or also refer to the 'vision' of nature, the aims of EDENLAB will include studying the effects of children's active interaction with plants in indoor educational settings.

The reasoning behind the presence of plants within the educational spaces, therefore, leads to the development of reflections on the educational relations that are established with plants, going so far as to also consider the education of the issues that are so present today, such as sustainability

The LAB has an anima aimed at supporting university didactics addressed to future teachers and intends to offer concrete tools to implement the indications offered on the development of Global Competences. Particularly, both through the courses and the presence of a plant-rich context, it intends to verify how to meet the new requirements of the Civic Education Act. To this end, it is studying proposals to actively involve students in the laboratory.

Our second objective is to meet the needs of schools that required accompaniment in the process of transforming space/teaching methods, and which could find in the proposal an opportunity to research the issues related to a possible set-up of educational environments with plants. In the course of 2021-2022, various national and international schools adhered to the EDEN proposal, introducing as many plants in their classrooms as there are pupils and teachers. Requests have led to the establishment of action research with schools, in order to enhance teaching professionalism. The proposal is to consider plants as a variable of pedagogical interaction and to provide scientific validity to the encounter between

theory and practice in a process of experimentation in which all actors are involved in the creation of learning plants-landscapes. The activities focus on the development of methodological tools for the domestication of school space, thanks also to the introduction of plants; the promotion of a didactic approach based on creative exploration, which supports the playful dimension conveyed by teaching materials that are self-created by students-teachers.

At the Faculty of Education of the Free University of Bolzano the activities of our EDEN LAB took the form of setting up two green classrooms (Figure 1) for teaching, inside which are more than 100 plants. The idea was born together with the schools' request to return to presence with the restrictions imposed by Covid-19. To preserve collaborative organization in the classrooms dedicated to laboratory activities 100 plants were purchased to symbolize the students, generating natural distances that marked still more cooperative work islands.



Figure 1. Green classroom

In the lab, we are monitoring whether this setup can foster the students' relationship with plants. Through their presence also in the indoor environments, the aim is to involve the communities in the relationships of care and therefore protection of nature as a source of well-being for all to concretely develop green-sustainable skills. If in fact "green" has an imperceptible influence on the human being in terms of increasing empathy-connection with the human being (Maas et al., 2009), this empathy could counteract the so-called "plant-blindness" phenomenon (Balding, Williams, 2016).

2. EDEN: TOWARDS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY GREEN CURRICULUM WITH PLANTS.

It is within the context of EDENLAB that the doctoral research "Eden: towards a transversal green curriculum" was born. The project investigates how the establishment of indoor university learning environments through the interaction with plants conveyed by a co-constructed interdisciplinary green curriculum can foster the development of GreenComp (Bianchi et al. 2022). The reciprocal link between the well-being of humans and the well-being of the planet is something universally recognized. The European Environment Agency places the sustainable interdependence between humans and the planet at the center of its action programs (e.g. the Agenda 2030). However, it seems that a dualist view of the human-nature relationship, understood as two interconnected but distinct entities, is still strongly rooted, and in promoting actions aimed at safeguarding the needs of future generations. The issue of the symbiotic relationship with the 'non-human' is not clearly focused on. It appears to be exclusively the safeguarding of the needs of the human generation that is the subject of reflection. For this reason, reference is made in this research to the framework proposed by Misiaszek (2021), who identifies the existence of a "planetary sphere", the Earth, within which there is what he calls the "world", i.e. the

anthropocentric sphere, and the non-anthropocentric sphere, which includes the non-human spheres whose boundaries are fictitious by virtue of their being profoundly "intertwined together" (p.21).

The plant world is a fundamental contribution to the relationship between spheres, which not only represents a cooperative, innovative and sustainable model of life for human beings to learn from (Mancuso, 2021) with beneficial effects on their quality of life, but also a powerful living entity that can positively affect humans development (Chawla, 2020). It is precisely because of the benefits that plants bring, that the world of education and psychology is questioning the link between learning and nature. Within this research, there are experiments on the relationship between human beings and the plant world, in school and extracurricular environments that offer a starting point for research, as stated in the previous paragraph.

The question that now arises is: what is the human contribution to the aforementioned interdependent relationship? Can plants 'teach' and offer humans an opportunity to develop the ability to cooperate with nature (Clement, 2014)?

To answer this question, one can consider the studies of Iana Markevych et al. (2017), who identify three 'pathways' through which 'greenspaces' can be linked to health: reducing harm; restoring capacities; building capacities. Referring to this classification, Nicole Van de Bogerd et. al (2020) elaborate on a systematic review of research conducted on the indoor–outdoor nature relationship in study environments and the well-being and academic achievements of students in secondary and higher education. The research highlights both the need to conduct longitudinal studies in everyday life settings on the topic and how the investigations conducted so far with respect to indoor nature have predicted passive exposure. However, there is evidence (Han, 2017) that active exposure to indoor nature appears to be more significant.

The doctoral thesis presented here aims, first and foremost, to conduct an analysis of institutional documents from UNESCO and the European, Italian, and Swiss Communities because it is in these contexts that the research takes place. The concept of 'education for sustainable development' has been framed from a theoretical point of view, and theoretical reflection has led to a more punctual justification for favoring the use of the concepts of learning for sustainability (Bianchi et al., 2022). *Trait d'union* in the documents listed above is to emphasize both the responsibility that higher education institutions have for this and the need for its promotion in the educational context in a transversal and longitudinal manner.

The project is based on the framework of "Biophilic campuses" (Abdelaal, 2019) and the framework of constructive learning environment elaborated by Mäkelä and Leinonen (2021). It focuses on the university ecosystem, investigated in its capacity as an educational environment, whose constituent dimensions are: overall well-being; learning situation; learning tools and space design. The research challenge lies in the possibility of cultivating these dimensions through the inclusion of plants, understood as pedagogical entities through which to promote innovation, biophilia, and sustainability through the development of GreenComp. It is important to emphasize that, starting with the setting up of indoor green spaces, the study focuses particularly on the creation of an interdisciplinary, green curriculum with plants aimed at promoting the development of an 'indoor green education'.

The research questions are the following:

Q1. Does the presence of plants in indoor tertiary education environments affect the well-being and place attachment of teachers and students?

Q.2 How can a cross-curricular and interdisciplinary green curriculum model for tertiary education focusing on the relationship between humans and indoor plants be developed in a participatory manner?

Q.3 Do the presence of plants in academic teaching spaces and the formulation of a interdisciplinary green curriculum facilitate the development of 'Green Comp 2022' in pre-service teachers?

The hypothesis guiding this research is that educational environments with plants foster the development of GreenComp. Green competencies are defined as the ability to identify sustainable values, envision sustainable futures, embrace complexity in sustainability, and, thus, act as a motor for sustainability. The presence of an indoor green space and the establishment of an interdisciplinary curriculum with plants will mediate the relationship between these skills and the aforementioned concepts. Learning, as a result, becomes meaningful when positive emotions, motivation, and the needs of the learner are met.

The research takes the constructivist-socio-cultural epistemological paradigm as its reference. Its design is a multiple-descriptive case study referring to the legislative and educational records of South Tyrol and Italian-speaking Switzerland and aims at understanding the realities in which the investigation will be carried out. The project will be conducted with a mixed methods approach with "parallel" architecture and with the research strategy of triangulation. The study will be longitudinal: lecturers and pre-service students from the two universities will be involved for a duration of 18 months. Two lines of work will be developed concurrently, the first aimed at the monitoring of the well-being and place attachment of those who attend green classrooms; the second aimed at the participatory development and testing of the curriculum. The first line, designed to respond to Q1, will involve the following instruments: the use of a questionnaire designed to investigate well-being and place attachment; and semi-structured interviews to investigate quantitative data. In the second line, related to Q.2, three focus groups for each university are planned which will flow into the curriculum proposal. The two lines of work will be crossed at the end of the project to answer Q.3 through a triangulation process that will be conducted through the use of qualitative-quantitative questionnaires (to be administered pre-post intervention) to investigate both processes and results for students and teachers, focus groups with students, and observation.

The research aims to offer a concrete form of Eco-education through the development of joint action: on the one hand, the setting up of learning environments with the plants; on the other hand, the activation of a curriculum that enables the systematic development of ecological intelligence. Firstly, the improvement in the state of well-being and place attachment perceived by the project participants is expected to be recorded within the green classrooms. Secondly, it is hoped that the dialogue between different disciplines will lead to the co-creation of a curriculum that places the theme of the relationship between the plant world and humans at the center in order to promote a new ecological understanding of sustainability. Finally, it is expected that perceptions of well-being and a place attachment, together with the presence of the aforementioned curriculum, will promote the development of GreenComp. If these results are achieved, the project would offer a model for designing educational environments to develop empathy for plants and adopt sustainability as a common practice.

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What Lessons can be Learnt from International Organizations' Engagement with Lifelong Learning as a Policy Concept?

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Abstract - This symposium examines the different approaches taken by international organizations (IOs) to promote adult education and lifelong learning policies. The session comprises four inputs: Elfert and Boeren give historical accounts of the approaches of UNESCO and the EU respectively. Rubenson contrasts the different political frames of UNESCO and OECD. Schuller provides a personal perspective on OECD's work over the decades. Loosely applying the three dimensions of the philosophy/rhetoric, the 'policy grip', and the level of resource commitment as an analytical frame, the session aims at sparking discussion about what lessons can be learnt from IO's engagement with lifelong learning.

KEYWORDS: International organizations, lifelong learning, UNESCO, OECD, European Union.

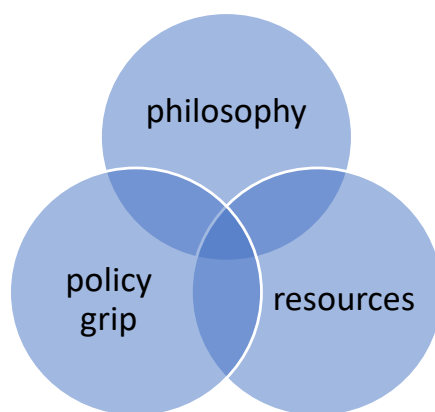
1. INTRODUCTION

This symposium aims at sparking discussion about lessons from the different approaches taken by international organizations to promote adult education and lifelong learning policies. Lifelong learning features prominently in Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) and the global Education 2030 agenda. Yet the history of lifelong learning as a policy concept shows very uneven progress, with setbacks and fluctuations, internationally as well as nationally.

The session comprises four brief inputs, from pairs of researchers from different generations. Elfert and Boeren give historical accounts of the approaches of UNESCO and the EU respectively. Rubenson contrasts the different political frames of UNESCO and OECD. Schuller provides a personal perspective on OECD's work over the decades.

In comparing our various accounts we see a possible framework for the discussion, built around three dimensions:

- The *philosophy/rhetoric* surrounding the organisation's approach to lifelong learning
- The degree of '*policy grip*' exercised by the organisation
- The level of *resource commitment* entailed in the organisation's proposals.



2. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE LIMITED POLICY IMPACT OF UNESCO'S HUMANISTIC VISION OF LIFELONG LEARNING

This section focuses on the circumstances of the limited impact of UNESCO's concept of lifelong education (and later lifelong learning) as a global policy paradigm. It derived from the policy idea of "éducation permanente", which spread in France in the 1960s (Hake, 2018). Rooted in popular culture and cultural democracy, it showed traces of Enlightenment humanism and existentialist philosophy and was closely tied to a vision of a democratic society built on active citizenship (Elfert, 2018). UNESCO's engagement with lifelong education was related to the dampening of the optimism of the post-WW II years in terms of social and economic equality. The student protests of the 1960s against capitalism and the encrusted and elitarian education system, in particular the "événements" of 1968 in France, compelled UNESCO and also other international organizations such as the OECD to raise questions about the "problems of modern society" (Schmelzer, 2012).

While the OECD focused more on the costs and benefits of economic growth, UNESCO emphasized citizenship, individual empowerment and democracy and was concerned about the challenges of exporting educational models from "First World" to "Third World" countries. However, UNESCO's 1972 report *Learning to be* (the *Faure report*), which promoted lifelong education as the new global "master concept", had little effect on national educational policies. Although the *Faure report* was acknowledged by other international organizations, member states perceived the report as too philosophical, and developing countries regarded lifelong education as a luxury of the developed world (Torres, 2002).

One of the key reasons why the *Faure report* was perceived as unorthodox was its strong critique of the traditional school and its engagement with the arguments of school critics such as Ivan Illich. For example, the OECD response to the *Faure report* criticized the "heavy ideological overtones which are inappropriate in a U.N. document designed to have global significance" (cited in Elfert, 2018, p. 129). A critical stance towards the school also characterized the research program on lifelong education carried out by educationists associated with the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) in Hamburg in the 1970s (Cropley, 1979; Dave, 1973). While employing the discourse of non-formal learning, UIE's research programme was too focused on pedagogical and curriculum aspects of primary and secondary education to speak to adult educators.

But the shortcomings of UNESCO's lifelong education program was not the only, and not the most important reason for the lack of uptake of UNESCO's vision. Shifts in the political economy in the aftermath of the oil crisis in the late 1970s were not conducive to lifelong learning. With the replacement of social-democratic by conservative governments, policy ideas pertaining to the Keynesian welfare state faded into the background in favor of neoliberal market-oriented

policies. Education was greatly affected by budget cuts in an era of austerity, and “equality issues had no high standing in the political climate of the 80s” (Eide, 1990, p. 44). Ettore Gelpi (1984), the last head of UNESCO’s lifelong learning unit before its demise, attributed the resistance to lifelong learning to conservative societal forces who regarded education “as a means of social reproduction...and not of democratization” (p. 83), and were opposed to the egalitarian nature and active participation in society that the idea of lifelong learning entailed.

Maybe most importantly, lifelong learning was crowded out by the focus of global development agendas on formal schooling. In developing countries, the centre of gravity of educational policy-making shifted towards the global governance agenda of Education for All (EFA), launched in the 1990s. This was dominated by the World Bank’s priority on the expansion of primary education (Faul & Packer, 2015). EFA overshadowed UNESCO’s 1996 report *Learning: The Treasure Within* (aka the *Delors report*), which reclaimed UNESCO’s humanistic tradition of lifelong learning as a counterweight to the challenges of neoliberalism and economic globalization. While the *Delors report* had some “soft influence” and sparked educational reform projects such as the development of lifelong learning indicators (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010; Canadian Council on Learning, 2010), these initiatives were short lived (Elfert, 2018).

The limited policy impact of UNESCO’s humanistic vision of lifelong learning was thus related to a series of factors and circumstances. Given its limited budget and mandate as an intellectual organization, UNESCO put forward its policy ideas pertaining to lifelong learning in “flagship reports” which were perceived as too philosophical and utopian and not operational enough. UNESCO also has a much broader and heterogenous membership than the OECD and does not have the ability of the World Bank to exert policy pressure through financial means. Moreover, the lack of policy success of UNESCO’s vision of lifelong learning must be considered in the context of the organization’s declining role in the landscape of global governance, the overall neoliberal political economy, which favoured evidence-based policy-making, the focus on schooling in international development initiatives, and the lack of funding for adult education, which also extends to the contemporary SDG 4 agenda (Elfert, 2019).

UNESCO’s most recent education “flagship” report, *Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*, published in 2021, includes calls for a broad view of adult education that “extend[s] far beyond lifelong learning for labour market purposes”, but this vision will likely remain at the level of rhetoric given that the SDG 4 agenda emphasizes assessment of learning outcomes of formal schooling, and adult education has not made its way into the indicators of SDG 4 (Uppingham seminar, 2016, p. 13). The focus on measurable outcomes will likely keep “informal and non-formal approaches to learning...undervalued, mentioned in passing, and largely invisible” (Benavot et al., 2022, p. 180).

3. UNPACKING THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Until the signing of the Treaty on the European Union in 1992, a coordinated European approach in the field of education and training was rather limited (Rasmussen, 2014). Since the early 1960s, the EEC discussed the need for vocational education policies and since the 1970s, education ministers from the different member states met on a regular basis. Eurostat, Europe’s statistical office, started with the collection of streamlined education data since 1978. After the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, debates on the need for Europe to become competitive with other continents in an increasingly globalised world became louder (Mohorcic-Spolar & Holford, 2014). The year 1996 was labelled as the ‘*European Year of Lifelong Learning*’, putting lifelong learning in the spotlight across the Union’s member states. The late 1990s boosted a renewed focus for lifelong learning which became a centrepiece in the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in 2000 and the implementation of a new *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*.

The core ambitions of the work undertaken around 2000 were to boost economic competitiveness and growth through lifelong learning but also to stimulate active citizenship and social cohesion. An *Education and Training 2010 strategy* was designed in 2001, aiming for 12.5 percent of the adult population between the ages of 25 and 64 to participate in at least one adult learning activity by 2010, measured on a four weeks' basis. Soft power governance methods through peer pressure were introduced with periodic monitoring being part of the policy method (Lawn & Grek, 2012). While European targets were set out, the responsibility for the design and implementation of specific policies remained at the level of the individual nation state. As argued by Mohorcic-Spoljar and Holford (2014), new policy papers published in the second half of the 2000-2010 decade reduced the focus on the non-economic benefits of lifelong learning, weakening its humanistic focus. Instead, the spotlight became firmly on employment and productivity, underpinned by human capital approaches. For example, this became especially obvious in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial and economic crisis. This trend continued throughout the 2010s.

A new *Education and Training 2020 Strategy* was designed in 2009, setting targets to be reached by 2020. Moving into the 2020s, the European Commission's policy focus in the area of lifelong learning remains strongly centered around economic perspectives, highlighting the need for skills to support the transition to a green and digital economy, underpinned by resilience and adaptation to ever-present challenges, including climate change, Artificial Intelligence and automation. A new strategic framework under the label of the *European Education Area* aims to stimulate cooperation and synergies between member states. It keeps a soft governance model underpinned by benchmarks and indicators, which still remain unmet by many of the Eastern and Southern European countries. Now moving from a four weeks to 12 months measurement model, a proposed 47 percent of adults between the ages of 25 and 64 should participate in adult learning, to be increased to 60 percent by 2030. The strong focus on skills is also visible through the implementation of a new *European Skills Agenda* with 12 actions to stimulate individuals and businesses to develop and boost their skills. Specific examples include *Action 1 – Pact for Skills* – for which companies, private and public organizations and regional and local partnerships can sign up to in order to cooperate in areas of skills development. *Action 8 – Skills for Life* – aims to guarantee the development of life skills for everyone, mainly underpinned by the previously rolled out initiative of *Upskilling Pathways*. While the dominance of lifelong learning policies thus remains strongly economically driven, the Commission specifically links these aims to its social targets. It argues that a boost in skills through participation in lifelong learning will help to achieve the target to obtain an employment rate of 78 percent by 2030 for those between the ages of 20 and 64. Employment and increased revenues in taxes will also help to lower the proportion of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, to be decreased by 15 million by 2030. As mentioned above, while centralized actions exist, it is still the responsibility of the nation state to implement policies. Research (see Boeren, 2016) has demonstrated large differences in how much funding is spent on issues relating to Active Labor Market Policies, training vouchers, subsidizing of adult education centers etcetera. These differences have been discussed through – for example – the focus on the Nordic model of lifelong learning, a welfare model that centrally invests in social services and is strongly committed to reducing inequalities (see Rubenson, 2006).

To conclude, the European Commission's lifelong learning policy focus mainly aligns with a human capital approach, with the core aim to boost economic competitiveness and productivity through raising people's skills. If successful, this would lead to increased social security for individuals through employment and financial safety. However, while mentioned in policy documents in the early 2000s, the focus on active citizenship and social cohesion seems to have significantly softened during the last 20 years. Ultimately, European member states remain responsible for the implementation of adult education policies in their own countries.

4. CERI/OECD AND LIFELONG LEARNING: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

This section contributes a personal perspective on OECD's contribution to analyzing and promoting lifelong learning. It derives from two spells as a member of the OECD Secretariat: in the 1970s working to Jarl Bengtsson in the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, on what was then known as the recurrent education project; and in the 2000s when I returned as Head of CERI. I draw more on the earlier period.

CERI's *Recurrent Education: A Strategy for Lifelong Learning* (OECD/CERI 1973) initiated a program to explore and develop a radical proposal for refashioning the education system as a whole. This seminal work, written by Bengtsson and Denis Kallen, emerged at the same time as UNESCO published the Faure report, *Learning To Be* (UNESCO 1972). Then as now the OECD analysis focused more on labor market issues and UNESCO on cultural issues; but in the OECD there was a very strong concern with issues of educational equality and other social concerns (see eg Husén 1972).

The 1973 'Clarifying Report', as it came to be known, was radical in its implications. The principal arguments deployed are now all too familiar: the need to continually update knowledge and skills, and the obligation to provide second and third chances for those who did not succeed first time round. It is easy now to underestimate just what a direct challenge this posed to the 'front-loading' character of the education system, which sought constantly to retain young people for as long as possible and paid little attention to what happened later. Arguably, indeed, the radical implications of the proposal, for funding and organization, continue to be underestimated; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they have been stifled by the vested interests of institutions and by an intellectual conservatism still dominated, perhaps sub-consciously, by the front-loading model.

'Recurrence' meant not just a chance to return to studying, but repeated opportunities to access learning of different kinds. This was set in opposition to the standard model of Education-Work-Retirement. It had a very strong egalitarian rationale. Yet it has to be said that the Clarifying Report's alternative model was simplistically linear. In particular it greatly underplayed the gender dimension, at a time when women were entering the labor market in greater numbers. Women had not yet begun to outperform men educationally and lagged far behind in career terms (see Schuller 2017), but this was still a major flaw.

There was a good head of steam behind the project, with a major further report – *Recurrent Education: Trends and Issues* - presented in 1975 to European Ministers of Education. Subsequently, some of the more imaginative thrusts behind CERI's work on lifelong learning came in association with bodies outside the education system. One outstanding example was that of learning regions/cities – now taken up in a big way by UNESCO. A second was an exploration with major employers of their organizational practices promoting learning, including pioneering work on educational leave of absence as an employment benefit – still a major potential item on the agenda of both industrial relations and social programs.

Yet the 'strategic' thrust of the Clarifying Report never gained traction as an organizing concept for education policy-making – even in Sweden, generally regarded as the front-runner on these issues (and, not coincidentally, Bengtsson's native country). The interest in lifelong learning has waxed and waned over the decades, without ever generating sufficient impetus to rebalance the system as we once hoped.

I turn now briefly to add to previous observations on how two different analytical concepts - human capital and social capital - might illuminate the different international organizations' approaches to lifelong learning. The OECD's education work originated in the relevance of education to economic growth, so it's no surprise that it pays a lot of attention to the interactions between education and the labor market. In some circles this has been enough to condemn it as a crude, instrumentalist tool of neo-liberal thinking. Well, maybe; it will always depend in part on how Member

countries think, since they determine the organization's agenda. Certainly 'human capital' originated in neo-classical economics, and is often used to calculate financial returns, to individuals, firms and countries. However it is also a way of promoting the notion of education as something that brings many benefits, of which increased income or productivity is only one. That is why in my second spell at CERI we were able to launch the program on the social outcomes of learning, which looks at how investment in education of different kinds yields health and civic benefits (OECD/CERI 2007). The important question is how the concept is used. Some very simplistic economic analyses attribute to initial schooling rewards which happen much later; such a cumulative approach inevitably loads the dice in favor of those early years.

There were interesting, and at times quite tense, debates held in the OECD over whether social capital is a useful concept for policy or analysis. The debates, sparked by Bob Putnam's book *Bowling Alone* (2000), had direct relevance to how education functioned, both in its selection processes and in the rewards for success (Baron et al 2000). To some in the Secretariat social capital sounded flaky, and perhaps even ideologically suspect. But innovative work was done within CERI, led by Tom Healy, and although the term is still subject to rigorous scrutiny – rightly so, since like human capital it can be misused – it has alerted us to how the outcomes of education are shaped by broader social forces and networks.

5. TOWARDS A BLENDING OF THE SUPRANATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS' WORLDVIEWS ON LIFELONG LEARNING

Critical analyses of supranational organizations' policies on adult education and lifelong learning have repeatedly found that the last forty years have left us with two competing paradigms of lifelong learning, the human capital model, pushed by the OECD, and the "humanistic model", put forward by UNESCO (Regmi, 2015). Over time the latter has been pushed aside by its human capital rival (English and Mayo, 2021; Mikelatou and Avantis, 2018). While the UNESCO paradigm is diffuse, it contains notions of a broadening of the democratic processes in society and argues that people should be "making themselves" rather than "being made". Further, recent UNESCO documents have stressed the importance of member states giving increased attention to popular adult education (UNESCO, 2016; UIL, 2022). These elements are basically lost in the OECD model that overwhelmingly focuses on the economy. However, it may be advantageous, rather than seeing them as totally distinct from each other, to regard the paradigms as two halves of a Janus face that together express the ambiguous nature of lifelong learning. This section will focus on the potential to blend the two competing discourses on lifelong learning as to better reflect the two sides of the Janus face.

The analysis builds on Brown's concepts of pressure points and trade-offs (Brown, 2001). Discussing future skills formation policies, Brown notes that these will be driven by how countries address critical "pressure points", particularly globalization, skills upgrading, and social inclusion. The handling of these pressure points involves political struggle where the outcome will reflect dominant political economy and the strength of the various interest groups. The assumption is that a supranational organization's success in promoting its existing lifelong learning framework is governed by the extent to which it is perceived by member countries to be a solution to the key pressure points they are facing. In addition to how well the organization's blended paradigm is seen to be responding to the pressure points its ability to "sell" the new paradigm will depend on its success in driving the national agenda setting. In other words, the OECD's success in finding acceptance for its economistic position on lifelong learning is a result of its capacity, in Gramscian terms (Adamson, 1980), to manufacture the "common sense" of society that becomes taken for granted and therefore comes to govern national policy actors' approach to educational reforms. Papadopoulos (1994) notes that the OECD's catalytic role starts with the identification of key emerging policy issues facing individual countries. Drawing on international

experts the OECD secretariat develops a position paper addressing how and why the challenges have arisen, their implications, and the need for further studies within the OECD. This form of policy research uniquely combines the collective policy experience of Member countries with insights from academic research. A semi-autonomous think-tank capable of sophisticated long-term planning is also partly an international civil service and a shared state apparatus (Dostal 2004). This combination of characteristics has positioned the OECD to gain hegemony over the lifelong learning agenda. Thus, if UNESCO were to promote a blended model it would need to be able to get national governments to accept it as the proper policy response.

Consequently, when looking closer at the likelihood of either organization being able to promote a blended paradigm it is informative to consider previous successes and failures the OECD and UNESCO have had in winning broad acceptance for their respective l-l-l paradigm. While the present OECD paradigm has become the taken for granted position it is important to note that the first generation of OECD's l-l-l paradigm, recurrent education, is widely regarded as a major policy failure (Rubenson, 2008). This bold idea of education was never given serious consideration as it was not seen by member countries to be a realistic response to the major pressure points facing society, nor was it politically viable. This all changed with OECD's second generation of l-l-l that instead of radical restructuring of the educational system shifted the focus to the quality and nature of initial education and also expanded the understanding of education; *education is not simply synonymous with schooling* (OECD 1989, 38), a point also raised in the initial recurrent education debate. The paradigm was promoted as a way to meet a rapid and continuous transformation of working life (OECD 1989). Seen as a response to key emerging policy issues facing individual countries the paradigm was quickly embraced world-wide. The paradigm gained dominance through a process driven by OECD's knowledge management system (OECD's statistic and indicators program and country reviews) (Dunleavy, 1991), and an extensive interface between national bureaucracies and their counterparts at the OECD (Mahon and McBride (2008). The elaborate and on-going interactions between national civil servants and their counterparts at the OECD provide the former with a rich milieu for policy learning (Dostal 2004). Thus, OECD's capacity to authoritatively provide expert comparative knowledge has afforded the organization a discursive advantage. The factors explaining OECD's hegemony also shed light on UNESCO's difficulties in gaining acceptance for its l-l-l paradigm. First, their position does not adequately respond to dominant pressure points, particularly not to the economy. Second, UNESCO lacks the knowledge creating capacity of the OECD. Third, the interface between national civil servants and UNESCO is far less developed than what is the case with the OECD.

The discussion so far would suggest that without drastic changes to UNESCO's structure and way to operate, the likelihood of a blended model being accepted mainly rests on the OECD. The important question thus becomes, what would it take for the OECD to successfully incorporate some of the elements of the UNESCO paradigm into its understanding of l-l-l. The lesson from the failed attempt to promote recurrent education points to the necessity to read the political landscape right and to understand the nature of current pressure points. Piketty's (2022) analysis of levels of inequality over the last two hundred years provides an insight to the challenges of moving in the direction of a blended paradigm. Driven by social struggle the welfare state rose in power resulting in dramatic decreased inequalities during the period 1914-1980. Progressive taxation systems, in combination with generally increased taxes, provided the necessary funds to combat inequalities. However, driven by neo-liberal ideology encouraged by national and international economic interests groups, the emergence of international treaties intended to depoliticize the economy became prevalent and came to protect property and prevent redistribution, which have resulted in inequalities rising again. Piketty notes that to reverse the present trend we need to reinstate progressive taxation and to "stop the uncontrolled circulation of capital lacking either a social or environmental objective". Hopefully the fallout of the COVID pandemic, in combination

with a growing understanding of ever-increasing danger of environmental disasters, rising democratic deficits and dangerous levels of inequality, is creating conditions similar to those following the World War I. In this situation it would behove the OECD to use its sophisticated knowledge generation capacity to look at how a blended model of lifelong learning can play an important role.

6. CONCLUSION

Coming back to the framework for comparing different supranational organizations' approaches to lifelong learning outlined in the introduction, the *philosophy/rhetoric*, the 'policy grip', and the level of *resource commitment*, it can be concluded that the human capital approach to lifelong learning has prevailed over the humanistic philosophy. The "policy grip" of the OECD and the EU can be explained by their alignment with the economically-oriented approach to lifelong learning; it further builds on soft power governance mechanisms. To continue the discussion about the complex lessons that can be learnt from the different approaches taken by these organizations, it is indispensable to take a closer look at their member states. As Rubenson has argued, the economic side of the "Janus face" of lifelong learning was more widely accepted by countries as solution to the key pressure points they were facing, defined by economic considerations, which also determined the resource commitments to lifelong learning. We would like to propose two questions prompted by this retrospective: 1) In so far as the lifelong learning model has failed to gain central purchase, what weights do we give to the different barriers or factors: the conventions/vested interests of educational institutions and government departments; public understanding of 'education'; rigidities in employment practice; or other factors? 2) What, if any, are the major concepts – theoretical but operational – which underpin today's thinking on lifelong learning?

For further research, it would be worthwhile to take up some research initiatives such as those mentioned above regarding the social outcomes of learning that were short lived and did not receive enough policy attention and resources. It would also be interesting to do a historical mapping of the lifelong learning commitment of countries or regions to the three dimensions – the *philosophy/rhetoric*, the 'policy grip', and the level of *resource commitment* –, historically and in the present day. How many countries would hit the 'sweet spot' in the center, where a coherent philosophy combines with realistic policies and adequate resource commitment? Where do most countries sit in this frame? And what priorities does such a mapping suggest? Answering such questions would put us in a better position to assess the successes and failures of the policy concept of lifelong learning, which would have implications for the assessment of the era of SDG 4.

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Fostering Reflective Thinking and Combating Ethnocentric Tendencies. A Cross-Cultural Inquiry-Based Learning Experience in Higher Education

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Abstract - A pilot teaching project in the context of higher education has yielded some insights on effective teaching strategies for the promotion, among postgraduate students, of a habit of inquiry. This is meant as a valuable attitude in contemporary societies and a paramount prerequisite for developing reflective thinking and open-mindedness in a Deweyan perspective. Postgraduate students – pre-service teachers and educators – were involved in a cross-cultural and inquiry-based project. As the students' perspectives revealed, adopting an inquiry attitude contributed not only to the development of reflective thinking and open-mindedness but also self-empowerment and inquisitiveness.

KEYWORDS: Cross-cultural; inquiry-based learning; higher education; reflective thinking; open-mindedness

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper provides selected methodological insights from a pilot teaching project that took place in the context of higher education. The project, titled “Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Early Care and Education”² was grounded on the assumption that fostering a habit of inquiry is conducive for promoting reflexivity and open-mindedness. The inquiry-based learning pedagogy was enhanced by the provision of a cross cultural learning space.

In the complex world we live in, marked by unprecedented transformations, growing multiculturalism, intersectionality, and “superdiversity” (Vertovec, 2007), deeply held assumptions about learning and education are being questioned. It has become crucial to nurture reflective thinking (Dewey, 1933) and combat ethnocentric tendencies for learners of every level.

Education practitioners are at the forefront of the increasingly complex society we live in today. The religious, axiological, linguistic, and cultural complexity of education institutions requires practitioners to be trained for the encounter with the otherness (Bove, 2020; Braga et al., 2021). Future education practitioners should be socialized in a culture of critical inquiry and scientific attitude before entering the field, during their pre-service training in the context of higher education.

To address this urgent educational agenda, innovative methods for pre-service and continuing development of practitioners are required. Some methodological insights are presented here, drawing from the teaching experiences with postgraduate students that took place in the academic year 2021/2022 through the cross-national collaboration of two universities³.

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² The project was co-designed and supervised by prof. Chiara Bove and prof. Mary Jane Moran. In Italy, Anna Chinazzi was involved as co-researcher and facilitator of the activities for the Italian students. In Tennessee, Macy Halladay (PhD candidate) co-supported the American students. Our sincere thanks to all the students for their active participation.

This teaching experience can be methodologically framed as a cross-cultural, inquiry-based learning activity in which “learning by doing” served as the overarching theoretical tenet. The cross-cultural students’ partnerships were established via the Internet between students from the University of Tennessee, in the USA, and the University of Milano-Bicocca, in Italy. The three-month virtual exchange took place during a period of reduced international and local mobility due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In such conditions, the value-added of this project was the provision of space, time, and opportunity to connect students from different countries, despite distance.

Students were scaffolded throughout the process and encouraged to nurture a reflective attitude through research-based initiatives (marrying theory and praxis). The process was not only monitored for educational reasons: Students’ perspectives were also elicited to enable the facilitators (professors-researchers) to fine-tune the project for future academic years to come. Due to structuring a research-like teaching experience and assessing the process through qualitative research methods, teaching and research were co-constitutive.

Advocating the marriage between teaching and research meant moving from a traditional dichotomous perspective to embracing the idea of learning as a social practice. Research and academic teaching were meant as part of the same enterprise (Brew & Boud, 1995; Brew, 2003): They both were kindled by the spirit of active inquiry, “which is higher education’s *raison d’être*” (Westergaard, 1991, p. 28).

2. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

The cross-cultural, inquiry-based learning approach was the overarching pedagogical strategy, adopted to promote a habit of inquiry, a prerequisite for the two-fold aim of the project, i.e., fostering reflective thinking and combating ethnocentric tendencies.

2.1. Inquiry-based learning

Inquiry-based learning (IBL) is a student-centered, “inductive” teaching approach inspired by inquiry-related procedures. Within a constructivist theoretical framework, students were encouraged to be active participants in their learning processes, instead of passively receiving direct instruction. IBL supported collaborative work during which students worked together on challenging tasks (Maaß & Artigue, 2013). Although the method has been generally more popular for science education, it can be implemented in a wide range of disciplines, such as education and psychology.

2.2. Fostering Reflective Thinking

In a context marked by change and complexity, snap judgments should be avoided in favor of a reflective habit, a way of thinking, that enables one to “convert action that is merely appetitive, blind and impulsive into intelligent action” (Dewey, 1933, p. 17). It is the “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends” (ivi, p. 118). This attitude can empower people to cope with the new, not only by relying on past experiences but by acting creatively and intelligently. Reflective thinking involves “a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates and an act of searching, hunting, inquiring and finding material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose the perplexity” (ivi, p. 121). According to Dewey, it can and should be taught. An active inquiry-based approach is particularly appropriate for enhancing critical reflective thinking and practice.

2.3. A Cross-Cultural Pedagogy to Combat Ethnocentric Tendencies

In our interconnected and multicultural societies, it has become a paramount educational goal to combat ethnocentric tendencies by creating opportunities and contexts in which to promote intercultural dialogue and “cultural negotiation” (Tobin, 2016; Bove, 2020). Ethnocentrism is the tendency to evaluate on the basis of one’s own cultural standards, which are believed (consciously or unconsciously) to be superior. Human beings constantly view and interpret the world through the lenses of what they already know, therefore it is crucial to get to know other cultural perspectives. For this reason, a cross-cultural dimension was incorporated into the project to foster the development of students’ cultural de-centering attitudes.

Engaging in collaborative and cross-cultural inquiry-based projects provides students with the opportunity to nurture their reflexivity and develop a “collective stance” that allows the possibility of viewing their “beliefs and practice through the eyes of the other” (Moran et al., 2017, p. 3).

Thus, reflective thinking is a crucial role insofar that it enables one to overcome prejudices, which are “prejudgments, not conclusions reached as the result of personal mental activity, such as observing, collecting, and examining evidence” (Dewey, 1933, p. 116).

3. THE “CROSS-CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS” PROJECT

The three-month pilot project, “cross-cultural partnerships³”, took place in the academic year 2021-2022, involving graduate students from the two universities. Each student was assigned to an international partner to cooperate in designing a research project from conception to completion of the implementation plan. A similar previous experience, piloted in 2015 (Braga, Bove, Moran, Brookshire, & Correia, 2021) followed the experiences of learning through interactions with critical friends (Baskerville & Goldblatt, 2009), and helped to structure the project presented in this paper. While in the first experience the students were invited to work in pairs without systematic guidance and more freedom, in this second experience it was decided to provide more structure and scaffolding: A facilitator was in charge of supporting the process and creating the context for students’ individual and collective critical reflections.

3.1. Context of the Project and Participants

The “cross-cultural partnerships” involved 12 students undertaking a postgraduate course in the field of education. Seven of them were enrolled in the University of Milano-Bicocca and the project was incorporated into the coursework of the module “Research methods in education” (within the Masters’ degree in Advanced Educational Science) in which part of the lessons were dedicated to students’ group work. The other 5 participants were students attending the course/module “Cross-cultural Perspectives in Early Care and Education” at the University of Tennessee. Collaborative activities among students were carried out synchronously and asynchronously, discussed with international partners via Zoom as well as during class time by reviewing clips from previous partnership Zoom videos. All students freely volunteered to participate, after the project was presented at the beginning of the course.

3.2. Learning Aims

The project not only served the specific academic goals of the courses in which it was framed (disciplinary knowledge and hard skills), but it was also planned to promote a deeper and transformative approach to learning (Mezirow, 1994), along with the attitude to “cope with the new” (soft skills). The main aims were to promote an inquiry and reflexive

³ Bove, C. M., & Moran, M.J. (2021). Encouraging Cross-cultural Perspective and Critical Thinking Skills in Educational Students through *Virtual Exchange and Negotiation*. Unpublished project guidelines.

attitude and foster cultural awareness toward the aim of identifying and combating ethnocentric tendencies. Both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills were pursued.

The learning context and the activities were structured to give students the opportunity to engage in collaborative research and cross-cultural processes in a sustainable and scaffolded way.

3.3. Activities

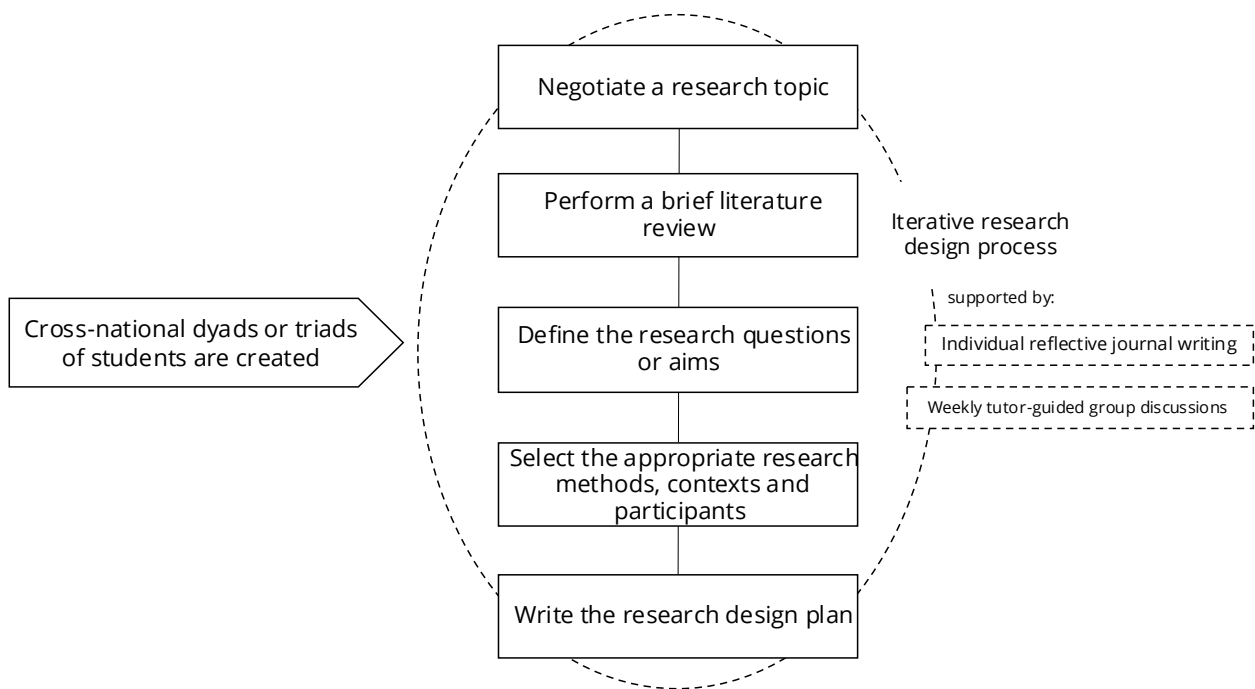
Three cross-cultural dyads and two triads of students were set up to work collaboratively on the inquiry-based task: They were asked to co-design a research project by negotiating the topic (within the education field), conducting a brief literature review, formulating the research question, and selecting the most suitable research methods.

At the end of the project, students were asked to write a paper that included the research proposal and a reflective and self-assessment section. They also gave an oral presentation with the support of slides to the whole class.

Students were supported through tutor-guided monitoring throughout the recursive and collaborative process of their qualitative research designs. Support was gradually reduced (faded scaffolding) to help them develop autonomy as partners and foster individual accountability.

The reflective stance was also supported both at individual and collective levels. Students were encouraged to keep personal, reflective journals. The affordances of reflective writing for the professional development of pre-service educational practitioners are well-known (Cohen-Sayag & Fischl, 2012; Etscheidt et al., 2012; Lee, 2008; Sileo et al., 1998). On a collective level, students from each country participated in tutor-driven critical reflections on a weekly basis. The process is visually reported in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Cross-cultural inquiry-based learning: visualization of the process.



4. RESEARCH METHODS

Throughout the implementation of the project, research methods were used to assess the proposed pedagogical approaches. Our critical reflections on the teaching experiences are based on the following elements:

- Active listening of the students during the individual and collective reflection sessions
- Final papers of students
- A short open-ended questionnaire, administered at the end of the project
- In-depth group interview with three focal students at the end of the project. The group interview lasted around 100 minutes and was recorded and transcribed

The objective was to qualitatively assess the pilot project to develop a pedagogical model tailored to promote reflective thinking and the intercultural stance of students in the context of higher education.

In the implementation of the project, a balance between flexibility and structure was pursued. This – combined with the facilitators’ inquiry attitude – made it possible to serendipitously embrace new perspectives in light of the expansive learning theory (Engeström, 1987) for which individuals could interpret and expand the possibilities of activity and knowledge in increasingly enriched ways. Eliciting students’ perspectives not only allowed us to assess the project according to its predetermined aims but also revealed it had a broader educational impact.

5. STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVES

Although this experience is based on data derived exclusively from a convenience sample of Italian students (7), listening to the voices of participants yielded some interesting methodological insights for developing future innovative strategies to promote critical reflective thinking and cultural decentering.

5.1. Inquiry Attitude, Reflective Thinking and Curiosity

Participating in the cross-cultural partnerships project contributed to developing students’ scientific inquiry, fed by reflective thinking and intrinsic curiosity. Co-designing a research proposal allowed them to make sense of the complexity of scientific inquiry and to engage in reiterative and non-linear thinking processes. As an Italian student wrote in the questionnaire, she came to the realization that qualitative research is not a “unidirectional process” since “it was necessary to go back several times over our steps, over previously achieved milestones, to reshape and rearrange what seemed already defined”.

Engaging in an inquiry-based project fostered students’ inquisitiveness: “This project awakened my curiosity”, wrote a student in her final papers: As Dewey wrote, there are several ways to kindle curiosity and one of them is to engage students in inquiry-like projects. Following his argument, “Curiosity rises above the organic and the social level and becomes intellectual in the degree in which it is transformed into interest in finding out for oneself the answers to questions that are aroused by contact with persons and things” (Dewey, 1933, p.143). When curiosity is attached to ends that “require finding” through a “a sequence of inquiries and observations” (Dewey, 1933, p. 144), it is transformed into an intellectual plane, promoting “that open minded and flexible wonder of children” (Dewey, 1933, p. 144) that is necessary to act in educational contexts. A lack of questioning attitude is a danger, as Dewey clarified in his work: “Alertness, flexibility, curiosity, are the essentials; dogmatism, rigidity, prejudice, caprice, arising from routine, passion, and flippancy, are fatal because of lack of a questioning attitude” (Dewey, 1933, p. 214).

5.2. Cultural Negotiation and Intercultural Awareness

Students had the chance to reflect on their cultural assumptions and get to know other perspectives. What impressed the Italian students the most was the difference in the conceptualization of disciplinary content, as it emerged in a questionnaire response: “I did not expect so many cultural differences and how we understand education in different

ways". A cross-cultural perspective is, therefore, useful to promote awareness of the socio-historical nature of sciences and combat naive reifications.

Intercultural awareness and open-mindedness are not a notion to be transmitted only by books and passive instruction. They are values, an attitude to be achieved through a dialogical process, often marked by misunderstandings and discomfort: "I was very challenged to really and actively listen to the other person. Sometimes it happened to me to misunderstand or to be misunderstood and this generated nervousness and frustration" (questionnaire response). An important realization is that cultural negotiation and cooperative work do not imply partners develop completely overlapping perspectives. Through a constructive dialogue, students "have managed to keep all the different perspectives together, without necessarily saying 'we must see eye to eye', but 'let's try to work together towards a common aim'", as a student told us during the group interview. As Tobin, et. al. argued in their work "The process of cross-cultural dialogue and negotiation will produce hybrid form of practice that combine the beliefs and values of the immigrant and host cultures" (Tobin, et. al. 2007, p. 37).

5.3. Self-empowerment

Some of the outcomes were quite unexpected. Interestingly, students stressed that participating in the "cross cultural partnerships project" reinforced their self-perception, making them more confident, both at a professional and personal level. Engaging in intercultural exchanges enriched students and pushed them to overcome some professional resistances or (perceived) limits. As a student clearly stated in the questionnaire "the aspect that challenged me the most will seem trivial, but it was me with my ideas and fears. This experience allowed me to add important elements from a professional but also a personal point of view. I realized that I, too, can embrace these experiences, give them a try, without thinking I'm not enough for the situations and the requests".

Unexpectedly, the linguistic difference – that could have been an obstacle especially for Italian students - functioned as a stimulus to accelerate the ability to culturally decenter themselves. As one student clarified in his/her paper: "the possibility to speak and write in English, so not with my mother-tongue, gave me the opportunity to experiment [with] a sort of decentralization. Using words and expressions of another language forces me to go out of my comfort-zone and to experiment with the complexity to express myself in another way".

Furthermore, the importance of promoting a metalinguistic attitude at the pre-service professional development level emerged: One of the students underlined how the ability to deal with different languages, even if not in a proficient way, is essential to promoting exchange and collaboration in contemporary contexts. As Anolli argued "The monocultural mind is no longer sufficient to govern the complexity of the intercultural relationships that animate the world scene today" (Anolli, 2011, p. 39). On the contrary, the "multicultural mind", which is "flexible" and "creative" as it has been exposed to different cultures/languages, is a "tolerant mind in relationships with people of different culture (...) it indicates the willingness of subjects to accept diversity as a resource" (Anolli, 2011, p. 63).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER PERSPECTIVES

The cross-cultural and inquiry-based project proved to be useful in promoting transformative and meaningful learning in pre-service practitioners' education. Potential further developments of the cross-cultural inquiry-based project may involve 1) forming groups purposefully according to students' research interests (instead of random grouping), 2) incorporating an empirical research experience in the phases (in addition to designing a research plan), 3) considering expanding the collaboration to other countries.

Although limited by the focus on a small convenience sample, this pilot project has revealed the great potential of these strategies in cultivating fertile seeds for a better world to come. A scaffolded and cooperative process promoted postgraduate students' habits of inquiry, reflective thinking, open-mindedness, and curiosity.

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Survey on Adult Learning and Education Policies and Practices. Opinions of European Regional and Local Stakeholders

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Abstract - The opinions European local and regional stakeholders have about the actual situation and the future perspectives of adult learning and education is the object of the international survey herein reported. The goal of the RegALE survey (Regional capacity for adult learning and education) was to get a multilayered view on the challenges and opportunities of the adult education sector at the regional and local level, and gaps and needs of the adult education and learning staff. Using the Delphi method technique, a questionnaire was structured for adult learning policies assessment, drawing on a study by the European Commission (2015), to assess the basic factors influencing the participation in adult education and learning, and staff's capability to deliver an adequate skills supply both for individuals (equity) and for society (sustainability), at this time (pandemic and Next generation Europe' implementation). RegALE survey was primarily addressed to public and private experts and stakeholders from 12 European countries. 241 professionals took part remotely, being: 67 politicians and professionals involved in adult education and learning governance at a regional and local level (28%), and 174 professionals responsible for leading, managing and coordinating adult education organizations (AEOs) (72%). Data analysis and interpretation indicated six success factors of the European framework related to five domains: i) Policies, systems, investments, organizations. ii) Adult learning supply, demand and workforce. iii) Disadvantaged groups. iv) Vertical and horizontal governance. v) Internationalization of adult learning organizations. These might have an impact on the development of European cities and regions, as well as on the provision of an adequate adult learning supply, as long as they are accompanied by networks and cooperation of stakeholders on a local level, enabling individual and community growth.

KEYWORDS: learning exclusion equilibrium, governance in adult learning and education, clusters.

1. THE RESEARCH QUESTION

There is no country in Europe where an organic and consistent adult learning and education (ALE) system exist. Everywhere ALE provisions are referring to a large number of public sub-systems like health, military, transport, agriculture, culture, education, justice (from magistrates to prisoners), etc. All these domains have their own education and training systems that work for the training of adults who affect the policies of the related domain (both as employees and as recipients of their policies like magistrates, penitentiary officers, prisoners, soldiers, immigrants, etc.). Each sub-system is regarded as independent, with its own rules of operation by virtue of which it reproduces itself and prolongs its influence on the local level independently of the others. Every sub-system operates within its own clusters that guarantee ALE provision.

¹ The article is the result of the fruitful and regular collaboration between the Authors. Only for scientific responsibility, the Authors declare that Francesca Torlone is the main writer of paragraphs 1 (The research question), 2 (The research aim), 3 (Main findings). The Authors supervised the quality of the overall writing, and validated contents.

In this fragmented system the problem is about the development of national strategic guidelines and the orientation and management of services and activities by public authorities at national and local level. Everywhere in Europe the prevailing answer is the free adult learning and education market (Federighi, 2006). This is also the reason why there is no European country where ALE opportunities are in the condition to decrease the number of low-skilled citizens significantly (Unesco, 2022; Council of the European Union, 2016; European Commission, 2013). The same problem exists everywhere, albeit in different ways. The European countries that were investigated (Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, the United Kingdom) are facing that, too.

2. THE RESEARCH AIMS

Combatting against the high number of low-skilled and low-qualified citizens is possible if taken at a local level. This is why it is important to investigate how it is possible to contrast the current “learning exclusion equilibrium” and increase adult learning and education opportunities in European territories. It is not only a matter of improving the existing learning devices such as methods, tools, contents. It is more a matter of analyzing how all these “patchy systems” can work together in a way to guarantee an adult learning and education public provision that can effectively support in overcoming the “learning exclusion equilibrium”.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.1. Thematic domains that were surveyed

The European survey on regional capacity for adult learning and education (RegALE) is led by the European Association for Education of Adults (EAEA) and funded by the European Commission (Torlone, Federighi, Operti, Mavrič & al., 2023). The items of the survey are structured according to the conceptual framework for adult learning policies assessment set up in the study by the European Commission (2015). In this study a conceptual model has been developed which explains the links between policy actions and their effects, thus helping in assessing to what extent existing policy measures and interventions as well as broader policy frameworks are effective in achieving their aims. In RegALE survey, this framework has been used to collect the assessments of respondents according to the essential factors influencing the participation in adult learning and education and their capability to deliver adequate skills both for individuals (equity) and for society (sustainability).

The survey is focused on policy makers and stakeholders’ subjective perceptions, attitudes and views about the actual situation and future perspectives of adult learning and education in Europe. The reason is that, in a democratic society, views, mind-sets and ideas of decision makers and stakeholders determine the perspectives for the development of adult learning and education in regions and cities.

The nine domains that were surveyed are the following:

- *Public policies.* It is a general opinion that European countries are experiencing a favorable time for the development and adoption of plans, strategies, regulations, frameworks, and special projects on adult learning (Cedefop, 2021; Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2021; Department of Education, 2020; Hellenic Parliament, 2020; Republic of Estonia-Ministry of Education and Research, 2020; Ministry of Education and Research, 2017; Ministry of Regional Development and European Funding of Croatia, 2017). However, respondents also noted that their implementation is slow to manifest significant and perceptible effects at the local level. According to the respondents, this issue can be caused by the inability of policies to act in the long-term perspective. Furthermore, the general belief emerges that policies focus on sectoral aspects

and areas of adult learning, that originates patchy systems. Improvement could be achieved by adopting a more holistic approach and evidence-based policies.

- *Systems.* Respondents indicated that there is no European country where a comprehensive adult learning and education system endowed with shared values, principles, missions, functions, and concerted priorities exist. The cooperation and coordination among the various stakeholders are considered casual or weak. They often operate within project clusters, that are often changing and evolving, with few opportunities for interrelation and without structural support.
- *Investments.* The prevailing opinion is that current funding is adequate to maintain the existing balance between adult learning and education supply and demand. However, this funding is considered insufficient to guarantee the expansion of adult learning and education. About 4 out of 5 respondents believe that priorities for spending are not well selected and that the effectiveness and impact of public expenditure are scarce.
- *Adult education organizations.* The opinions expressed within the European survey highlight how adult education organizations can cover complementary, substitutive, or completely autonomous functions concerning lifelong learning public policies. However, everywhere adult education organizations are given a central role that is more relevant than the role played by public institutions. That is because of the variety of fields in which they operate and their ability to include targets who are excluded from participation in ALE. The survey highlights some limits to be overcome that concern specifically the need to increase the relevance and quality of adult learning supply, especially the one addressed to the diverse groups of the public excluded. In the near future the number of adult education organizations is expected to be reduced due to centralization and efficiency processes. At the same time, demand for adult learning and education, skills for life and closer relations with the labor market are expected to grow.
- *Adult learning and education provision and demand.* In all the surveyed countries, the training and education provision covers a lot of fields like second-chance education, cultural activities, health. However, learning opportunities are deemed insufficient to meet the needs of different groups of population, in particular the most vulnerable ones. Training in basic skills for work, for life and citizenship is considered an improving trend by respondents. The mismatch between training supply and demand is common in all the surveyed European countries. According to the majority of respondents the discrepancy between the training provision and the training demand is due to the lack of knowledge of current and future training demands by public and private stakeholders. That seems to be the case also in countries where there are dedicated forecasting services related to the evolution of labor markets and social innovation.
- *Adult learning and education workforce.* The lack of an adequately qualified adult learning and education workforce constitutes an issue that respondents equate to the need to build a healthy economic and financial situation for the adult education organizations. The view of 3 out of 4 respondents is that, without a qualified ALE workforce, it will be challenging to face the complexity of the future learning demand. About 2 out of 3 respondents believe that the current policy commitment to support their professionalization is insufficient. Furthermore, the survey results underline the need for actions to improve the status of the ALE workforce.
- *Disadvantaged groups.* Dissatisfaction with the low level of the investments addressed to people who are excluded from ALE opportunities is expressed by 4 out of 5 respondents. The factors that limit equity in access are economic barriers, the lack of relevance of the training provision, and the lack of progression pathways and outreach activities. At the same time, the lack of guidance and support services is evident, and the policies aimed at encouraging groups that are excluded to make their learning demands explicit are rare. That is

considered crucial in contributing to the stagnation in the participation of vulnerable adults to adult learning and education activities.

- *Governance.* In spite of the different models of administrative decentralization in Europe, respondents were asked to provide views on vertical and horizontal governance. For the former one, views on decentralization models are divergent: among respondents who expressed an opinion, the ones who consider that there is a good balance of power between central and local governments, or a high level of autonomy prevail (61.4%). Other respondents (33.6%) highlight excessive centralism in power distribution. Horizontal governance calls into question the ability of those who carry out public functions to establish forms of collaboration with a great variety of public, private, and third sector actors. The collected opinions assessed the cooperation between regional and local governments and actors such as social partners, businesses, and adult education organizations. A widespread dissatisfaction emerges about the ability to build and strengthen partnerships among the wide range of social actors involved in adult education and learning policies.
- *Internationalization of adult education organizations.* The benefits of boosting the internationalization of adult education organizations are confirmed by 2 out of 3 respondents. The remaining did not answer or considered themselves not interested or not competent in the field. Respondents indicated that internationalization could produce the following benefits: i) develop and innovate ALE organizations through mutual learning processes (67%). ii) access to international funds (50.6%). iii) influence international policies (46.8%). iv) globalize ALE organizations and activities (45.5%).

3.2. The main results of the European survey: the set of non-linear adult learning and education systems and the learning exclusion equilibrium

Adult learning and education is a complex field, with a set of dynamic, non-linear systems and sub-systems driven by public and private stakeholders, not for profit organizations and professionals qualified in specific areas of adult learning or trained for other education sectors. Policy fragmentation is high as the policies that deal with adult learning and education in justice, culture, health and so forth are drafted without cross-sectorial and intra-institutional strategies.

The snapshot emerging from the survey is that each sector organizes the training and learning provision with different rules and acts according to the various ALE representations and narratives related to their strategies or educational services.

The more developed the public ALE system is in the country, the higher the variety of public and private stakeholders is – including their specificities and functions. It is also true that where public intervention is weak and demand for training is high, for-profit and not-for-profit private ALE initiatives develop and grow.

The diversity of visions and perceptions seems to depend on the specific sector each stakeholder belongs to. The work done by respondents shapes the idea of education accompanying the practices (or rather, the narratives with which they are communicated). In the open-ended questions of the survey, no matter the country they come from, teachers tend to focus on teaching issues, while managers on management or organizational issues. That highlights the diversity of interest and ideas among different professional categories.

The survey does not reveal a strategic vision or common orientations about the future, even among those who work in public institutions. Perceptions and plans are related to the mission of the sector (education, vocational training, culture, services, social policies, etc.) or to the specific institution respondents belong to.

The diversity of organizational contexts that generate and manage adult learning processes has a unifying element in the function performed, namely adults' learning. Nonetheless, there is no evidence of a holistic system, general plans,

consistent organization, coherent services, and dedicated financial resources. At least, this does not appear from any of the responses. Diversity and competition or parallelism characterize the relationships between actors. These seem to be structured primarily as relationships within sectoral clusters (Porter, 1998), with a local and regional dimension, even if they belong to national networks and systems. These clusters are often territorially based and gather interconnected organizations, specialized providers, service providers, and associated organizations operating in a particular field and characterized by the simultaneous presence of competitive and cooperative relationships.

Public policies are required to orient and support all these actors towards adequate quality standards of the learning provision. Rules, services, and funding are the tools on which expectations of respondents converge. That is also the case for a more equitable distribution of opportunities to participate in adult learning.

Setting priorities, advocating for quality, and ensuring equity are the main functions recognized for public policies. That remains a challenge in all the surveyed countries. Everywhere, expectations and opinions point out the most serious problem: the difficulty for public policies to act to alter the “learning exclusion equilibrium” for the progressive reduction of low-skilled and low-qualified adults. The “learning exclusion equilibrium” has its roots in the “low skills equilibrium” (Finegold & Soskice, 1988). The idea that stands beyond is that participation in adult learning and education is a variable of this equilibrium. In other words, this is typical of situations where an economy becomes trapped in a vicious circle of low added value, lacking skills, and insufficient wages. It occurs wherever the weak demand for skills from businesses is added to the inadequate attention to this problem from public policies. In other words, both the labor market and the State contribute to a poor skills supply for citizens. At the same time, young people and adults have a weak propensity to invest in their education and training. The economy and society seem to have adapted to the high number of low-skilled and low-qualified adults living in the respondents’ contexts. In this frame, their training is entrusted to the incidental informal learning processes occurring where they live and work. That explains why, with respect to each of the themes investigated by the survey, it is possible to find a significant number of respondents who express their satisfaction with the existing situation. But it also explains why most respondents (being politicians and professionals involved in the governance of the local and regional adult education system or professionals engaged in the direction, management, and coordination of AEOs) express dissatisfaction with a situation they consider inadequate and characterized by inefficiencies and short-term plans.

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Skills in Action: From Life Stories to Self-Awareness and Self-Discovery

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Abstract - This paper describes the learning outcomes achieved by the three target groups (graduates, PhDs, and civil service volunteers) who took part in the interactive psycho-pedagogical workshop developed by the SINAPSI University Center (University of Naples Federico II), starting from the academic year 2019-2020. The workshop is designed to help students develop employability skills and successfully transition from university to work. Students are encouraged to narrate both themselves and their training and learning experiences with the help of specific narrative-autobiographical devices. By exploring their own selves, students learn to identify their potential being relative to the context in which they live and make conscious decisions about their future training and career paths.

KEYWORDS: Skills, narration, guidance, future, awareness.

1. INTRODUCTION

For several years now, international (Cedefop, 2009; Musset, Kurekova, 2018; Onu, 2015; Unesco, 2015) and national (Miur, 2014) guidelines have recognized the importance of guidance for young people and adults throughout their life course as a fundamental step in the process of self-recognition and, consequently, in the development of both self-awareness and autonomy in making life and career choices. The current society of "risk" (Beck, 1986/2000, 1997/2008) and of "liquid post-modernity" (Bauman, 2000/2002) is characterized by the "deinstitutionalization of the life course" (Kholi, 1989), that is, the de-standardization of biographical paths. The linear succession of stages of personal development and fulfilment (training, job placement, career progression, retirement, etc.) has now given way to a sequence of fragmented phases of life, marked by frequent changes of course and existential reorganizations.

In this context, self-narratives, although not the exclusive form of self-promotion and self-expression, are currently a privileged means to access biografization, namely the set of actions and behaviors through which individuals are able to give shape to their personal history: a self-narrative in which they recognize themselves and become recognizable to the others (Delory Momberger, De Souza, 2017). Through self-narratives, individuals become aware of the threads of their life journey, linked in different ways to personal interests, achievements and acquired skills. This new awareness enables them to give an answer to some fundamental questions: what is really important to me? What is my potential? What knowledge and skills do I need to acquire to build a new training and career project? These answers foreshadow new scenarios in terms of personal and career re-planning.

Life narratives may prove to be an effective device for guidance, counseling, and training. Exploring personal histories may help assess individual potential and skills; identify individual and/or contextual constraints and resources to define vocational training and re-training projects; support and encourage people to improve both effective communication skills and likeability. As the core of interpersonal relationships, effective communication is a complex skill that, as is well known, does not end with the verbal component. In fact, communication skills in the workplace include writing skills, verbal communication skills and listening skills. Likeability, on the other hand, is the ability to make others feel good about themselves by being positive, extrovert, and other-centered. Studies have shown that likeability can foster a feeling of being more authentic and persuasive in social relationships and interpersonal communication in everyday life situations, as well as in work contexts (Almonte, 2022). The values, projects and strategies that characterized education

and training in the past should be redefined to effectively support youth and adults in facing new social and economic challenges (Capo, Grimaldi, Striano, 2020; Domincé, 2002; Striano in Marescotti, 2015; Dato, 2017a; Dato 2017b). These challenges require individuals not only to achieve greater self-awareness in developing training and career projects from their own specific needs, but also to renew the relationship with themselves and others, taking on their own share of responsibility in the development of their personal and professional identity. The increasing importance given not only to the 'knowledge' and 'know-how' competencies, but also to the 'knowing how to be' and 'knowing how to become' ones (Rossi, 2008) [my translation from Italian], such as creativity, relationship management, and sense of initiative, which are now required in any professional field (Natoli, 2010; Rifkin, 1995/1996), highlights an even stronger bond between personal and professional identity.

2. "MY PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SELF-PORTRAIT". AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE DEVICE AS PART OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE "SEZIONE DEI SERVIZI PER L'ORIENTAMENTO VOCAZIONALE E LA PROMOZIONE DELL'OCCUPABILITÀ" (SPO) ["SECTION OF SERVICES FOR VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE AND EMPLOYABILITY PROMOTION"].

To offer adequate support to young people in their transition from education to labor market, the University of Naples Federico II has established the "Sezione dei servizi per l'orientamento vocazionale e la promozione dell'occupabilità" (SPO) ["Section of services for vocational guidance [and employability promotion]"] at the SINAPSI University Center. Its training activities have the following objectives: highlighting the importance of life experiences, recognizing soft skills, and developing strategies and tools for self-promotion and self-presentation that can effectively help young people navigate a disorienting and ever-changing employment scenario. The activities are intended to respond to the questions of young people who feel the need to know themselves, a need motivated in turn by the desire to take stock of their lives and manage their careers, thus 'triggering a twofold exploration: on the one hand, the exploration of individual skills possessed and, on the other, that of the labor market and of the competencies it requires' (Levy-Leboyer, 1993, p. 61) [my translation from French].

Starting from the 2019-2020 academic year the autobiographical narrative device "My Personal and Professional Self-portrait" has been developed and tested with three different target groups: 1) graduates and undergraduates; 2) PhDs and PhD students in the final stage of their PhD program; 3) young volunteers of the "Servizio Civile Universale" ["Universal Civil Service"]. The students were guided in the creation of a self-portrait, namely a digital curriculum vitae, consisting of images, videos, and sounds. Indeed, in the society 4.0, relying exclusively on traditional formats such as the paper CV to find a job can be very limiting. Moreover, digital storytelling can be a vehicle to encourage self-awareness and reframe self-identity (Cambi, 2007; Costa 2016; Dato, 2017b), revealing hidden biographical dimensions (skills, knowledge, self-images, values, etc.). Through digital narratives, individuals learn to: know themselves and others better; pay attention to what is happening around them; express opinions and emotions and contextualize the contents of their experience; socially share their self-image and the transformative power of what they have learned; and finally, in line with the increasing popularity of social recruiting, create and share their professional brand online (paper CV, digital CV infographic, LinkedIn profile, etc.).

The digital self-portrait represents a moment of self-training. From the perspective of skills assessment, "My Personal and Professional Self-portrait" enables users to work on personal histories and relational exchange. On the one hand, it helps people review and reframe past events, giving new value to the learning experiences and to the skills acquired in

different contexts (formal, nonformal and informal). On the other, it enables them to hone their self-presentation skills (Jedlowski 2000, Orofiamma 2005) to potential interlocutors in the world of work, acting as a valuable tool in promoting employability. Digital storytelling can prove to be, in the context of career guidance and training, a stimulating methodology to support the development not only of soft skills, but also of key competencies, both of which are recognized by the European Union as essential to ensuring social inclusion, employability and the exercise of active and aware citizenship. Recent European documents (European Commission, 2015, 2016, 2018; OECD, 2017b) emphasize the importance for individuals to exercise their own self-entrepreneurship meant as human agency, i.e., the ability to act throughout life. It is, in other words, the possibility or freedom for people 'to imagine and desire something that has not yet been fulfilled' and 'to identify goals to achieve it' (Costa, 2013, p. 111) [my translation from Italian]. The development of individual agency also depends on the development and improvement of individual competencies; more specifically, the so-called key competencies.

3. "MY PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SELF-PORTRAIT": TARGET AUDIENCE, EDUCATIONAL GOALS, ACTIVITIES. THE THREE TARGET GROUPS AND THEIR NEEDS

"My Personal and Professional Self-portrait" is a workshop aimed at three different target groups:

1. "Servizio Civile Universale" ["Universal Civil Service"] volunteers

In the 2019-2020 academic year, a group of fifty volunteers of the "Servizio Civile Universale" ["Universal Civil Service"] took part in the workshop at the *Sezione dei servizi per l' orientamento vocazionale e la promozione dell'occupabilità* (SPO) ["Section of services for vocational guidance and employability promotion"] of the SINAPSI University Center. The group, divided into two subgroups of 25 people, consisted mainly of young people with an average age of twenty-five who were attending university courses (80%) or vocational training courses as health care assistant, computer programmer, beautician (20%).

PhDs and doctoral students in the final stage of their PhD program

During the 2019-20 academic year, the workshop involved for the first time a group of doctoral students composed of three women and three men, all with an average age of 30, in the final phase of the doctoral course in "Mind Gender and Languages" at the University of Naples Federico II. The objective was to guide the doctoral students in the creation and promotion of their professional identity through a process of personal and autonomous re-elaboration of the knowledge and skills acquired during their studies. During the doctoral program, students focus, in fact, almost exclusively on their need to be guided and supported throughout their academic journey and are not always fully aware of the importance to develop additional competencies and skills such as: acquiring a transdisciplinary perspective; mastering research methodologies; communicating effectively to exchange views with other members of the scientific community; becoming aware of their own study and learning strategies; creating a local network of resources. These skills are essential to become research professionals in academia, as well as in other contexts (Milani, 2019).

Undergraduates and graduates

Finally, in the 2019-20 academic year, the workshop also involved a group of graduates and undergraduates, consisting of nine people, including five graduates and four undergraduates. During the first meeting, all the participants openly expressed the need to receive support from the University at the end of their studies. They asked for guidance to learn how to deal effectively with current work contexts, characterized by uncertainty and instability, and how to promote themselves in the best possible way.

4. EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Specifically, the objective of the educational activities carried out in the workshop is to enable the participants to:

- Recognize any learning achieved in various life and learning contexts (formal, non-formal, informal).
- Imagine and build a training and career project that is as close as possible to the knowledge and skills possessed and expendable in the labor market.
- Improve (through the creation of the digital curricula story) self-management and self-marketing skills as well as self-narration and self-presentation ones (Jedlowski, 2000) to promote themselves in the labor market in the best way possible.

The goal of the participants is to redefine their training and career project and adapt it to their motivations, personal inclinations, goals to be achieved, and to the limitations and resources of the reference context. Through constant support and encouragement, the participants develop greater awareness regarding:

- the constellation of meanings that has guided or is guiding the choice to undertake specific university paths and educational experiences.
- the representation of their role/profile (in this case: graduate and undergraduate; PhD and PhD student; volunteer).
- any learning acquired during their education path and through specific employability promotion activities, and how these can be used and channeled into a career project in line with their personal and educational history.

5. METHODOLOGY AND STAGES

To encourage the creation of the storyboard for the video portrait, the workshop includes the use of narrative devices that aim at the improvement or acquisition of self-management, self-marketing, and self-promotion skills. Special devices are used to prompt the narrative of past educational and/or professional experiences and the "anchoring" of personal skills, knowledge, and values to the experiences themselves. The participants are encouraged to narrate using images and metaphors, as these stimulate their most intuitive and creative side.

Listed below are some of the narrative tools and devices used in the workshop:

BdC ("Bilancio delle Competenze" ["Skills Assessment"]) questionnaire for soft skills self-assessment: the assessment model adopted refers to the skills outlined by the European Qualification Framework (EQF), the "Life skills" laid down by the WHO, the key competencies of the DeSeCo Project and the ISFOL model. The questionnaire consists of 45 items and presents respondents with a series of statements to which they are asked to react by selecting answers from a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) (five-point Likert scale).

Narrative-iconographic devices: they encourage the participants to write the autobiographical narratives needed to create a digital curricula story. Here following are all the devices developed and used during the workshop: "E qui comincia la mia storia" ["And Here My Story Begins"], "Una cartolina da me stesso" ["A Postcard from Myself"], "Chi sono?" ["Who Am I?"], "La mia mappa dei luoghi... uno sguardo dall'alto" ["My Places Map... A Look from Above"], "Zoom", "Come mi vedi? Attraverso... gli occhi dell'altro" ["How Do You See Me? Through... The Other's Eyes"], "Life's Patchwork", "Una cartolina dal futuro" ["A Postcard from the Future"].

"Uno zainetto per gli attrezzi" ["A tool backpack"]: this is the set of tools and products made by all the workshop participants (skills maps, employability profiles, paper CVs, etc.). All products are stored in a special folder given to each participant at the beginning of the course: it is a kind of personal "archive" where the participants are asked to store the products that they will create during the workshop activities. Moreover, the participants are given a summary sheet of their employability profile and soft skills that provides a visual representation of both the score achieved in each employability appraisal scale and the level achieved in each soft skill. "La mia mappa delle competenze" ["My Skills

Map"] is a device that enables each participant to identify the soft skills, acquired or to be improved, needed to promote and realize a solid personal and career project. Moreover, by sharing and comparing maps within the group, the participants have the opportunity to take stock of their training experiences, while analyzing and giving new value to their skills, knowledge and aptitudes.

6. WORK ORGANIZATION

The workshop includes 5 weekly meetings of 4 hours each, divided into four stages. In the first meeting, the facilitator presents the aims and the objectives of the workshop, hands out the skills assessment questionnaire, and the digital curricula story methodology is introduced.

1. The first stage is **exploration**: by recalling their own training experiences, the participants reconnect with their own personal history.

2. This is followed by the **re-signification** of personal experiences. During the second stage, the participants are asked not only to write about their experiences, but also to reflect on them. At this stage, questions arise that can open up new and interesting perspectives. Personal maps are created.

3. The third stage is **reconstruction**: based on what emerges from the participants' writings, a personal storyboard is created that reassembles the puzzle of their lives. A self-narration takes shape, and includes acquired knowledge, goals, personal resources, and interpersonal relationships.

The final stage includes sharing, reflection and self-evaluation of the path undertaken.

7. NARRATIVE DEVICES

"Una cartolina da me stesso" ["A Postcard from Myself"] is a narrative incipit that helps the participants find a beginning to their own story and produce a kind of postcard that provides the first image of the digital story.

"Chi sono?" ["Who Am I?"] is an activity that encourages the participants to find the right way to introduce themselves to the others starting with their own name. The name we are given at birth identifies us and makes us recognizable. Pronouncing our name means affirming our identity by saying "I am..." and "positioning" our self within a discourse concerning ourselves as individuals. Tracing the history of our name allows us to make unusual but important discoveries, to find the origin of our name and to understand how its meaning is closely related to certain human, character, dispositional qualities. But our name is also something that "systemically reconnects" us to our family environment because it reminds us that we belong to a particular family community characterized by ties, traditions, and innovations: for example, the tradition of giving newborns a name that has been passed on through generations, or the introduction of a new name that breaks with the family tradition.

"La mia mappa dei luoghi... uno sguardo dall'alto" ["My Places Map... A Look from Above"] encourages the participants to take a panoramic look at their own lives, creating a map of all the significant places in their life course. It is a self-recognition activity that allows the person to rediscover a plurality of roles, activities, and functions. According to Dewey, the individual, besides being involved in a variety of activities, experiences multiple identities simultaneously: 'he must, at some period of his life, be a member of a family; he must have friends and companions; [...] he has a business career. He is a member of some organized political unit, and so on' (Dewey, 1916, p. 359). Thanks to this device, the participants are able to rediscover, recognize and identify the formative and transformative power of the multiple places and contexts in which they have lived, and are invited to create a narrative that aims to associate contexts and learned skills. The creation of a map of life's places represents an important formative moment for the participants, as long as it does not remain tied to a strictly subjective dimension (learning from oneself and for oneself), becoming instead, through

sharing, an opportunity for exchange and debate (Apps, 1996). Through the map of places, a multi-narrative takes shape, to be meant as the center of an individual's existence.

The "Zoom" device is complementary to "La mia mappa dei luoghi... uno sguardo dall'alto" ["My Places Map... A Look from Above"]: the participants are invited to select the most representative places within the map. Next, they are invited to zoom in on a narrative fragment and identify the details which together make up the human potential that represents a person's authentic value: skills, aptitudes, values, competencies. It is precisely by zooming in on the details that they discover those previously unknown aspects, faces, aptitudes, and meanings (places, people, symbols, learnings, etc.) that make their life path unique.

"Come mi vedi? Attraverso... gli occhi dell'altro" ["How Do You See Me? Through... The Other's Eyes"] invites the participants to produce, through writing and/or metaphorical descriptions, an image of themselves, to describe in detail how they perceive themselves and, at the same time, to also discover and understand how significant others (family members, friends, mentors, etc.) see them. This is an activity that proves to be particularly fruitful, as the other's account (how the other sees us...) can confirm or, in many cases, complement, enrich, or even contradict the image we have of ourselves, thus revealing aspects of our identity that we previously ignored.

"Una cartolina dal futuro" ["A Postcard from the Future"] invites the participants to project themselves into the future ("Orientamento al futuro e alla pianificazione" ["Guidance to the Future and Planning"]). The participants are asked to explain, through a picture or a short story, where they see themselves professionally in the near future. By identifying and revealing their career goals, the participants are able to reactivate and give new value both to the individual volitional dimension (what they want to do) and to the values dimension (the set of values that determine their career goal).

"Epilogue or back cover": the participants are asked to end their self-portrait with an aphorism, a slogan, or a metaphor that summarizes their existential philosophy or worldview. They have to identify a personal perspective to end their "personal and professional self-portrait". The analysis of the texts produced during the workshop shows that all the participants prefer to "close" their self-profile by identifying and specifying an existential perspective, or rather by taking an individual "attitude" that guides one's "knowing how to be" and "knowing how to do".

Starting with the autobiographical fragments (narratives) produced through the different narrative devices, each participant identifies the narrative thread of their "My Personal and Professional Self-portrait" to which, at a later stage, the photographs and images produced or chosen from the album will be matched before proceeding to the video editing with a specific software. The ultimate goal is to create a self-narrative that: 1) represents the synthesis of the biographical journey of the individual participants (experiences, aptitudes, goals, values, skills, etc.); 2) highlights the importance of those aspects that express individual uniqueness; 3) fosters the anchoring of the personal profile to a socio-historical background, relocating individual histories within a multiplicity of collective contexts (family, educational, professional) and, therefore, far beyond the production and the understanding of individual meanings. Reference to the socio-political and economic context enables individuals to develop a greater degree of awareness of non-formal and informal experiences and to share the narrative of their life stories in order to find both individual and collective elements that are useful for repositioning themselves in a specific social context (Draperi, 2010/2012).

8. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the participants' assessments and the texts they produced showed that "My Personal and Professional Self-portrait" is a device that primarily promotes self-discovery as a possibility of a "return to the Self". By identifying and recognizing limitations and resources, they are able to find one or more answers to the question "Who am I?". Digital stories express the need for the participants to "find themselves" so they can get to know themselves better, focusing

mainly on individual contents and aspects: the identification of certain skills, aptitudes, motivations, professional values, and goals to be achieved, responds to their need to "recognize themselves". Only later do they feel the need to "present themselves" and to find the right form and words to make their human capital known to third parties and promote their employability.

The aim of the narrative activities (described in the second chapter) is to foster self-awareness (personal aptitudes, skills, values) and invite to look at one's biographical path, characterized by challenges, changes, and rhythms of individual transformation (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017), from a different perspective. Their purpose is therefore the exploration and the self-assessment of the skills and abilities acquired in various learning contexts as well as the rediscovery of personal interests, values, and philosophy of life. Self-narrative is what might be called an "autobiographical test" (Baudouin, 2010): a "life test" including the narration of those personal experiences, even difficult ones, which qualify the self by highlighting personal skills, abilities, aptitudes, and implicit knowledge.

From this perspective, the narrative workshop represents a micro-pedagogical context where the participants are given the opportunity to live a formative experience that promotes 'a change whose extent and effectiveness' can be documented. 'It is a space specifically created by the researcher-trainer' (Demetrio, 1996, p. XXI) [my translation from Italian], where the relationships themselves play an educational role. Through the production of personal narratives and writings, the workshop enables the participants to focus on the following indicators of the self (Bruner, 1997): action, commitment, resources, social reference, evaluation, reflexivity, and consistency, which together provide an overall representation of an individual.

The results of the phenomenological and lexical analysis lead us to believe that the methodology behind "My Personal and Professional Self-portrait" enabled the participants to restore and understand the meanings of past and current experiences, identifying resources and obstacles as starting points for accessing a new conceivability and replanning of the self and its future (Batini, 2011). The workshop activities were welcomed not only as a means of promoting employability but, more generally, as an opportunity for personal growth. Promoting the re-planning of the self and the future (through activities that aim at the self-recognition of one's biographical path) means helping the participants, whose lives are often dominated by anxiety, sense of precariousness, frustration, insecurity and disorientation, to acquire "entrepreneurship" competence and, consequently, to take responsibility for their own lives and future (Alberici, Catarsi, Colapietro, Loiodice, 2007; Bresciani, Franchi, 2006; Gibb, 2002). We here refer to the ability to: 1) imagine the future; 2) identify and assess individual and group strengths and weaknesses; 3) influence the course of the events, despite uncertainty, setbacks, and temporary failures; 4) turn ideas into actions; 5) reflect and learn from both the success and failure (European Commission, 2018). By "entrepreneurship competence" we here refer to 'a manifestation of oneself in the educational fullness of human qualities' (d'Aniello, 2017) [my translation from Italian]: it's not just the ability to start a business and make profit, but rather the impulse to transform ideas and opportunities into action. Entrepreneurship is an attitude that involves comparing and acquiring multiple points of view, risk taking while seizing opportunities, and choosing to take actions consistent with specific personal and career goals.

With regards to the three target groups (PhDs, volunteers, graduates and undergraduates) we observe that the reconstruction of personal, educational and career experiences through the narrative activities is useful both in the recognition of the knowledge, values and skills already acquired, and in the identification of the skills that are not related to one's field of work or study and need to be developed or improved. In this way, the participants are helped to identify additional career opportunities that need to be transformed into actions by mobilizing resources. These resources can be personal (namely, self-awareness and self-efficacy, motivation, and perseverance), material (for instance, financial resources) or non-material (for instance, specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes). At the end of the workshop, the

participants show greater self-awareness: it relates not only to the acquisition of knowledge and skills during their course of study, but also to the set of abilities and competencies acquired through different life experiences. They all refer to the different formal, nonformal and informal learning contexts and represent the human capital of each individual.

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Improvisation as a Pedagogical Attitude of School Teachers

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Abstract – This paper sprouted by a conversation happened in front of the poster I presented at the ESREA2022 conference with a fellow PhD candidate, about the supposed inevitability of the institutional mandate for teachers, and the listening of the presentation of Inkeri Aula in the Pre-Conference, in particular the concept of “more-than-human” communities. Those experiences have been seeds in the loose soil of my PhD research and represented the spark for me to engage in deeper reflections about the roots of my work, the methodological implications, and the consequences on the research results, which I present in this article.

KEYWORDS: Improvisation, teachers, schools, transformation.

1. THE STARTING POINT: UNCOMFORTABLE POSITION

My interest upon improvisation as an educational theme is the result of a seed planted in my biographical experience as teacher (and, before, as student) of Italian public school system, which, almost 10 years ago, intertwined with my practice as a performer of improvised theatre. The immediate (and maybe naïve) metaphor between improvisation on the stage and the one inherent in the classroom opened questions that excavated my beliefs and unhinged the entire idea of my role: “How can I be that active and co-constructivist teacher I want to be, if not improvising? And yet, is it possible to improvise in the contemporary school system? How can teachers be trained to do it? And why they aren’t?”

At a European and Italian level, the declarations about school’s objectives carry within them a contradiction: on one hand, schools are seen as the official institution with the duty of growing responsible citizens, that can cope with the contemporary complexity of the world (and possibly that can face its pressuring issues); on the other, they are infused with the bulk presence of the economic growth logic, which want those same citizens to be competitive workers (Boarelli 2019). These regulations seem to back up democratic and child-centered principles in pedagogy; however, while theories and professional tools about how to “embrace the wobble” of the educational relationship in teacher education and in-service training are still very limited, pressuring instances for measurability and standardization of the curricula arise regularly. One of the reasons for this may be the disruptive force that could potentially emerge in scholastic institutions, if the audacity of following young learners was implemented on a structural and permanent level.

This ambivalent approach causes a cascade effect on how our schools are built and thought, on how teachers are educated to work and, finally, on how students grow and become. This reflected in a profound uncomfortable feeling while I was practicing my profession; but also, more remotely, in the logic underlying my scholastic performances as a student. I knew that it was not merely a personal experience, unrelated to the system I was in; my feeling was reflecting something bigger and more complex. In the daily life of a teacher animated by socio-constructivist principles the question of how to stick with the institutional mandate while following students’ interests and needs remains pressuring and without a systematic answer. Therefore, my doctoral research in improvisation in teaching profession wanted to explore a possible starting point that could help reimagining the teaching process, in the direction of moving an unsettling step in the scholastic system.

2. IMPROVISATION AND COMPLEXITY

School teachers are intrinsically and constantly in contact with unknown unknowns¹ since their daily job is to develop didactic projects in complex environments such as modern classrooms. The network of encounters, insights, feelings, and experiences opens the question if it'd be more effective to follow and consciously read a flow of occurrences instead of a rigid scripted program; also, if that same complexity should be avoided or embraced as vital in the teaching methodology.

Life in a complex world, and a life which reflects and values the complexity of both self and world, requires the ability to improvise – to deal with, and indeed to create, the unforeseen, the surprise. Interestingly, the Latin root of improvisation is *improvisus*, or unforeseen. Increasingly, it seems, life in or out of organizations requires of us the ability to both react appropriately to unforeseen events, and actually generate those events – to act creatively and innovatively. (Montuori, 2003)

In classrooms, unexpected events show up daily, sometimes even in terms of new normatives (Corbella et al. 2020): in between the pressure of unknown-before limitations, the aim of students' learning and the institutional targets, it is crucial to bring into focus adapting/coping and creative responses to the unknown in the teacher profession.

Improvisation as a pedagogical attitude has been explored and analysed from different perspective in recent years. Holdhus et al. (2016), thanks to an extended literature review, outlines four essential features of professional improvisation of teachers: interactive nature, design competences, repertoire availableness, context-dependence. Whereas Zorzi (2020), in reference to phenomenological research with theatre, dance and music expert improvisers, drawn the profile of the teacher/improviser: a professional who has a whole set of attitudes and recognizes the fixed characteristics of her profession as opportunities to improvise. In both studies, improvisation emerges as something that is linked to teacher's agency, but also inextricably related to the context. Whereas my research tried to seize improvisation as it happens spontaneously in classroom environments and interrogate teachers about their knowledge of this dimension, fulfilling the empirical/direct-drive gap existing in literature. Embracing the metaphor of education as theatre, I wanted to focus my attention to the embodied dimensions of teaching (Ferri, 2022) entangled with improvisation. However, the journey to reach that objective has been anything but linear, and the type of lenses I was applying phase after phase of my work, deliberately or unconsciously, have been affected by some in-progress changes.

3. A JOURNEY ON THE EDGES OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Qualitative research is itself more like an improvised choreography than a scripted sequence of action (Janesick, 2001). From the beginning of my doctoral program, I knew it was fundamental to understand one self's paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Given my biographical and professional experience, I was sure of my topic, but I did not yet know the way I wanted to look at it. Literature didn't narrow the possibilities: research upon improvisation as an object in education used widely diversified lenses. I recognized myself in the Interpretivist Paradigm (*ibid.*), but still, it has been challenging to find an exclusive approach that made sense globally: the shifting and an overlapping set of methods and tools, which I will describe in the following lines, reflect the phases and the aims of the project, and the non-stop wondering about the more comprehensive way to grasp such a liminal phenomenon as improvisation.

Firstly, my theoretical framework, Embodied Pedagogy (Gamelli 2011), needed to reflect into a framework for empirical research. As I mentioned before, the conceptual metaphor that underlies my approach is the relation of identity existing between theatre and education (Antonacci & Cappa, 2001; Cappa, 2016; Rivoltella, 2021). This means I look at the classroom as a "scene" where what happens is, at the same time, fictional and realistic; a space of protected experimentation of reality, animated by bodies, actions, voices and gestures of teachers and students, in relation to the classroom environment. This metaphor enables to see the teacher as director/dramaturg/actor, but, most of all, to focus upon what *really* happens in the classroom/scene. This willing to root into spontaneous happenings made me opt to choose to enter in classrooms for having a direct drive upon the phenomenon of improvisation. To sustain this choice, I opted for

an ethnographic-inspired research method: the capacity of the ethnographic observation to grasp different levels of occurrences, with its layered taking notes method (Cardano 2003), helped me to consider the interrelations of my object of study and to not force its isolation. I observed 8 teachers, from primary school to high school, in four different schools of Lombardy (Italy), for at least 6 hours of classroom work each.

When I moved on to the next phase of the research, a shifting caused propitious troubles in my convictions. I was sure that proposing to teachers a practical training of improvisational theatre, appropriately prepared for them and for research purposes, would have been beneficial to build deeper understandings. I also believed that one output of my research could have been a training proposal for future and in-service teachers, and this could have been the transformative mission of my research. For this reason, I referred to Pelletier's (2020) pedagogical scenario for teacher education, which consists of a selection of improvisational games connected to teacher profession, followed by an in-deep discussion about their insights. However, entering deeper in the design of the training, Formenti's (2017) work upon the Spiral of Knowledge constituted a strong inspiration. After experiencing the "a-methodical method" first-hand in a professional group² during the first year of the PhD program, full of curiosity, I delved into cooperative research. Of course, I did not just want to deliver a training, but I wanted to engage teachers as experts and researchers of their own experience and navigate with them in a knowledge-building process. When it came to designing the research/training program for three group of teachers in those same schools where the observations took place, those readings and experiences came out on top again: in particular, the four phases of the Spiral (authentic experience, esthetical representation, intelligent comprehension, deliberate action) and Bateson's "excess of conscious finality" (1977). I almost surprisingly realized I couldn't erase these principles from my *habitus* as practitioner and trainer, even if I had not initially planned to integrate them. This made me consider again my final aim: wasn't it an excess of conscious finality, to simply expect that training teachers in some exercises could signify a transformation in teaching methods? Wasn't I forcing improvisation to be the umpteenth professional competence teachers should have had? Wasn't there a risk of flatten it into the neoliberal meaning of "competence" (Cirillo & Gremigni, 2019)?

When I started, I wanted to achieve a conceptualization of improvisation, rooted in the real occurrences of Italian classrooms, because I felt the theoretical need of clarifying and dignifying it as a pedagogical theme, otherwise commonly ostracized in the educational discourse as a maybe inevitable, and yet irrelevant, phenomenon. To translate this common experience of teachers into a pedagogical object, phenomenological approaches in education (Mortari, 2019) seemed very relevant and influenced my choices in research tools and analysis: interviews and coding. For most of the time of my research, I firmly believed I wanted the output of my research to be a phenomenological description of improvisation. But, when I finished the analysis, something peculiar happened: I was not satisfied with the fragmentation I created with my coding, and I had the feeling was losing the touch with the embodied and material aspects of the classroom environment. I was putting a distance between my understanding and the phenomenon: with my representation of improvisation as a pedagogical attitude, I was moving away from the actual experience of improvisation.



Figure 1: Tokyu Plaza, Omotesando Harajuku. During the third year of PhD program, I found this image to metaphorically describe what my coding looked like.

At the final stage of the analysis, my thematical codes manifest as a set of *characteristics* of improvisation as a pedagogical attitude (in terms of *modalities*, *conditions*, and *circumstances*) of the phenomenon, and a set of professional *needs* teachers feel about it. However, every intern cluster seems greatly interrelated with one another: in particular, it feels impossible to separate what improvisation is from what teachers do and from what their material possibilities of agency are. What if that ongoing interconnection - between constrictions, possibilities, level of perceived autonomy or freedom of engaging with an improvising approach to those same constrictions and possibilities – was the real finding? And still, something still felt in the shade. How could I bring that to light?

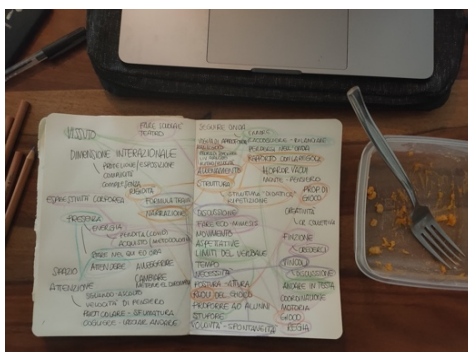


Figure 2: an attempt to finding interconnections in my codes (pencils, a notebook, a pen, a computer, a finished lunch).

The codes are in Italian.

With a set of codes speaking a crypted language to me, and the awareness that maybe I was oversimplifying something with my objectives, I met again and investigated New Materialism, just grazed at the beginning of my PhD program. The epistemological framework I begin with, Embodied Pedagogy, and the metaphor theatre/education, have as its core the notion of the educational *dispositif*, a re-reading of Foucault's theory in the field of education operated by Massa (1987), that informs a great amount of research in Italy and in my department. According to Massa's theory, there is not a deterministic relation between structural elements (space, time, bodies, symbols) of school institutions and the individuals that take part to it: if the first surely have a great impact in the educational process, there's also the possibility of pedagogical creativity (Massa, 2016). Therefore, the educational *dispositif* as theatre emphasizes the creative and playful role teachers and students can have in playing with time, space, bodies, and symbols, creating an alternative reality (Vimercati, 2022; Ferrante, 2017). The results of my research confirmed this artisanal nature of teachers' profession, whilst confirming the strength of structures of school systems. I think my findings are in a deep dialogue with the concept of "intra-action" of New Materialism, for which there is not a deterministic relation of materiality on humans or a cultural dominance in giving significance to materiality, but otherwise the signification comes from the intra-action engaged by human and non-human interacting, entangling, and performing with each other. This kind of approach has a direct impact on how science is pursued:

A performative understanding of discursive practices challenges the representationalist belief in the power of words to represent preexisting things. Unlike representationalism, which positions us above or outside the world we allegedly merely reflect on, a performative account insists on understanding thinking, observing, and theorizing as practices of engagement with, and as part of, the world in which we have our being. (Barad, 2007, p. 133)

With this last lunge, I realized I want to avoid achieving a description that feels distant to what is entangled in classrooms' reality. Since the performative and embodied nature of improvisation, I felt, in many times during the analysis, stimulated to engage in a performative way with my data. For this reason, I investigated Art Based approaches

in qualitative research, with the aim of disseminating the results with participants and school communities in an art-based and participatory way. Right now, I wish that this outcome resembles a performative experience more than a training. However, this part of the research is still in definition. Although as its core there are some (partial) conclusions this journey took me to.

4. CONCLUSIONS

There's a political value in recognizing that what happens in schools is the result of intra-actions of school system, teachers, students, social-ecological-economic environment. It is impossible to understand school innovation and transformation as something that can reside solely on the shoulders of teachers, e.g. with continuous training programs; and also, I feel as a duty to highlight the contradiction of simultaneously continuing to pursue standardization and measurability of learning performances in an economic logic. My research attempts to describe improvisation as the possibility for teachers to play with the structural dimension of classrooms and to proceed by insights and impromptu pedagogical events, instead of scripted programs; but, also, the results of the study show that embodying this playful and creative attitude foster the awareness of limits and constraints that are not dependent by teachers will, and rely someplace else, freeing teachers of a great social pressure. Improvisation can be a starting point for teachers to consciously play the intra-actions in the educational setting of a school. This is the reason this topic needs space in the educational discourse and practice.

Endnotes

¹ Unknown Unknowns is also an exhibition of Triennale Milano which hosted a brief contribution of this same research: <https://triennale.org/magazine/universita-mistero-pedagogia>

² GRASS: <https://www.scuolaphilo.it/evento/grass-circolo-di-ricreazione-di-sguardi-e-pratiche-educative-201909100834>.

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Perspectives on the Value of Studying an Early Years Foundation Degree (EQF Level 5) in England: Past, Present and Future Destinations

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Abstract - This paper draws on a collaborative investigation into whether the Foundation Degree (EQF Level 5) in Early Years, conceived over twenty years ago in England, still retains currency and value. The qualitative investigation explored the impact of the degree on the confidence and competence of students and the quality of their work in early years settings. Online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews took place with recent graduates from two Universities. Several key themes emerged including improved status and commitment. The study found that the program continues to be vital in transforming lives and creating enhanced levels of expertise within the workforce.

KEYWORDS: Early years, higher education, professional, learning, confidence.

1. INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This paper draws on an inter-institutional research about Foundation Degrees (FdAs) in Early Years. These intermediate level degrees build students' confidence and transform their practice (Bingham and O'Hara, 2007, Bath et al, 2014). This research aimed to find out whether these degrees are still as effective as they were when they were launched, and to what extent, in the light of government-funded apprenticeship programmes in England, they retain their value across the sector.

The research was conducted at two Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in England, the University of Hull and the University of Warwick, and their partner Further Education (FE) colleges. These degrees traditionally attract mature learners from diverse backgrounds and support the widening participation agenda in England. Students on these programmes are invariably mature, and from lower socio-economic groups, or have not had the opportunity to benefit from higher levels of education. Many of these adult learners are parents, come from black and minority ethnic groups, or are the first in their family to go to university.

A National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing Report, HMSO,1997) reviewed Higher Education (HE) in England and identified the number of mature women that wanted to update their skills, knowledge and qualifications. There was a need for a knowledge base to support practice, as well as widening participation. It was accepted that learning should not stop at a specific age and that lifelong learning approaches should be developed. HEIs should continue to develop partnerships with employers, and respond to these rapid developments.

The Labour government proposed the delivery of a Foundation Degree in Early Years, to create a progression route for experienced practitioners. The Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree in Early Years (SEFDEY) was launched in 2002 by a small number of HEIs with standards in a Statement of Requirement (DfE 2001), and endorsed by the early years sector. A working party tasked to develop the standards, evolved into a SEFDEY Professional Association, which became the voice of early years students, practitioners and tutors across HE and FE institutions and which inspired this research study.

This research aimed to explore the impact of the FdA on the personal and professional lives of students.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What do Foundation Degree in Early Years students and graduates say about how their study influences practice in their settings?
- What do Foundation Degree in Early Years students and graduates say about the difference their study makes, if any, to their confidence and competence in the workplace and in their own lives?
- What do Foundation Degree Early Years students and graduates say about what difference their study make, if any, to the lives of young children and their families?

3. TRANSITION TO FOUNDATION DEGREES AND HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)

Since 2001, FdAs continue to attract a wide range of students, providing an alternative route into HE without the requirement for traditional entry qualifications and the opportunity to continue to work and earn while studying.

The journey into HE was challenging for non-traditional students, particularly in the first year (Palmer et al, 2009). The decision was made to involve FE institutions with smaller classes, flexible arrangements and sympathetic teaching (Harvey et al, 2006). FE colleges were seen as particularly skilled at understanding the needs of students returning to study after many years and were often more conveniently located for students. After two years in an FE environment, students felt more confident to progress to HE.

4. SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS ON FOUNDATION DEGREES

Widening participation is understood as opening doors to more applicants from more groups, including lower socio-economic groups, those who have not had a chance to benefit from education at an earlier stage, older applicants, parents and black and minority ethnic groups and other non-traditional students. In their study of widening access to early years degree programmes, Bingham and O'Hara (2007) found that students' motivation and determination was strengthened by the relationships that developed within the group. However, it was argued that new entrants may suffer from 'imposter syndrome' (Clance and Imes, 1978, in Tiefenthaler, 2018). In other words, they may feel out of place, as if they do not belong. To feel a sense of belonging, they need to acquire social capital, or the language and behaviours practised within their new study environments. FdA students need to be able to communicate, for example, in academic written English, and express their perspectives in discussions.

Once students have 'incorporated' (Bourdieu, 1997, p.145) the language of the early years discipline, and feel comfortable within this new environment, they can behave and respond in a natural and regular way. Trodd and Diskerson (2019), in their qualitative study at one institution, found that the FdA had an impact on their participants' professional and learner identities. They found that the FdA helped students gain confidence in the workplace, become more able to reflect on their work, share their learning, and communicate their reasons for making changes. This study sought to broaden these perspectives by exploring the implications of students' experience on the FdA in other areas of their lives as well as on professional practice.

5. METHODOLOGY

The researchers aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena (Burton, Brundett and Jones, 2008) occurring in the participants' own social world following their study on the degree. An interpretivist research design adopted a layered approach, eliciting and analysing in-depth, qualitative data.

The first layer involved an online survey. This was particularly appropriate in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic since the participants were likely to have become more comfortable with online forms of communication. It was easier for them to participate with no travel time or costs. The second layer consisted of informal, semi-structured interviews. These took place online for convenience and in consideration of people's wide experience of online meetings following extensive regional and national lockdowns. The online, semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to feel comfortable in their own surroundings and therefore more likely to reflect and discuss certain questions openly. Participants were invited to elaborate on their responses to elicit their reflections and stories as professionals, scholars and human beings.

The researchers aimed to collect in-depth, qualitative data to provide rich information and gain an understanding of what the FdA meant to the participants, both professionally and personally. This included how the degree fitted into their life histories, what their expectations were and their views on the benefits and challenges of studying. The researchers allowed them space to talk about issues that mattered to them.

At the analysis stage, time was allocated to reflect on the data, incorporate new perspectives and consult with co-researchers. This deliberately slow, measured approach was considered appropriate to examine the impact of FdAs on people's lives, not just immediately after study, but over time.

The structured questionnaires elicited participants' responses about the impact of their FdA study on their current practice. In the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked about their beliefs, confidence, attitudes and emotions relating to their work as practitioners in a range of early years settings and how these had evolved since studying the FdA.

A 'convenience' sample was used (Robert-Holmes, 2018), with all participants having completed a FdA in early years. The voluntary sample was drawn from students at an FE or HE institution that held a SEFDEY Professional Association membership. The lead researcher at each university distributed questionnaires to current students and recent graduates. 51 students completed these. The questionnaires opened with two fact-finding questions about participants' roles and the type of settings they worked in. All subsequent questions were open-ended, seeking qualitative, narrative responses, e.g. In your opinion, how has studying for or achieving a Foundation Degree made a difference (positively or negatively or not at all) on your competence? Each question was appended by an invitation to give examples.

From the returned questionnaires, five former graduates at each university were selected using a random selection software program. Of these, eight participants engaged in the second layer of this research, namely the online semi-structured interviews.

6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participants were informed about the nature of their involvement, and what would happen to their data. All data was anonymised, and participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the research at any time, even after they had read their interview transcripts. As set out in the EECERA ethical code for early childhood researchers (Bertram et al, 2016), participants were provided with 'full and honest information about the content, purpose and process of the research and given the opportunity to agree or disagree to participate in the light of this information' (p.vii).

7. LIMITATIONS

This qualitative study was conducted *within* the field *for* the field. This insider/research approach (Hanson, 2013) can result in the researcher not questioning taken-for granted assumptions, leading to superficial analysis and biased interpretation. To address this, both institutions shared their collated data and consulted with the wider research group.

The research sample was limited in number. However, the original intention was to try to ascertain the broad thrust of views and not necessarily to argue for precise statistical significance in the results. The research design and richness of methods used enabled a well-rounded appreciation of the context and situation studied.

There may be some reservation about the authenticity, accuracy and honesty of the respondents. According to Cohen et al, (2017), trust needs to be developed between the researchers and the respondents. When an interviewer is known to the interviewee, then a degree of reciprocity could take place, with interviewees giving answers that they think researchers want to hear or will put in a positive light. Student interviewees, for example, may be eager to please the interviewer (halo effect). It could also be argued that *because* of the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, that the responses were more honest and expansive. Interviews are of their very nature interpersonal, and it is inevitable that the interviewer will have some influence on the data.

Another area of potential bias is in the coding factors from the responses and amassing the coded material into broad themes when the interpretation of the responses could be subject to question and construal. This was reduced by the fact that the data was carefully and critically reflected upon and discussed by several researchers. This approach minimised the over interpretation of data and claims made in the analytical phase.

Generalisability from the data to a wider population may be limited. However, since the findings were the result of a process that was meticulously conceived and peer reviewed by co-researchers at every stage, the findings were considered reliable and relatable to other institutions, especially those making decisions about future early years programmes.

All interview transcripts were scrutinised by the researchers three times, to allow them to re-experience the sections that appeared most significant to the respondents. The researchers shared their thinking with each other throughout the analysis phase. They developed an ongoing counterpoint activity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988), going backwards and forwards via email communication and online meetings to build up their understanding of the data. Researchers sought to identify patterns in the interview data by conducting a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

8. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Six overlapping key themes were identified from the data. These were,

1. Professional and personal change
2. Expertise and knowledge
3. Challenges and commitments
4. Status and recognition
5. Invisible supportive networks
6. Career opportunities and aspirations

There was an overwhelming consensus that students increased in competence and confidence. Most interview respondents felt that studying the FdA had made a significant difference to their lives, with most questionnaire respondents and all interview respondents agreeing that they had more confidence in themselves and their practice. This is illustrated by comments such as,

“It’s making me more reflective.... questioning why [we do things] and confident to say, this isn’t working and this is what we need to do.”

“It’s improved my self-confidence and my self-belief.”

Many felt that they became more knowledgeable and used their expertise in practice. The questionnaire data indicated that respondents had made changes to practice with improved leadership skills, for example in working with parents and carers, saying they were more confident in talking to parents. This led to a greater sense of pride.

“I’ve been trusted to change and implement new routines and pedagogies within our workplace.”

“I was able to mentor a new member of staff.”

This feeling of pride was apparent in what respondents said feeling more appreciated in the workplace:

“I can actually talk about my job and what I do and why I do it now and the importance of doing it.”

“I can stand there as an equal partner [in a multi-agency team]my opinions, my views and my suggestions, they’re valued or they should be valued. And I’m quite confident in that now.”

In relation to challenges and commitments, over half of respondents stated the FdA was *“worth all the hard work”*. However, challenges were recognised, particularly pertaining to family, with some citing tiredness and most identifying time management as an issue. One participant said that *“managing time and home responsibilities, juggling work, family and study time, and ‘mom guilt’”* were potential obstacles. The data demonstrates the importance and impact of ‘family capital’ (Webber, 2017); with the student family member in need of support as they give support to others.

The findings reflected the original drive for recognition of these experienced professionals (DFEE, 1998), providing the steppingstone and credibility identified by Welsh (2020). Invisible supportive networks, dovetailed into the other themes; providing overwhelmingly positive responses regarding from family members, tutors, colleagues and fellow students. One respondent said she made lifelong friends on the programme.

“Got lifelong friends from doing it ... people with the same knowledge and passion for early years.”

The majority of respondents talked about improved aspirations and a desire to continue their studies or progress to teacher training.

9. CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research identified that adult education and lifelong learning are crucial factors in improving quality in the early years sector. The opportunity for adult learners to study an FdA resulted in increased knowledge, competence, and confidence on a personal level and in the workplace. Despite the availability of a range and types of qualifications, the FdA is still an attractive option, particularly amongst mature and experienced female practitioners. The FdA also served as a progression route to further study and career development. It had a positive impact on the personal and professional lives of participants, potentially with a concomitant impact on quality of their work in the sector. The study concluded that the benefits for learners far outweigh the challenges, and the FdA remains highly relevant, with future financial investment reaping rewards for employers, students, graduates and children.

The study highlighted the need for further research into the impact of different delivery patterns and the quality of teaching for adult learners, as well as research on issues of gender and cultural capital. Although the focus of this study was on Early Years, the findings are important across disciplines.

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Chronicity and Pandemic: Research Perspectives and Educational Actions to Support, in Changement, the Adult with Chronicity

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Abstract - The pandemic has introduced new elements of complexity in the existence of subjects, exposing them to unprecedented forms of fragility. These considerations take on greater meaning in the chronic condition in which such complexity must be reconciled with the tasks of the management of the disease. Starting from the results of a qualitative research on the formative dimensions in the self-management of diabetes, the paper highlights the contribution that the socio-material perspective on the chronicity experience can offer in outlining new research possibilities and educational actions that activate transformative resilience processes, to support the subject in living current life scenarios.

KEYWORDS: Chronicity, pandemic, socio-material approach, complexity, education.

1. EXPERIENCING COMPLEXITY BETWEEN LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES

The dramatic changes, introduced by the pandemic in the past two years, have sparked the debate on the issues regarding health and well-being of individuals and communities, highlighting their multifactorial and procedural character.

Being healthy and feeling well are not static conditions, solely attributable to the absence of disease but they are processes of continuous interaction, among biological, psychological, social and material components, in search of ever-changing balances.

From this perspective, while pursuing the objective of protecting the community health against the pandemic, something crucial seems to have gone missing: the eco-systemic and highly complex character of individual and collective health, which emerges by decentralizing attention from the strictly biological dimension of individuals and expanding it to their actual existential experience (Cucuzza, 2021; Zannini, 2003).

When facing such complexity, in which the medical-health paradigm is kept in check by its exclusive focusing on the biological level of the disease, creative forms of thinking are needed, capable of grasping the relationships between the different dimensions of the subject's life so to build sustainable life paths.

In fact, alongside a necessary thought "on the limit" materialized in the implementation of indispensable containment strategies for the reduction of infections, what is really missing seems to be a thought "on the possible" which, starting from a reflection on the impacts of the constraints imposed on the experience of the subjects, questions about the resources that can be activated to find new balances in coping with the situation.

These considerations take on greater significance if contextualized in the context of chronicity, an ever-increasing condition in the world, in the presence of which we are witnessing an amplification of the negative impacts of the pandemic both with respect to the treatment practices and to the course of the disease and in terms of quality of life of the subjects: the necessary reorganization of health services has often led to the deferral of scheduled services with the risk of a reduction in the quality of care; the rules to avoid contagion have added further obligations and daily attentions to those already necessary for the management of the disease; the greater vulnerability to severe and lethal forms of Covid-19 in patients with previous chronic diseases, resulting from the scientific evidence available to date (<http://www.epicentro.iss.it/en>), has increased the levels of anxiety and stress that subjects in these conditions must face and has often made social distancing even more drastic, increasing the subjects' difficulties in terms of participation and involvement in the common consortium.

Such condition challenges the pedagogical knowledge to “think what is possible” to understand how to support the individual in change and accompany him while pursuing his own life project.

In order to understand such complexity, it is important to approach the theme by grasping the multidimensionality of the subject's experience and the intertwining of individual, social and material components.

Socio-material approaches (Fenwick et al., 2011), focusing on the entire system of relationships between social and material elements, allow us to take a look that restores complexity to the experience, thus opening up new perspectives of research and educational actions that support the adult subject with chronicity in inhabiting new life scenarios.

Below, starting from the results of a qualitative empirical research on the formative dimensions in the self-management of type-1 diabetes in the adult patient (Cucuzza, 2021), the contribution that the adoption of a socio-material outlook can offer in studying the experience of chronicity will be explored, so to later “open up to the possible” through a reflection on the implications of such approach in the education of adults in this condition, in order to activate paths that can support them in facing the complexity of the present times.

2. EXPLORING CHRONICITY THROUGH A SOCIO-MATERIAL LENS. THE CASE OF TYPE-1 DIABETES

2.1. The scope of the research

Type-1 diabetes is a chronic disease requiring the body of the patient to interact with objects, technologies, and procedures without which it could not keep on surviving. Put it simple, such pathology causes an increase in blood sugar levels due to the lack of insulin production by the pancreas, due to the destruction, by antibodies, of β cells which produce this hormone. Insulin must be injected every day, for life, through multiple subcutaneous injections with an insulin pen or with an insulin pump providing a continuous infusion of insulin into the subcutaneous tissue. In addition to the insulin supply, the management of type-1 diabetes also includes glycemic monitoring, diet and physical activity and is self-managed by patients (<http://www.idf.org>).

2.2. The research design

The below presented research has the objective of exploring the formative dimensions in the self-management of type-1 diabetes in the adult patient (Cucuzza, 2021), within a socio-material theoretical-methodological framework, through the use of the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Ferrante, 2016; Landri & Viteritti, 2016; Latour, 2005). ANT can be defined as a conceptual grid that allows to grasp the nature of relationships within the field of investigation, permitting to focus on the entire system according to a relational epistemic arrangement combined with the attention to the heterogeneity of the elements. Its use has made possible the analysis of the connections between the human and non-human components collaborating in the implementation of self-management necessary practices.

For the realization of the research, in-depth interviews were conducted with adult diabetic people, to deepen the type of experience and learning that different objectual materialities produce in the self-management of type-1 diabetes.

The analysis of interviews, conducted in according with the ANT assumptions, has foreseen the subdivision of the same into thematic units, identifying as a focus the exploration of the ecology of relationships between human and non-human and the analysis of the effects produced by the non-human on the subject's experiences and learning processes.

2.3. The results

Under the socio-material lens, diabetes self-management emerges as an intricate network of interacting social and materials elements. From the analysis of the emerging relationships, such practice turns out to be a useful medical tool for the treatment of the disease on the one hand, and on the other a latent training device tending to build a certain type of methodical subjectivity, functional to the regular fulfilling of the practice. However, the inherent instability of existence with its infinite variables, allows only temporary alignments of elements, in the “here and now” of the situation and places the subject in front of the need, in order to be methodical and self-manage at best, to become flexible and always devising new solutions to implement the needed self-management practices.

The fulfillment of the practice therefore involves a constant process of learning from experience and the development of flexibility, organizational and problem-solving skills, which the subject is not often aware of, and which are not recognized by the care network.

The adoption of a socio-material gaze, through the analysis of the contribution of the social and material components participating in the experience, has made it possible to identify these learnings as the result of situated and heterogeneous networks of actors, opening up to a research work and educational action favoring its acknowledgment and support.

The results of the research are also reflected in the international literature relating to the patient's experience with chronic disease and the learning processes he puts in place to manage it.

In particular, starting from the 1980s, we have been witnessing the development of a research trend that explores the strategic adaptation processes that the patient implements in order to live a valuable life despite the disease (Thorne et al., 2002). This research trend leads to a translation from the traditional focus on suffering, to the discovery of some aspects of the experience of chronicity that are transformative and positive and characterized by the development, by the patient, of skills concerning making decisions and self-care (Thorne & Paterson, 1998).

Furthermore, studies on experiential learning in diabetes, show that this is a continuous process, essential for the learning of coping with the disease (Johansson et al., 2016; Kneck et al., 2014; Kneck et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2008; Low et al., 2016; Paterson et al., 1998; Skrine Jeffers et al., 2019) and often eclipses the more structured inputs provided by the healthcare system (Skrine Jeffers et al., 2019; Wilkinson et al., 2014) becoming the main strategy for dealing with one's condition in daily life.

The above informal training processes, albeit in the specificity of each disease history, can be considered recurrent in the experience of managing chronicity as it is characterized by self-management practices foreseeing strict daily care routines, and they constitute important resources deployed by the subject, that can be brought to light, supported and enhanced by the educational intervention.

3. OPEN TO THE POSSIBLE

The flexibility, problem solving and learning from experience skills that the subject in chronic conditions usually implements for the managing of the disease, have suffered a profound stress with the pandemic.

The introduction of new and unpredictable social and material elements into the existence of subjects has meant, for people with chronic conditions, continuous efforts and responsibilities in an attempt to reconfigure disease management practices based on circumstances, thinking new strategies and accessible practices, to avoid contagion or, in case of disease manifestation, to reconcile therapies and fulfillments with those usually performed, to overcome it in the best possible way.

This precious work, developed at an informal level and very often latent by subjects, risks being lost and not recognized or adequately valued by the subject himself, and, on a broader level, by the entire community.

So, while working with the subject, it becomes important to establish that space of significance that is educational care, with the aim of escorting him towards the existential authenticity, in the continuous search for a balance between its limits and possibilities, whose connotations change constantly (Palmieri, 2012), encouraging processes of transformative resilience understood as the ability to open up to the possibilities of realizing one's life project, valuing internal or external protective factors as elements capable of sustaining and implementing a positive growth (Garista & Zannini, 2003).

To this end, it is therefore important to recognize the internal and external protective factors that can support the subject in the change process. From a methodological point of view, the use of a socio-material perspective allows to analyze the experiential networks that enable the subject to deal with the condition of chronicity, identifying which specific socio-material assemblies can favor and support the learning processes. From this analysis, it is possible to pedagogically reconfigure the experience of managing chronicity, through the opening of fields of educational experience that allow the subject to become aware and process the learning developed during practice, thus supporting him in learning to learn.

The structuring of adult education paths for chronically ill adults in this direction allows to thematize some objects of experience that are particularly stressed in the contemporary scenario, considering the set of individual, social and material factors that contribute to determining them and working on resources and potential.

A first object of experience can be defined as the *toolbox*, referring to the wealth of flexibility, problem solving and learning from experience skills that, as discussed above, the person with chronicity acquires to self-manage his condition and of which he is often unaware. Such object can be thematized through experiences that allow the patient to become aware of the possession of these skills and to learn how to utilize them in the different areas of daily life. The fields of experience that can be activated, in this sense, are many: from activities that transversally solicit organizational and problem-solving skills such as, for example, role-playing games, to structured contexts for the comparison of experiences between peers, or moments of confrontation between patients and medical-health personnel in a vision of the patient as a “carrier of knowledge” acquired by directly experiencing the disease.

A second object is the *unexpected*, in reference to the constantly changing situation and the sudden requests for change that the pandemic has introduced into the lives of individuals. This object of experience can be thematized through the establishment of experiences that present elements of discontinuity and rupture, thus challenging the subject to face them, in a protected situation, thus helping him to become aware, consolidate and strengthen those informal learnings and resources, already developed in coping with the illness and that he can implement in order to cope with the situation.

Finally, a third object of experience is *freedom*, particularly put to the test by the limits and restrictions caused by the pandemic and by the formative and performative pressures implied by the self-management of the disease. This object can be thematized through the preparation of experiences in which the subject can actually feel individual freedom, starting from his own effectiveness, and allowing him to become aware of limits, constraints and characteristics of the context and then, starting from these, identify spaces for action so to pursue one's life project.

In this way the role of a pedagogy of resilience is outlined (Zannini, 2003) which does not reduce the subject to the disease itself and to the limits connected to it but, while recognizing its presence, restores importance to the fullness of the individual's experience and opens to the possible, activating transformative practices in this regard.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The contemporary scenario, in constant change, challenges the subject to think of himself as in transformation, to think of transformation (Ferrante, 2014), to live in transformation and, consequently, challenges pedagogy in supporting him with such task.

The adoption of a socio-material approach highlights how the transformation, as well as the transitions from a state of illness and uneasiness to a state of well-being and vice versa, are the results of structural processes resulting from the interaction of human and non-human actors, which entail a continuous, complex and uncertain learning process, characterized by an active connection with all the material and social elements of the context (Barbanti, 2016).

From this point of view, change-generating elements are emerging properties of the network and are, in turn, recognizable through the socio-material analysis of the training processes actually implemented or in action (Barone, 2007).

The analysis of the mentioned elements allows to pedagogically reconfigure the experiences by intervening on materiality in order to design and encourage new forms of action in which it becomes an ally (Viteritti, 2017) in supporting the subject in a chronic condition to inhabit new life scenarios.

The recognition of the reticular and systemic character of the experience and of the learning processes involving the subject, invites a widespread intervention that calls to the various actors engaged, enhancing the resources and potential of the interaction between the subject, the social and material context of belonging, favoring not only the transformation of the individual but also the development and growth of communities, with a view to reciprocity.

This intervention acts in contrast to the prevalent welfare logic in the management of the disease, favoring the empowerment of the person in this condition and participation in the community. It also helps to promote a new culture in the community in the approach to chronicity, deconstructing the representation of finitude and passivity attributed to it in the common sense.

This way, new research perspectives are opened up which, starting from the study of the relationships among the different elements of the formative structure agent, interpret complexity, outlining educational actions capable of recognizing, thematizing and respecting it, thus helping the chronically ill subject to live the present time, improving his quality of life, and promoting community development and the economic and social sustainability of the practice.

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Dancing the Crisis Beyond the Usual Choreographies in Social Work

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Abstract - "Arianna" is a video-performance performed six months after the conclusion of a cooperative inquiry with social workers, volunteers and family members of people with intellectual disabilities in northern Italy. The choice of an aesthetic and performative way of analyzing and interpreting the research material arose from the need to move away from the colonizing power of discourse in order to open up new interpretative possibilities around the relationship between the experience of crisis and transformative learning processes. It contributed to the creation of an idea of transformation that tries to look beyond "the form that transforms".

KEYWORDS: Transformative learning, performative research, dance, social work.

INTRODUCTION

I am a social worker and I am a second level coordinator of a system of services for people with disabilities in a non-profit organization in Northern Italy. I am also a third-year PhD student in "Education in Contemporary Society". I am doing a workplace doctorate that is based on an agreement between my company and the university starting from the need to innovate social practices of services for adults with intellectual disabilities, beyond "usual choreographies".

When I refer to "usual choreographies" in the sphere of social work, I intend to propose an interpretative metaphor that critically investigates the organization and evolution of services for adults with disabilities and that highlights the functionality/ dysfunctionality of the relationships that are activated at the *micro* level (between individuals: professional-user, coordinator-family, professional-family, ...), at the *meso* level (between systems: service-family, service-institutions, service-territory) and at the *macro* level (between service networks, between periphery and center).

My doctoral research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and explored the relationship between crisis experience and transformative learning processes in the professional context in which I work. In this contribution, I will narrate the salient passages of the performative part of my doctoral research and I try to illustrate how it contributed to generating some awarenesses useful for the composition of my own interpretative model of transformative learning.

1. BEYOND "THE FORM THAT TRANSFORMS"

Questioning the frameworks within which discourses on transformative learning are embedded is not trivial, especially in a historical time when learning and education in adulthood are experiencing a difficult situation that risks following the goals dictated by consumerism: "Change and transform!" (West, 2016). On the contrary, the idea of transformation challenges us to critical and problematizing thinking that is contextualized in a *liquid modernity* (Bauman, 2000), where nothing seems able to maintain its own solidity for long "in society, in education and in our personal lives" (Formenti & West, 2018, p. 34).

The deeper premises of *transformative learning theory* (Mezirow, 1991) are Western and related to North American culture: individualism, rationalism, optimism and harmonic perspective (Boström et al., 2018). However, today we need concepts capable of integrating structural inertia, organizational change, conflict and power into the research and educational process. These can also help to better understand the deep ambivalences, contradictions and paradoxes that affect all people involved in the learning process. The relationships between the micro, meso and macro levels require new theorizations, in the direction of a complex theory of transformation.

I have thus tried to temporarily leave in the background the question "*What 'form' transforms?*" (Kegan, 2000) that has animated the international scientific debate over the years around the theory of transformative learning (West, 2014) in order to move thinking beyond "the form that transforms".

All this has been an invitation for me to think in movement, which has also been connected to my training as a contemporary dancer. Bringing this awareness rooted in the body into the framework of my doctoral research, putting it into dialogue with the dilemmas, tensions, inhibitions and insights of a research into crisis and its transformative possibilities brought out at a certain point the need to perform the research data.

2. A COOPERATIVE ENQUIRY IN THE CRISIS

My research *with* the field began after the arrival of the pandemic in Italy. The variation in the usual choreography generated by the exceptional nature of the situation was grasped in its informative meaning and motivated the beginning of an initial exploratory investigation with a group of service coordinators (Cuppari, 2021a).

The prolongation of the pandemic emergency over the months made me and my colleagues aware of the need to find ways to inhabit uncertainty but also to reflect in systemic way (Formenti & Rigamonti, 2020) on the premises underlying the usual choreographies that had characterized the social educational work of the services.

In the following months, several research-training paths were designed and implemented (Cuppari, 2021b; Cuppari, 2021c; Cuppari, 2022a; Cuppari, 2022b). These pathways used *cooperative inquiry* methodology (Formenti, 2017; Heron, 1996), a type of Action Research that goes beyond data collection and analysis and that is used to sustain change in social action. This methodology enabled participants to become communities of research (Heron & Reason, 2001) and practice (Wenger, 1998).

The research *with* the field ended in June 2021. At some point, the prolonged duration of the pandemic emergency had exhausted its informational reach. On the contrary, a certain tiredness and discomfort was present in the field, due to the difficulty in giving new organizational form to the unprecedented practices generated in the crisis. All learning was in fact being called into question by the uncertainty of the situation and this had made the organization of services even more rigid and made it difficult to imagine the future. I realized that my own research questions were being transformed. In particular, I was asking myself: "What cultural idea of transformation am I becoming the holder of?".

3. "ARIANNA": DANCING THE PROCESS

"Arianna" (<https://vimeo.com/701090070>) is a video-performance resulting from a work of re-analysis and re-interpretation of research data. My familiarity with the aesthetic language of dance oriented me towards a performative analysis and interpretation of the research data (Gergen & Gergen, 2018). The use of dance and choreographic composition has both organizing and liberating potential (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002).

Whereas the research with the field was characterized by an immersive process in the social context investigated and a creation of knowledge through continuous dialogue with the participants, in this performative part of the research I felt the need to connect with the inner echoes of the research process, with the tensions, anxieties and questions it aroused. The research has in this second part taken the form of an *embodied autoethnography* (Spry, 2001).

The shift from verbal data to dance required attention to the selection of the material to be translated into dance, the choice of movements, the scene and the meanings generated by these choices (Leavy, 2009). I reanalyzed the research material and selected those narrative excerpts in which there was explicit reference to sensations, movements, body and movement metaphors. Some of these excerpts were then incorporated into the musical track.

After this selection, I tried to place the narrative elements within certain critical passages that characterize the transformation in the crisis (Alhadeff-Jones, 2021; Morin, 2016):

- 1) organized routines, habitual patterns of action, status of normality;
- 2) perception of crisis signals by means of irregularities and antagonisms;
- 3) blocking of organizational devices;
- 4) unlocking of hitherto inhibited virtualities;
- 5) integration of antagonistic and complementary forces in an organizational and fluid way;
- 6) fluctuation in time and renewal of energy and organization;
- 7) organizational reconfiguration of the system.

For the realization of the video-performance, I collaborated with a choreographer and a musician. In the planning phase, we reflected on a number of questions: Where to place the dance? How many people to involve? The choice was to draw on research material to identify a symbolic place for the process. The house was an evocative image that naturally emerged in the choreographer's mind and mine. It was one of the most inhabited contexts during the pandemic crisis, a place normally little known and inhabited by the services. We therefore contextualized the dance in the space of a house that is no longer inhabited, suspended between what it was and what it could still be.

A second crucial step in designing the video-performance was the choice of subjects. In this case we opted for a *pas de deux* that could help the observer's gaze move from a *micro* level (the individual subjects), *meso* level (the relationship between the subjects) and *macro* level (the dance in the house and the house in the landscape).

The mode of video shooting has also long been the subject of reflection on the action of observing. Immediately, the choreographer and I agreed on the choice of a mobile and fluid quality of filming, a 'gaze' proposed by the camera that was part of the dance in being.

With respect to the music, we chose not to use a piece that had already been composed, but to make use of the expertise and artistic sensitivity of a musician to be brought into dialogue with the creative process that was accompanying the design of the choreography.

4. DISCUSSION

The video performance "Arianna" was disseminated within academic contexts (e.g. ESREA SpringSchool 2022) and in my professional context. The collective viewing of the video allowed themes to emerge on which to develop further reflections around my research questions.

A first theme that emerged during the academic discussions was the relationship between individual and social experience in research, made visible in the difference between the cooperative inquiry part and the predominantly autoethnographic part of performance analysis. Indeed, the interaction with the cultural field of which I was a part made me as much a research subject as the other participants, blurring the boundaries between personal and social, between myself and others (Conquergood, 1991; Ellis & Bochner, 1996).

A second theme concerned the evolution of my identity, which during the research opened up to a *triple consciousness* (Du Bois, 1996; Welang, 2018): that of a social professional, that of a researcher and that of an artist.

Finally, a third theme allowed me to interrogate the relationship between art, research and the educational profession in my research, as explored by *a/r/tography* (Irwin, 2013). The *a/r/tography* is a fluid process of enquiry that moves in the liminal space between "a" (artist), "r" (researcher), and "t" (teacher) and is realized through a rigorous and continuous form of reflexivity and analysis (Springgay, et al., 2005). "Arianna", from this perspective, can be seen as a fluid and

becoming composition of three different parts that informed the whole process: scientific research, aesthetic sensibility and a pedagogical presence (Hills, 2006).

Another very useful moment of collective reflection was the viewing of "Arianna" with a group of service coordinators who had participated in the research. The decision to refer to the coordinators for a concluding reflection on the entire research process stemmed from the need to bring the reflection back into my own professional context. An initial theme brought up by the coordinators concerned the quality of certain professional 'gestures' and their effects on the relationship. The following are the words of one coordinator:

Watching the pushes in the video, I thought about how many times we pushed the families in these months. (...) and I wonder how much those on the other side moved because they were pushed by us or because of a change in the actual way of thinking about the relationship.

Another coordinator questions what it means to think about the transformation of services in relation "to the rest of the world":

When they started to pull the rope I wasn't sure if they would get out. (...) I imagined a rope pulling them back. This video clarified for me where I would like to go in a world that I don't feel is ready yet.

Another theme that emerged from the discussion was that of time in transformation. Two other coordinators say:

I was struck by the opening scene, her sliding her arms along the wall, which seemed to me like a crazy clock that wants to return a little to the past and a little to the present.

I was struck by the final sentence 'I'm looking at all this as if it were a painting': when you're too far in, things are in a loop and the movements convulse. When you walk out the door, things change. Now we are still inside. This anguish is current, it is not the anguish of the emergency.

The narratives of the coordinators do not seem to conceive of the possibility of redefining new frames in this uncertain moment. This reminds me of the same difficulty encountered in the act of taking a picture of a moving image such as, for example, a dance. What happens to the idea of transformation if the continuous movement makes it difficult to capture 'the form that transforms'?

5. CONCLUSION

Having been the opportunity to carry out my doctoral research in a highly uncertain context such as the one generated by the pandemic allowed me to deal with my cognitive vulnerability from the outset and to rely on skills acquired in areas of knowledge apparently far removed from academic research such as, for example, artistic research.

The evolution of metaphors and professional postures in the course of research with the field had effects not only on practices and a certain way of conceiving the function of services but also on identities, primarily my own. The autoethnographic approach to research and performative work constituted ways of exploration and dialogue between different parts of me (social professional, researcher in training, dancer). This PhD course has enabled me to open myself up to the multiplicity that I am and to trust in a research process that can only in part be deliberate.

The form that transforms can be seen as one of the ways through which to view the complex dance of transformative learning. *Beyond form* - that constitutes the etymology of the word "transformation" (from lat. *trans*, beyond and *formare*, to give a form) - I see the possibility of a thinking in motion, sensitive to the *pattern which connects* (Bateson, 1979), a performative, ethical and aesthetic way through which to imagine adult learning, "for the world to come".

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Critical Consciousness and Perspective Transformation in Prison as a Double-Edged Sword

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Abstract - The paper presents initial findings from a three-year research project that aims to examine the ways in which imprisonment influences adult learning. Building on the work of theorists that explain how the prison environment and the corresponding ethos function as an underlying school, we collected biographical narratives from imprisoned students that highlighted several continuities between their lives inside and outside of prison. Based on the content of these narratives and a diligent process of participant observation of the life at a Second Chance School that operates within a Greek prison, we discuss some of the implications that such continuities may have on the process of perspective transformation, as well as ethical implications for the adult educators' work in the specific environment.

KEYWORDS: Prison education, transformative learning, biographical method.

1. INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE SCENE

'Prison is the biggest school of 'em all, albeit with no degree', a student replied when asked to present himself and his educational background, in the beginning of one of our classes in the Second Chance School of Korydallos Prison, the largest remand Greek prison. This was one of several responses that enhanced our interest in studying how the experience of imprisonment influences adult learning.

The benefits of prison education are well documented (Cleere, 2022). 'Access to quality education from the first day of incarceration to and beyond the day of release' (UNESCO, 2021, p. 9) has long been recognized in international and regional declarations as a fundamental human right, of which no one should be deprived of. Despite documentation of its multiple benefits by scholars and incarcerated students (Wilson & Reuss, 2000) and frequently expressed acknowledgment of legal commitments by policy makers, the majority of prisoners worldwide are denied access to education in practice (UNESCO, 2021). If programmes that adopt a correctional focus are scarce, one imagines why educators who attempt to practice critical pedagogies inside prison often speak of an unsolvable paradox (Behan, 2014; Castro & Brawn, 2017). Given the inconsistency of education provision, the fact that the right to education, as every other human right, is subordinate to the carceral order (Fassin, 2017), and the pervasiveness of modern punishment that goes far beyond prison (McNeill, 2018), we would not doubt our student's claim that prison is a very influential 'school' in its own right.

Many studies on the function of confinement as punishment par excellence suggest that the lesson people learn in prison does not concern so much their actions, as their ideas about their identity, their worth, and their place in society (Fassin, 2017; Foucault, 1977). These ideas, Fassin (2017) argues, are inextricably linked to the realities of incarceration, naming, among others, the deteriorating material conditions, the overcrowding, the failure of services to guarantee access to basic health care, work and education, and the ever-present threat of sanctions for breaching the rules or even protesting an injustice.

Similar conditions distinguish the Greek prison system that we set out to study. After its latest visit to Greece the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) reaffirmed 'a continued lack of strategic direction and investment by successive governments to address the chronic

crisis within prisons.’ (2022, p. 45) Greece has been repeatedly condemned by the European Court of Human Rights for dire detention conditions and prison overcrowding and has one of the highest percentages in Europe of long and very long prison sentences for a large range of offenses (CPT, 2022).

According to the latest data, in 2021, sixty percent (60%) of people detained in Greece had not completed compulsory education, while seventeen percent (17%) of them declared themselves illiterate. At the same time, no more than 1 in every 10 adults incarcerated in Greek prisons is provided with an opportunity to study, a percentage that gets much smaller if we consider those who have not completed compulsory education and/or do not speak the language, and thus are not in a position to exercise basic rights, like the right to understand what they are accused of during hearings.

Primary schools and language learning programmes that could cover part of the most pressing of the above needs, are scarce. Most schools operating in Greek prisons for adults are Second Chance Schools (hereafter, SCS), which correspond to lower secondary level. There are no senior high schools that would allow SCS graduates to continue their studies and, even though there is legal provision for those who wish to study on their own, very rarely are prospective students allowed access to study materials and information.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

The principal researcher of this study had access to the Second Chance School of the male department of Korydallos Prison, due to her parallel role as an adult educator for five consecutive years.

The research reported here lasted six months, with the first three dedicated to participatory observation of the school’s life and journal keeping that allowed us to record dysfunctional beliefs that were often expressed during class conversations and deemed worthy of further examination. The rest was dedicated to extensive interviewing of incarcerated students, both formally and informally. Interviewees were selected based on a purposive sampling procedure designed to create a diverse group of participants in terms of ethnic origin, degree of experience of the prison context, and level of commitment to the school. During the survey there were about 55 students active in the school, 39 of whom were immigrants, a percentage that reflects immigrants’ chronic over-representation within the general prison population. Our sample reflects this balance, as 12 out of our 16 informants are non-nationals.

We decided to use the biographical method as a means to put different experiences of incarceration into context, letting our informants freely elaborate on critical life events that defined their identities, especially in the face of major adversities, like the one they are currently facing, through what Alheit (2022) calls ‘biographical work’.

We collected biographical narratives from 16 students, but we will focus on 8 of them who represent a characteristic pattern in the population, due to their ethnic and class origin as well as their early experience of forced migration. Most of our participants have been raised in countries of the former Eastern Bloc in the early 80s, mainly Albania, as members of working-class families, dropped out of school and acquired their first job around the age of 12. They were forced to migrate at a young age to Greece, either directly or after several efforts to settle elsewhere.

The biographical method allowed us to examine how disorderly social processes, like the historic transformation of Central and Eastern Europe since 1989 and our students’ subsequent migration as stigmatized ‘undocumented’ immigrants deeply influenced their lives, leading them to develop, very early in their life, a core belief that the world is unjust when one is born as a member of the lower social class. The experience they acquired ever since, especially during incarceration, only made this belief stronger. In moral terms this should be considered one of the biggest pains of imprisonment and a major barrier to biographic learning. The latter, signifies individuals’ innate capacity to

'reinterpret their contexts, if necessary, and experience the "world" as a space that can in principle be shaped.' (Alheit, 2022, p. 13)

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1. Childhood years

Most of our participants experienced the collapse of regimes while they were still children. At the time, they did not understand what was happening or why, nor could they do anything to take control of their lives. Some make no references to their childhood at all. They start directly from the period of entering work or the period of migration.

Fifth grade, 12 years old. I was getting up in the morning. My grandfather was taking out ice. We worked on refreshments in the summer and blankets, mattresses in the winter. I'd take the ice out, fill the freezer, go to the bazaars, and when I was done, I'd take a bag of ice to school. Like a kid. We weren't that rich. I was more into work than studying or reading. So did my parents. They were all workers.

Joe, 39 years old

All of the participants left school early, either because they needed to work to support their family or because they felt that they didn't fit in. Even those who had relatives in the family who had advanced degrees saw a lifetime's hard work wasted after the collapse of the regime and a society abruptly change its orientation.

3.2. Informal survival lessons

Most of our students have grown up in patriarchal societies. They rarely question the value of discipline - even when it is imposed by brute force. The perpetrators of violence are mainly older men in the family, gangs of peers, teachers and all kinds of authority figures, such as residence permit inspectors, police officers, etc. When violence is perpetrated by a significant other, it is usually justified by reference to objective difficulties, culture or religion (Kochurani, 2019), while gradually the participants adopt it as a means of survival, or at least recognize its necessity. This applies to their lives in general, and to prison in particular which, at this point, reflects and validates a very familiar reality (Western, 2018).

My father did time in prison in Russia as a child. Out of grief for my sister's illness, he drank and made trouble. And I was leaving the house. In an area where no matter where you went there was nothing happy. Everybody was growing back then. With the suffering. With poverty. You didn't see any joy. And I failed school, due to absences. I didn't go to classes. I knew I'd grown up in a family where everyone was a driver and I knew I didn't need school.

- What did they think?

- They were swearing. He shot my mother. I started hating him as a kid. I couldn't understand why. I only understood when I was imprisoned.

All those years he was so cruel... No love.

But that's what made me strong. If I'm proud today, it's because of him. Because I don't know, if he was different, what I'd be like today.

Jim, 43 years old

Our participants emigrated very early on, selling their belongings to make a fresh start, and lived for several years in the agony of being undocumented. A walk downtown, an unexpected check, could result in a violent deportation. One of those rides brought Ervin, then 17 years old, very close to death, as the van carrying him along with 25 other young migrants caught fire and the policemen in charge, forbid them to exit for more than three hours, until the next one to carry them arrived. This is only one of numerous instances that suffering violence led our informants to begin using it themselves, a pattern that one of them called ‘role reversal’.

3.3. Life in prison: Notes from the researcher’s journal

References to prison life are very cautiously made and are usually kept off the record. The following notes are based not only on students’ narratives, but also on participant observation of relevant class discussions and informal talks with former inmates.

All in all, experiences of incarceration seem to confirm and exacerbate what reality has already taught our students regarding structural inequality, including in the criminal justice system (Scott-Hayward & Fradella, 2019). Like, for example, that:

- Money makes the (prison) world go round. Differences in economic power not only determine how one will spend their incarceration time, but also how favorably their case and application for parole will be judged.
- No matter how much one struggles to spend their time in prison productively, the only thing that matters to those who decide for inmates’ future (e.g., members of parole boards) is that inmates comply with prison rules (Koros, 2020), which practically means succumbing to both formal power (exerted by legal authorities) and informal power exerted through prisoner hierarchies.

It seems that surviving prison requires avoiding critical thinking, let alone openly questioning hierarchies, at any cost. One of the participants who avoided to speak about the ‘dark side of prison’ (his words) when interviewed, gave us the following note on our last day in the field, which reflects many other testimonies:

This is where the man resets. Miserable conditions, cold water, dirty food, horror. Ugly behavior. From morning till night in agony, both for your life in here and those left behind. In the same room men from different countries, differences in mentality and character. Survival of the fittest, the one without fear. Bloodshed for a Coca Cola can. Unimportant objects you wouldn't even notice outside, become valuable inside. To see people dying next to you, you don't talk. Three basic things: survival in here, anxiety for loved ones outside, shame for becoming a burden to your family. And all day long you have to think about what you're going to say in court and how it's going to turn out.

John, 43 years old

4. DISCUSSION

Kegan has argued that we need to take into account the learning pasts of our students, their prior transformations, as well as the challenges they are facing in present tense, before we encourage them to question ‘the loyalties and devotions that have made up the very foundation of their lives’ (1994, p. 275). Based on the continuities observed between our informants’ experiences inside and outside of prison, concerning, for instance, the pressure to conform to standards of hegemonic masculinity (Maycock & Hunt, 2018; Sloan, 2016), the need to ‘make amends’ with (significant) others who have abused them, or the need to stay within strict behavioral boundaries in order to survive (Behan, 2014; Koros, 2020), we argue that their ability to critically reflect on their predispositions is severely constrained.

But what about our own unquestioned assumptions towards prison, prison education and our incarcerated students? In their dialogue on the limits of practicing critical pedagogies in prison, Brawn and Castro (2017) speak of the importance of developing an emplaced praxis that starts by acknowledging the completely different positionalities of incarcerated students and nonincarcerated educators.

It is worth asking ourselves, for example, whether we, as educators, revoke the moral responsibility to question parts of our role inside the prison system. If prison has failed (Foucault, 1977; Fassin, 2017), what exactly does ‘correctional education’ stand for? What it means to focus on individual transformation, inside a system that exacerbates social inequalities, so that the determination of punishable populations always has for counterpart the impunity of others, not only in the wider society (Panoussis, 2002), but also within the walls? What will happen if our students attempt to do the rereading of their circumstances that critical pedagogies desire and challenge prison authorities? (Behan, 2014; Castro & Brawn, 2017). How can we practice anti-oppressive pedagogies without facing these questions, without acknowledging the positionalities of our students, their lived experiences of social history, of class, of gender, of the carceral world, as well as their intersections? (Formenti & West, 2018)

How can we teach *and* learn from them (Freire, 2005) without at least trying to imagine what it means to be imprisoned, what it means to live ‘in a prison within a prison’, due to internalized gender norms (Sloan, 2016), social class norms (Charlesworth, 2003) or any other kind of socially produced norms for that matter? Brookfield proposes that the way we think is shaped by our social location, the cultural stream in which we swim, without even realizing its existence, and by dominant ideology: ‘the set of beliefs and practices, reflected in the structures and systems of a society, that are accepted as natural, commonsense and working for the good of all’ (2012, p. 143). Indeed, there is a pervasive assumption that prisons must feel like places of hardship and deprivation, despite all the research evidence on the harm they inflict (Fassin, 2017). Even in our own (educational) fora, prison is too often taken for granted - a necessary evil that we hope our students forget while in the school wing. From time to time, they admit they do. But critical reflection is not about forgetting. It is about remembering. We, as teacher-students, also need to reflect on our assumptions, not only of the prison system, but also of education, of our schools that continue to promote a ‘culture of silence’, by focusing on reading the words, but hiding the worlds within which their students are struggling (Shor & Freire, 1987). There is no better context to do so, according to Formenti & West (2018), than the context of our encounter with those who have been marginalized. No better means than the stories we may share. We believe their argument would perfectly fit to the prison classroom. This endeavor will be our next step.

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Quantitative Methods for Investigating Adult Learning and Multicultural Education in the Time of Crisis

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Abstract - Changing societies and the crisis that we have been facing in the last years due to the COVID-19 pandemic affected Higher Education generating new challenges for academic communities, which require to study how to manage and promote a culturally significant learning for all students. In this regard, developing innovative practices could enhance diversity as an opportunity for learning and reduce additional barriers that multicultural students may encounter in their educational projects. This paper draws from the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) perspective, which implies using cultural knowledge, prior experience, and learning style from ethnically diverse students' experiences in order to prioritize a culture-based process of learning. The purpose of this contribution is to describe the CRT in an Italian University, reported here as the research context, where the number of foreign students has significantly increased in the last decades. The mixed-methods design and the results collected through the Italian Version of the Student Measure of CRT laying the foundations for defining potential effective methods and useful strategies for promoting a safe, inclusive and multicultural environment of learning.

KEYWORDS: Measures, evaluation, universities, multicultural education.

1. MULTICULTURAL STUDENTS IN A MULTICULTURAL WORLD. THE CULTURAL RESPONSIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The multicultural transformation of society and the crisis that we have been facing in the last years due to the COVID-19 pandemic affected families, work contexts, and the field of adult education (Boeren, Roumell & Roessger, 2020). Changing societies in fact also impact in institutions of higher education. This generates new challenges for students and faculties, which need to be paying attention to these changes (Santagati, 2021; Bosco, Fabbri & Giampaolo, 2022). In Italy, for example, in the last decades, and in particular during the 2010/2011 academic year, we counted 63,524 units of ethnically diverse students, which became 94,924 in 2020/2021 (ustat.miur.it). The increasing number of multicultural students require universities to understand how to encourage and foster learning processes using cultural knowledge and learning style from students' experiences in order to prioritize a culture-based process of learning (Bosco, Orefice, Fabbri & Giampaolo, 2022). In this scenario, appears to be a priority investigate how to enhance diversity, strengthen participation in lifelong learning education for all students in order to identify useful didactics strategies for promoting their (also) cultural learning (Stanistreet, Elfert & Atchoarena, 2020; James & Thériault, 2020). Thus, developing innovative and culture-based practices in classes – on one hand - could enhance diversity as an opportunity for learning and – on the other hand - reduce additional barriers that multicultural students may encounter in their educational projects (Amiriaux & Fabbri, 2020; Bosco, Giampaolo & Orefice, 2020; Fabbri & Melacarne, 2020; Kramlich & Romano, 2020; Waller et al., 2020).

Even if this topic is widely debated abroad, in Italy is not already explored in depth (Flores & Heppner, 2002; Crockett & Hays, 2011; Woodley et al., 2017; Bosco, 2022). The literature review allow to identify two main factors investigated

in the empirical research: one referred to the 'dynamics of mobility', intended here as a factor which may have influenced the learning outcomes, academic failure or university dropout of young people with different backgrounds (Verhaeghe et al., 2017); the second referred to the 'successes achieved', considered as the element emerging from the educational opportunities that can be experienced, at school and university, by multicultural students (Santagati, 2021; Bosco, 2022). The second field of studies helped us to identify the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT, Gay, 2013) as a potential theoretical and methodological perspective which evaluate the cultural backgrounds in classes in order to make learning more significant for students. The CRT in fact implies using cultural knowledge and learning style from students' experiences in order to 1) prioritize a multicultural setting of learning, 2) improve their cultural meaningfulness impacting on their academic achievement (Snyder & Fenner, 2021; Bosco, Orefice, Fabbri & Giampaolo, 2022). The CRT may act a positive role in facilitating a richer and more diversified educational experiences in higher education because help ethnically diverse students in the acquisition of different perspectives, thus in the development of professional and personal skills needed in the challenging world (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Castaneda, 2004; Jones, 2004; James & Wood, 2005; Chang et al., 2006). Moreover, CRT as a theoretical and methodological approach may evaluates the significant perspectives of ethnically diverse students making their learning more culturally relevant, culturally sensitive, and culturally congruent with their daily life (Bosco, Orefice, Fabbri & Giampaolo, 2022). In the recent literature, CRT is considered as an important aspect to be learnt and applied in training courses addressed to future educators to provide them a social and cognitive scaffold starting from 'culture' and to define useful strategies and practices that may be applied in the future work (Hutchison & McAlister-Shields, 2020). The main topic of CRT in higher education suggests that faculties '*teach to and through*' the cultural identities of students (Hutchison & McAlister-Shields, p.5, 2020) and this process may be facilitate minimizing also culture biases that may be part of the learning environment. As reported by Gay (2010) there are some specific characteristics of CRT that may be taking into account in classes for preparing culturally sensitive professionals: 1) acknowledge the legitimacy of the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups as legacies that affect students' dispositions; 2) build meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived socio-cultural realities; 3) use a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles; 4) teach students to know and praise their own and each other's cultural heritage; 5) incorporate multicultural information, resources, and materials in subjects and skills taught in schools (p. 29) and, we may say, in universities.

Scholars focused on the measure of CRT in higher education (Dickson, Chun & Fernandez, 2016; Huang, 2019; Bosco, 2022) identify three factors in the composition of this construct, that are *i*) diverse teaching practices, *ii*) cultural engagement, and *iii*) relationship-building practices. These three dimensions of CRT, which have also been confirmed in Italian university contexts (Bosco, Fabbri & Giampaolo, 2022) referring to: 1) the application and the differentiation of teaching strategies used to reach the needs of the student population, 2) the evaluation of socio-cultural capital through teaching strategies that enhance culture-based teaching and the development of cross-cultural skills, 3) the ability to develop a positive relationship between teachers and students and among students, which can lay the foundations for the creation of an inclusive and multicultural environment of learning (Bosco, Orefice, Fabbri & Giampaolo, 2022). Methodologically, these three dimensions may be connected with the critical components needed for the preparation of CRT application, which are described by Gay (2002) in terms of the *i*) development of a culturally relevant curricula aimed at foster cultural diversity knowledge also through a cross-cultural communication, and with *ii*) the creation of a caring classroom climate 'by demonstrating culturally sensitive caring and building culturally responsive learning communities' with and for all students (p. 109).

Following this direction, how enhance the cultural dimension in classes? This scientific question drive this contribution aimed, in particular, at describing the empirically evidence of CRT phenomenon in Italian higher education.

2. METHODS

2.1. Sampling and procedures

Participants were selected through a convenience sampling procedure which, although not representative of the entire student population, allowed us to obtain preliminary evidence about the CRT measures. Each participant received the information regarding the process of data treatment and expressed his/her consent to participate in the study.

362 university students have been involved in this research. The sample is in prevalence composed by female students (92%) enrolled in Education Science (77%) (see Table 1) and aged from 19 and 63 years old ($M=22.53$; $ds=5.7$). Participating students self-identified as Italian (92%), Romanian (2.9%), Albanian (1.5%), Macedonian (0.3%), Ukrainian (0.3%), Syrian (0.3%), Uzbek (0.3%) and Colombian (0.3%). A small percentage of the participants self-identified as students with double citizenship and in particular as Italian-Brazilian (0.3%), Italian-Tunisian (0.3%), Italian-American (0.3%), Italian-Romanian (0.3%), Italian-Filipino (0.3%) and Italian-Colombian (0.3%).

| Bachelor and Master degrees Course | % |
|---|----------|
| Education Sciences | 77 |
| Language for Intercultural and Business Communication | 17 |
| Educational Consulting for organizations | 4 |
| Economics and Business | 2 |

Table 1: Percentage distribution of participants in Courses

2.2. Measure of Culturally Responsive Teaching for the Italian context

The Student Measure of Culturally Responsive Teaching scale (SMCRT) for the Italian context is composed by 23 items, according to the original instrument (Huang, 2019). This scale is aimed at collecting the measure of observation of CRT in university classes through a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 'Never' to 5 'Always'.

Previous studies (Bosco, Fabbri & Giampaolo, 2022) allow us to confirm the three factorial dimensions of the SMCRT, which results composed by: 1) diverse teaching practices (DTP), 2) cultural engagement (CE), and 3) relationship-building practices (RBP). In particular, DTP refers to the application and the differentiation of teaching strategies applied in classes to reach the needs of the student population; CE consists in the evaluation of socio-cultural capital through a culture-based teaching, addressed to develop cross-cultural skills for students; 3) RBP refers to the ability in developing a safe and multicultural learning of environment based on positive relationship between teachers and students and among students.

2.3. Results

2.3.1 Reliability

Reliability for the scale and each of three subscales (i.e., each factor) was estimated by Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency. Data from all participants were included in this analysis. Results showed the following Cronbach's alpha value for the three dimensions: $\alpha=0.85$ for DTP, $\alpha=0.82$ for CE, $\alpha=0.80$ for RBP, and the following value $\alpha=0.90$ for the entire SMCRT scale.

2.3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Data collected on CRT show the implementation in classes of different methodologies to facilitate students' learning processes (M=3.84; SD=0.62) and this is also associated with a positive evaluation towards faculties in building positive relationships with them (M=4.02; SD=0.63). Participants report that this process is supported by teachers that bring to the classes familiar - cultural and cognitive - elements for them (M=3.72; SD=0.82) in order to facilitate a better understanding of the didactic contents (M=4.05; SD=0.82).

A lower average scores is detected for the cultural engagement dimension compared to the previous factors (M=2.94; SD=0.81). Despite this data, results show that faculties pay particular attention in the creation of a setting in which is possible to express personal opinions (M=4.22; ds=0.87) and in which everyone is important (M=4.52; ds=0.78), and encouraged to learn from different cultures (M=3.60; SD=1.07).

The students' measure of CRT have been analysed also for courses (see Table 2). At this purpose, data show that students in Economic and Business perceive faculties more able to culturally engaged students (M=3.71; SD=.55) than students enrolled in other courses (M=2.93; SD=.8). A lower average scores is detected for students of Language for Intercultural and Business Communication (M=2.92; SD=.87) and Educational Consulting for organizations (M=2.82; SD=.83).

| Course | DTP | CE | RBP |
|---|------------|------------|-----------|
| | Mean (SD) | Mean (SD) | Mean (SD) |
| Education Sciences | 3.85 (.60) | 2.93 (.80) | 4 (.60) |
| Language for Intercultural and Business Communication | 3.79 (.80) | 2.92 (.87) | 4.2 (.70) |
| Educational Consulting for organizations | 3.88 (.40) | 2.82 (.83) | 3.9 (.55) |
| Economics and Business | 3.96 (.58) | 3.71 (.55) | 4.1 (.73) |

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of SMCRT for Courses

Another important data emerged is referred to the perception of CRT analyzed for gender. Courses took into account revealed traditionally a female prevalence and, even if male students are presented in our sample in a lower percentage, data show that they perceived faculties staff more able to apply different methodologies and strategies to promote learning in a positive setting (DTP: Male: M=3.9; SD=.6; Female: M=3.8; SD=.6) creating more cultural engagement with different students in classes than female students (CE: Male: M=3.29; SD=.6; Female: M=2.91; SD=.81). Moreover, data show that female students perceive faculties staff more able to build a positive relationship with them than their male colleagues (RBP: Male: M=3.9; SD=.58; Female: M=4.02; SD=.63).

3. CONCLUSIONS

This contribution was aimed at describe the students' observations about CRT in a convenience sample of students enrolled in Italian higher education. Results show a positive evaluation of students about the CRT apply in classes, even if with different average of scores. The RBP dimension receive the most positive evaluation from male and female students, independently by the courses, and the same positive evaluation has been detected for the application and the differentiation of teaching strategies applied in classes to reach the needs of the student population. Moreover, students perceive the effort to culturally engage classes, but with different scores detected more for male, which report an higher average score than females. These results enhance the culturally responsive practices and the diversified methodologies apply to facilitate a learning process that may be reflective and critical, dynamic, contextualized, based on positive

relationship and, overall, cross-cultural (Gay, 2018; Bosco, 2022). The dimension of cultural engagement and the lower scores revealed from participants, highlight the complexity of this dimension of CRT. More investigation are required to define how to operationalize this dimension inside the university didactics contents. In particular, appear relevant for us to understand how to practically use culture as theoretical and methodological approach and how to culturally engaged students in a relational process that may be exploit in classes in order to foster the socio-cultural capital that characterize the new students' population.

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Responding to Changes in Workplace Demands and Learning Styles: Challenges and Benefits of Work- Integrated Learning for Student Development in Higher Education

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Abstract - The aim of this presentation was to build and expand on a multiple-case study research conducted collaboratively by four convenors of the ESREA “Workplace Life and Learning” network in 2021. The research was designed as an opportunity for the contributors to examine and contrast their approaches for enhancing employability capabilities of students. The three key themes were discussed: (1) Work-integrated learning (WIL) and the development of identity, (2) WIL and the process of reflection, (3) WIL and transfer of learning.

KEYWORDS: Work-integrated learning, generation Y, higher education, reflective practice, employability.

PREMISE

Work-integrated learning (WIL) embeds a broad range of learning practices encompassing (1) systematic training (e.g., apprenticeship), (2) structured work experience (e.g., field experience, internships), and (3) institutional partnerships (e.g., service learning) (Sattler et al., 2011; Stirling et al., 2016) that are designed to provide students with exposure to ‘real-world’ work experience by deliberately integrating theory with practice (Patrick et al., 2009). Among the benefits of integrating curricula with workplace experience are deepening students’ knowledge and understanding, enhancing their work-related capabilities, and developing a sense of their professional identity (Cooper et al., 2010) and learning experiences (Patrick et al., 2008) as well as exposing the student self (Barnett et al., 2001).

Preparing a new generation of students to face the demands of the workplace, including workload, job insecurity, and perceived job content (Zeinolabedini et al., 2022) has become an increasing concern for higher education faculty. But how to approach curriculum development in a way that both appeals to different learning styles of students and allow them to reflect on competencies required by the new work environment? Even though there is evidence that certain disciplines in higher education (e.g., nursing, education, and engineering) have greater experience with WIL (Patrick et al., 2008), the rationale for concentrating on WIL practices stems from limited research studies focusing on the interpretation of the data regarding the benefits of WIL to students' learning, competency development and employability across national contexts.

The aim of this presentation was to build and expand on a multiple-case study research conducted collaboratively by four convenors of the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults “Workplace Life and Learning” (WLL) network in 2021. The research was designed as an opportunity for the contributors from various countries, including Cyprus, France, Italy, and the United States to examine and contrast their approaches for enhancing employability capabilities of students to WIL, guided by the two following questions:

- 1) What are the ways academics from different higher education institutions and countries are approaching and using WIL in their curricula?
- 2) How are different WIL approaches benefiting students' learning, competency development and employability?

The recognition that learning occurs within the workplace and is associated with organisational and individual development is not new (Bond & Garrick, 1999). According to Stevens et al. (2001), workplaces are structured to enrich learning experiences and provide opportunities for the development of the capacity of individuals. Indeed, WIL may contribute to the development of students through enhancing capabilities to identify and act upon new opportunities, enriching and expanding research abilities and critical thinking.

The need for Gen Y students to be prepared for a complex world of workplaces requires academics to work on curriculum on an ongoing basis and to consider WIL opportunities as part of curriculum design. This is because this generation discovered video games before anyone else and have a world view characterized by more individualism than previous generations. They also have a lesser attachment to social rules and this also in the workplace (Dalmas & Lima, 2016). The development of new teaching methods, therefore, is among the major challenges that higher education faces (Kozminski, 2011) to remain relevant in the current fast-changing and knowledge-driven business landscape (Avolio et al., 2019).

The curriculum development is an ongoing social activity, where learning can emerge from continuous interactions with students and milieu (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006). For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed additional changes within teaching and learning practices (Lokhtina & Tyler, 2021) that had an impact on the design of the material and the practices that academics use to support students to make a smooth transition from a higher education institution to a workplace. In addition, WIL can contribute to the development of a learning community (Lave & Wenger, 1991) among students and potential employers through different activities that can help them construct new (social) artifacts of knowledge and skills. WIL embeds a broad range of learning practices encompassing (1) systematic training (e.g., apprenticeship), in which the workplace is the central place of learning, (2) structured work experience (e.g., field experience, internships), in which students are familiarized with the world of work, and (3) institutional partnerships (e.g., service learning). Examining the main themes associated with the application of WIL approaches in private higher education institutions through a multiple case study approach will enable a reader to have a close insight into WIL approaches as part of curriculum development and the impact and benefits of WIL for Gen Y's learning.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CASES

Methodologically, the research approach that was chosen by the authors fits in the tradition of multiple case study (Yin, 1998). In multiple case studies, research data can be treated cumulatively aiming at exploring real-life and contemporary bounded systems through detailed and in-depth data collection (Creswell, 2013). Multiple cases are considered as multiple experiments (Yin, 1998). The chosen approach was also exploratory in nature. Exploratory case studies typically concern cases where there is a need to explore situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003). In exploratory case studies, researchers look inductively at patterns and differences across cases that lead to the identification of important themes.

Case studies are a very common methodological approach used in WIL research because of the highly contextualized nature of such programs (Coll & Chapman, 2000). Multiple-case study design also offers the flexibility of looking at different types of information, increasing opportunities for having a deeper understanding of the key explorative themes, making the evidence generated from a multiple case study be strong and reliable (Gustafsson, 2017).

The following table (Table 1) presents a high-level summary of the cases that were brought by each contributor.

Table 1. Overview of the Cases

| | Case #1 Cyprus | Case #2 Italy | Case #3 France | Case #4 United States |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Context and Sample | Audience: final-year undergraduate students Program of study: Hospitality and Tourism Management Institution: Private university, the Republic of Cyprus. Language of instruction: English | Audience: Master’s students Program of study: Human Resource Development Institution: public university, Italy Language of instruction: Italian | Audience: Master’s students including Program of study: Sciences of Education Institution: public university, France Language of instruction: French | Audience: Master’s students Program of study: Adult Learning and Leadership Institution: private university, United States Language of instruction: English |
| WIL intervention/ Process | Project-based learning Plan and organise a fundraising event to develop professional identity and critical skills | Traineeship Use exploration of HRD websites dedicated to online assessment of soft skills to develop critical thinking and reflexivity on assumptions | Apprenticeship Use apprenticeship experience to develop the ability to question one’s competencies and approach to work | Action Learning Work with a real-world client using an action learning process |
| Underlying Theories | Experiential learning, Identity formation in practice, Reflective Practice | Transformative learning, Reflective practice, social constructionism | Vocational didactic approach to the analysis of activity Reflective Practice | Action Learning Transformative learning Reflective Practice |

Below, the key themes will be presented and discussed.

THEME # 1: WIL AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY

Self-efficacy, self-confidence, openness, and appreciation for others, these are the types of growth that students reported experiencing across cases. Working in teams and sharing perspective with others were important catalysts to their perception of development. Across cases, there was clear evidence that working in small groups helped students gain insights into their own contribution, which in turn developed their confidence to voice their own opinion and engage with the team. At the same time, there was an interesting tension between the students’ aspiration to become clearer about their identity and their need to protect their existing relationships and sense of belonging. How can WIL better recognize this tension and what are the implications for teamwork and group discussions which are at the heart of WIL design? Recent research by Sanojca and Triby (forthcoming) highlights how new technologies and artificial intelligence require less socialization at work. In this context, a key moment in the construction of one's professional identity is more likely to be found in the intimacy of the subject, whereas previously it was formed through forming relationships within the organization. How can WIL recognize and respond to this emerging trend? What kinds of design may help students become more aware of their personal values? How can rapid shifts and changes in today’s world become opportunities for a deeper reflection on one’s knowledge and personal values?

THEME # 2: WIL AND THE PROCESS OF REFLECTION

Across cases, important learning outcomes were linked to the opportunity offered to the students to step back and reflect during their experience. As we went deeper into the cases, we found that both reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action (Schön, 1991) had an impact on them. Reflection-in-action was experienced as an opportunity to pause, step back and make adjustments in real time to individual or teamwork while reflection-on-action helped strengthen their level of critical consciousness on their goals and processes. Our cases show a range of reflective interventions for WIL such as feedback (e.g., formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998)), journaling, reflective dialogue (Gray, 2007). Reflection is also enhanced when faculty members act as learning coaches and facilitate the reflective process through reflective and meaning-making questions (O’Neil & Marsick, 2007). However, we also wondered how students’ new appreciation for reflection would endure once facing the reality of the workplace where it is often expected to “follow the flow”, make quick decisions and not “waste time”. In addition, there is a natural tendency among many students to jump to the task and get it done. How can we better help them turn their new appreciation for stepping back and taking perspective into a lifelong capacity?

THEME # 3: WIL AND TRANSFER OF LEARNING

Students graduating from our programs usually have a high rate of employability. Yet it is our view that employability is not only a quantitative measure and should be linked to their capacity to transfer learning and apply their skills to the workplace demands. In our research, there was evidence that students saw immediate applicability of what they learned. Complex problem-solving, the ability to challenge and reframe assumptions, critical thinking, these were examples of the skills students recognized as valuable for their professional future. However, we also noticed a strong sense of confidence about their capacity to apply what they learned for future employment. Even though organizations value problem solving and critical thinking, we are also aware that transferring these types of skills should not be seen as a taken-for-granted process (Cree & Macaulay, 2000): competence transferability is as much a theoretical as a pragmatic issue. How can we account more in our work about the risk of creating too much “perception of self-efficacy”? Transfer of learning often needs meta-competences: abilities to frame the acquired content/attitude in new contexts and this may involve transformations, negotiations, struggles etc. How is it possible to foster this dimension in WIL settings based in higher education settings? How can we then prepare them to transfer and sustain the capacities they developed during their WIL experience?

CONCLUSION: WIL IN THE POST-PANDEMIC ERA

The Covid-19 pandemic generated interesting questions as to whether and how WIL could be implemented in hybrid or blended formats combining asynchronous and synchronous learning. All of us were affected by the pandemic and had to experiment new solutions (e.g., the Italian case was completely re-designed as an online version). We had no alternative but to acknowledge and embrace the central role of technology and its impact on our settings and the relationships among students. We also noticed that our students belonged to a generation which has spent its entire life in the age of smartphones and are comfortable journeying through the digital sphere. Yet too often, many students do not question the functioning of the digital world and take what it offers for granted. This led us to realize that we have the opportunity to play a critical role in developing our students’ “digital literacy” (Hartley, 2017). How can we create the conditions of a meta-reflective space helping our students see more of the hidden agenda offered by the digital world and develop their capacity for critical reflection? The pandemic will also likely affect employability dynamics. How can we make WIL more relevant for the post-pandemic workplace (e.g., networking, personal development, identity formation) and help

our students increase self-confidence and resilience in difficult times? More longitudinal studies exploring long-term effects on work transitions and career benefits will be needed too in order to understand structural changes and ways to support our students.

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Fostering Pandemic Resilience and Community through CBAL Bibliotherapy Online Reading Groups

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Abstract - Bibliotherapy reading groups are an example of Community Based Adult Learning (CBAL) that promote pandemic resilience, social capital recovery and community creation. To examine this premise, I spoke with a bibliotherapy group facilitator/educator and conducted in-depth interviews with 14 adult learners from three separate online bibliotherapy reading groups that took place during the pandemic. They were based in: 1) a social service agency for job seekers 2) a local library 3) an architecture and design firm. The results show some forms of community and social capital were regained through these group adult education experiences.

KEYWORDS: Bibliotherapy, social capital, online CBAL.

1. INTRODUCTION: WHAT WAS LOST AND WHAT CAN BE GAINED

Since March 2020 Canada has been dealing with the shared challenge of a global pandemic and a learning experience of how to deal with its past and ongoing effects on our lives. This is a time in which the word *resilience* is being used to describe the ability of communities and people to weather this period and to recover and thrive in this time in which they lost many elements of their life. These elements included in-person relationships to their workplaces or school and people they could no longer see including friends and family or even daily acquaintances. They also initially lost access to many in-person government and private services. Through the loss of different types of community including schools, workplaces, services, community centers and access to the larger community outside one's home there was a loss of connection and habit which was difficult and isolating to many. The daily habits of interacting with community in many forms gives us knowledge and stability so people sought to regain some types of community albeit in different sometimes virtual forms. There was a type of urgency in having connection networks because people were searching for answers about how to cope with the isolation and their anxiety about their situation and the global pandemic. These connections networks are sometimes referred to as social capital defined here as robust networks of trust. Health promotion researchers Pitas and Ehmer (2020) argue that communities with high levels of social capital could respond better to the COVID-19 pandemic and that people, communities and government needed to strengthen and expand social networks in order to mitigate the toll the pandemic was taking on people. They emphasize that all three forms of social capital, bonding (strong trust networks of those within a group or community) bridging (connections across groups or communities) and linking (relationships between those with differences in social position or power), are "necessary for an effective response and sustainable recovery" and resilience in the face of new crises. (p. 943)

One way that connections and social capital can be gained is through community based social supports such as adult education. Adult Education researchers have often examined how Community Based Adult Learning (CBAL) can aid in the recovery of social capital and can foster resilience (Field 2005; McIntyre 2012; Meriam and Kee 2014;) during non-crisis and crisis times in one's life. Meeting people 'where they are' is always integral to CBAL and in the case of online bibliotherapy reading groups, and much of pandemic contact, they were actually coming into people's homes.

Rhodes and Schmidt (2021) have used social presence theory to discuss the importance of intentionality in online computer mediated adult learning environments. This theory looks at how social presence can be increased, in order to foster engagement and the feeling of being together in a communicative and high-quality learning environment. Some elements that are said to create this in online classrooms include *immediate and reactive interactions and using themes*

to guide discussion. These elements are all present in bibliotherapy online reading groups and this theory reflects what the groups seek to do which is to create a deeper social presence and engagement.

2. BIBLIOTHERAPY READING GROUPS: CONNECTING DURING A PANDEMIC

I interviewed the Executive Director of the Literacy Network (the facilitator) who explained her motivation for starting bibliotherapy reading groups. This was one of the network's first forays into adult education that didn't focus on professional or literacy upgrading. She had been frustrated with all of the literacy programs being focused on employment and said she "cared about people being able to access literacy for a much wider variety of reasons."

I was looking at the time for an intervention that I could introduce to programs to recapture some of those better more holistic approaches or reasons why people would attach to literacy. So, I'm concerned about civic participation, I'm concerned about just the love of reading, family literacy, promoting literacy as a tool for self-engagement or, self-discovery. (Jennine Agnew-Kata Interview June 27, 2022)

The intervention she found was Bibliotherapy reading groups which she accessed through initial contact with Natalia Tukhareli, a bibliotherapy researcher and adult educator who led this type of groups.

Bibliotherapy is a form of CBAL also known as fiction or reading therapy. It has taken many forms but the model used by our Literacy Network uses literature and poetry read aloud and discussed in facilitated reading groups to address participants' interests using themes like happiness, nature, love or friendship which might elicit helpful discussions on issues in everyone's lives and connect them in a shared experience. This was the model designed by adult educators such as Natalia Tukhareli who began "Read to Connect" groups (reading to combat loneliness and promote resilience). (Brewster 2018)

I had researched in-person Bibliotherapy reading groups in 2019 by looking at surveys administered to the groups by their facilitators and spoke to the facilitators themselves but this was only to evaluate the response to the bibliotherapy reading model. (Fernando & Agnew-Kata 2021) After the transition to online versions of the reading groups at the beginning of the pandemic I conducted 14 semi-structured online in-depth interviews with adult learners who had participated in 3 of these groups, run through 3 different organizations, to see if the online versions would also increase social capital through the creation of more robust social networks to combat isolation. Participants in the 3 groups all had the same facilitator, the Executive Director of the Literacy Network, and that was helpful in terms of consistency of the content and experience. My analysis of their interviews found themes in their experiences that gave insight into their possible increase in social capital.

The first reading group I studied was based in a social service agency that supports job seekers and provides them with welfare benefits who told potential learners that this was adult wellness education. Participants from this group did not appear on camera during the online Zoom meetings and had the lowest level of discussion but had the highest level of regular attendance. Members of this group were experiencing precarious circumstances and during interviews spoke of facing serious financial insecurity. Some thought this reading group might help them get a job, although that was not what the group was promised, some were looking for support during the difficult time of job seeking and others were just looking for a break from isolation and a chance to think about something other than job seeking. They seemed to appreciate the structure and content of participating regularly in the groups but did not feel a strong connection with other participants but instead strongly connected to the facilitator.

The second reading group was based in a city library, with participants from a number of different cities, as part of their library mandate to provide learning opportunities for their community outreach in what is often a traditional library function. (Sandford and Clover 2016) These were learners who were used to spending quite a lot of time with literature therefore they were looking for in depth discussion of the selected works that were read to them. They were the most engaged in the group discussion and in their interviews had the most detailed reflection on the groups and the concept of bibliotherapy. They were happy to have the opportunity to participate in the reading groups and developed some level of community with other participants but all felt more connected to the facilitator.

The final reading group was based in a private sector architecture and design firm that introduced bibliotherapy as part of their company educational institute that offered learning opportunities that were either accreditation or profession based or more general adult education courses such as bibliotherapy. Participants were looking to build some camaraderie with those they were working with and to have a break in the working day as these were lunch time sessions. They had the most positive reaction to participating to the groups and felt a lot of connection and bonding with other members of the group and the facilitator.

2.1. Participant Interview Theme: Community and Belonging

The participants said they were expecting a space where they could connect and be inspired and that indeed the groups created a feeling of community, belonging and happiness. Here are some of their comments:

“I expected to feel either you know inspired or just you know maybe a sense of calm. Maybe a little bit of a sense of belonging to likeminded people....and that's exactly what we end up doing a lot of the time is we have the opportunity to do that.” (Participant 105 social service organization)

“I loved sort of the feeling of community. I liked the immediacy because it made it seem that we were all in it together.” (Participant 103 library)

“There a great feeling I think of togetherness and inclusion and support and all those emotional things [sic] Everybody was happy at the end of the session.” (Participant 106 private sector organization)

2.2. Participant Interview Theme: Adult Education for Personal Development

The learners did find that although all had experience with professional or job based adult education in the past they enjoyed the opportunity to have an adult education experience that was more concentrated on connection and personal development. They were surprised that this could be a type of adult education available to them. They made some of the following comments including the value they placed on continuing education for growth:

“I really enjoy the bibliotherapy sessions that are through work because they are not related to my work at all.” (Participant 110 private sector firm)

“I’m somebody that’s like, oh, this could help my spiritual, emotional, mental, physical, I will do all of that all the time...I’m forever in progress.” (Participant 115 social service organization)

“I do not want to stop learning because once you stop it’s very hard to start again. And also I think when you stop learning is probably when you stop growing.” (Participant 113 private sector firm)

“My interest was really like both, getting support myself, being more emotionally literate myself in a safe group context because I learn well with group work.” (Participant 109 Library)

2.3. Participant Interview Theme: Creating Connections through Literature and Poetry

The use of readings focusing on weekly themes helped create discussion and connections through literature and poetry. It allowed for an entry point into conversations about ideas involving emotions or personal issues. Other than those in the library-based group the other participants said they had not read widely since they were adolescents. Poetry was the favorite type of reading for all those I interviewed as its concentrated emotion and universal themes allowed for all learners to relate to it in different ways. Here are some their comments:

“If you are someone who believes that literature moves people it was nice to get that real-world sense from some people.” (participant 102 Library)

“I really enjoyed the discourse interpreting the poem with everyone else.” (Participant 107 private sector firm)

“it's opened me up to poetry, it's opened me up to, all of a sudden, now I just want a poem. So, I was really grateful to be learning, put that hat on, people were empowering each other or supporting each other, piggybacking off each other's ideas.” (Participant 115 social service agency)

3. CONCLUSION: DID RESILIENCE INCREASE THROUGH SOCIAL CAPITAL RECOVERY?

These themes show some of the main gains that were described by learners in the bibliotherapy reading groups but did those gains increase their social capital and resilience? In general, the themes show increased connection and community and the positive experience of being read to, an action which seems to have linked them to their facilitator as a teacher and mentor, and there were affirmative feelings of being part of a group during an isolating time. There was also enjoyment of the experience of using literature to discuss the emotions and ideas that they were normally not getting a chance to discuss. Those interviewed felt this was helpful because they said they didn't usually make time in their lives to think and reflect. The loss of habit is also a key element that was regained through these reading groups. The recovery and centrality of habit (Dewey as expanded by Zembylas 2021) can be the creation of habit as a collective rather than an individual action and is this collective habit is key to learning and creating social change. The collective habit that was created through the bibliotherapy reading groups was important and provided structure and community to somewhat isolated people. The act of reading aloud and discussion represents the storytelling and the immediacy of reaction that creates what Rhodes and Schmidt (2021) referred to as a *social presence* and feeling of connectedness but also potential increases in social capital.

The social service organization-based reading group participants created some weaker forms of bonding and bridging social capital with limited reciprocity and trust as most participants said they had the perception that fellow participants did not share commonalities despite the fact that they were all experiencing financial and job insecurity. Linking social capital with the facilitator, perceived to be in a position of authority, was created as her reading and facilitation gained their trust and created a connection with her. The participants in the city library based bibliotherapy reading group created some level of bridging social capital since many came from different geographic communities but had institutional connections and bonded through literature. Much like the first group their strongest connection was the robust linking social capital with the facilitator. The private sector organization had introduced bibliotherapy in order to promote staff cohesion during the pandemic and they appeared to have achieved this. Participants in this group demonstrated the strongest bonding social capital as a result of their shared employment and strong trust network. They also had linking social capital with the facilitator. Therefore, in terms of the resilience through social capital that Pitas and Ehmer (2020) described they did in fact increase all three types although to varying degrees.

In terms of resilience there is a growing need for CBAL like bibliotherapy reading groups as a means to achieve it by building and expanding social networks. Libraries will continue to be gathering places both in person and online but now many public and private sector organizations can be seen developing spaces to encourage the creation of social capital

and personal trust networks. Many workplaces and service organizations have recognized the need to support workers or clients by creating meaningful connections and relieving anxiety. This has meant that they are seeking different types of CBAL such as bibliotherapy rather than learning focused solely on professional development. Adult education that is not transactional and labor market focused does still have community, social and political benefits. Research that advocates for learning that is not focused on the labor market can help promote community development through increased resilience and social capital recovery through CBAL. As Hansman (2022) argues, ongoing crises have also created opportunities to reframe current educational practices and concepts in the hopes of creating a more equitable world. (p. 14)

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- Interview with Jennine Agnew-Kata Executive Director of Literacy Network of Durham June 27, 2022. (bibliotherapy facilitator)

Ecologies of Education: Covid Pandemic as an Occasion to Interrogate Adult Education Theoretical Frameworks

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Abstract - The global pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus and the measures taken to face it have upset the organization of individual and collective existence, with respect to time, spaces, relationships and habits that marked our daily life. Therefore, also schools and educational services are in the middle of a sudden change that has affected both education professionals (educators, teachers) and pupils. The pandemic situation has suddenly shown that it is necessary to orient educational and social reflection to the links existing between spheres of existence usually considered as separate. The reference to adult education is significant, because the tenets of dualist and anthropocentric thought appear more deeply rooted in adult subjects. Our proposal is to reassemble the human with the environment through a perspective we termed “Ecologies of Education”, that will be discussed by the present paper.

KEYWORDS: Adult education, Covid pandemic, ecologies of education, educational world.

1. COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC: CHANGING AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL WORLD

The global pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus and the measures taken to face it have upset the organization of individual and collective existence, with respect to time, spaces, relationships and habits that marked our daily life.

Spaces and times in which our bodies were used to move in “taken for granted” modes have undergone a sudden change according to norms and rules that we never thought we had to refer to: in this sense, the fundamental dimensions of our experience had to be re-thematized, re-worked and re-sized precisely for the needs of containing infections (Sangster, Stoner & Food, 2020).

Following this direction, what was the ease, lived in a tacit and daily way, of our everyday life, was suddenly interrupted, making everyone perceiving, in different degrees and ways, a feeling of distress (Fratini, 2018), based precisely on the rupture of an abruptly changed previous “normality”.

In addition to personal, subjective and individual distresses, the health emergency has soon become an economic, social, political, cultural, educational emergency, which forced to radically redefine the structure of the whole society, the ways of taking care of people and using services, as well as our previous habits related to moving, socializing, communicating, producing, purchasing and consuming tangible and intangible goods and, not least, educating and teaching. Therefore, schools and educational services are in the middle of a sudden change that has affected both educational professionals (educators, teachers) and pupils (Williamson, Eynon & Potter, 2020).

¹ This paper was conceived by the three authors. Specifically, the first paragraph (Covid-19 global pandemic: changing and transformation in the educational world) is written by Andrea Galimberti; the second paragraph (Epistemological reflections for educational research: which status of the “human” in the field of adult education?) is written by Alessandro Ferrante; the third paragraph (Ecologies of Education) is written by Maria Benedetta Gambacorti-Passerini.

So, even within the educational services, we found ourselves overturning every usual concept of normality and everyday life, with the effort to design beyond the known schemes and in an atmosphere in which it was difficult to glimpse a certain or foreseeable future horizon: the world of education, therefore, found itself experiencing that feeling of widespread distress (Gambacorti-Passerini & Ferrante, 2021), already recalled with respect to what each of us experienced in our everyday life.

In this sense, a strong and fast investment of resources has thus become essential in the educational world to re-invent professional practices and to foster the adoption of strategies designed for promoting inclusion and reducing the negative effects of the current crisis (Ferrari, Triacca & Braga, 2021).

The forced changes with respect to social habits, school life management using digital media have contributed to making some forms of distress more evident, known and thematized, as well as bringing out unprecedented manifestations of fatigue, generating and accentuating the already existing inequalities and created new forms of educational poverty, discrimination and social exclusion (Gromada, Richardson & Rees, 2020), involving, for example, those who have not the skills, the economical budget or the logistical conditions to reach and use digital devices connecting to internet.

The professional world of education has been forced to pause in the uncertainty resulting from the breakdown of everyday life and its own habits: so, the challenge for education was to glimpse new possibilities and ways of thinking and acting educational practices, in a world suddenly modified by Covid-19.

2. EPISTEMOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: WHICH STATUS OF THE “HUMAN” IN THE FIELD OF ADULT EDUCATION?

In addition to social and pedagogical themes linked to schools, specific educational projects and services, the relevant changes occurred during the pandemic raise relevant epistemological questions that interrogate the theoretical frameworks of educational research and practice, as well as the conceptual categories that are adopted in it (Ferrante, 2021a; Ferrante, 2021b; Gambacorti-Passerini & Ferrante, 2021; Gambacorti-Passerini & Palmieri, 2021; Pitzalis & Spanò, 2022).

For example, the switch to online and digital education formats, in the so called “remote” forms of teaching and learning, have emerged as a consequence of mass closures of schools, colleges and universities. The “distance education” have proved to be indispensable in order to continue to educate and have inevitably led to emphasize the fundamental role of technologies: “education has become a widespread matter of concern for political authorities, education businesses, charities, teachers, parents and students alike. Education has become an emergency matter, and along with it, educational technologies have been positioned as a frontline emergency service” (Williamson, Eynon & Potter, 2020, p. 107). This means that “the Covid-19 pandemic, and associated measures of social distancing and school closures all over the world, have accelerated this digitization, triggering an urgent need for critical, up-close scrutiny of how this digitization is reshaping the worlds of education” (Decuyper, Grimaldi & Landri, 2021, p. 1).

The pandemic situation has also shown that it is necessary to orient educational and social reflection to the links existing between spheres of existence usually considered as separated: nature-culture, society-technical, human-non human, etc. (Ferrante, 2021a; Ferrante, 2021b). It is therefore necessary to change the reference paradigm in order to grasp the transformations that are taking place, otherwise not visible.

This paper is aimed at introducing a reflection about the status of the “human” and his/her relationships with “non-human” alongside the domain of pedagogical knowledge and the adult educational field. A body of knowledge and a field of practices that have been always characterized by a human-centered perspective rooted in anthropocentric assumptions on the relationship among humans, nature and other living beings (Ferrante & Sartori, 2016). This dualistic vision,

opposing human and non-human, nature and culture, meaning and matter, is becoming more and more unbearable in connection with dramatic ecological changes we are witnessing (Braidotti, 2019).

The reference to adult education is significant, because the tenets of dualist and anthropocentric thought appear more deeply rooted in adult subjects, such as teachers, educators, social workers and adult students (Palma, 2017). This means renewing research and educational practices in adult education in order to critically deconstruct the anthropological concepts underlying the current educational models internalized by adults (Ferrante, 2014; Palma, 2016; 2017).

In this scenario, then, who is the “human” in the field of adult education?

In the adult education studies, the adult to be educated tends to be considered in relation to an anthropological model that in educational theories, discourses, research, and practices may be more or less explicit, more or less stated, and of which researchers, teachers, and educators may be more or less aware. For example, in the field of critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991; Fook & Gardner, 2007; Brookfield, 2009), the adult is described as a subject who has acquired – through educational and life experiences – a body of tacit knowledge which the researchers and educators have to bring out and critically discuss, in order to show the subjects the implicit premises from which they think and act. In this sense, the human is defined as a being who learns from experience and is capable of developing critical thinking about self and social structures. At the same time, the focus of these perspectives is placed on individual subjectivities and cognitive dimensions, rather than on other aspects, such as the body, affects, and materiality (Ferrante & Galimberti, 2019). This view is not wrong, negative, or problematic in itself. However, it can become so if those who promote it tend to “naturalize” it, if they are not aware of its partiality and transitory nature. Moreover, one may wonder whether this (clearly human-centered) anthropological model could be the most suitable way to think about the human in a more-than-human world, crossed by a dramatic ecological crisis, in which it appears increasingly essential to reflect on the entanglement of human and non-human (Braidotti, 2013).

From these considerations, the question of who the human is, can be, or should be in the field of educational studies and especially in adult education can be developed in at least three different directions, which are nevertheless deeply interconnected.

The first direction has been indicated by poststructuralism and in educational theories has been thematized with great lucidity by Gert Biesta. According to the scholar, who is the human is a question that must remain open (Biesta, 2006). This means that this question needs to be problematized, without taking the category of human for granted, and that we need to avoid defining the other, especially before encountering him or her in the educational relationship:

I have explored a way to understand and approach education in which the question of what it means to be human is seen as a radically *open* question, a question that can only be answered - and has to be answered again and again - by engaging *in* education, rather than as a question that needs to be answered *before* we can engage in education (Biesta, 2006, p. 151).

The second direction has been indicated by posthumanism and new materialisms and consists of deconstructing, and reinventing discursive practices with respect to conceptions of human being that are embedded in pedagogical knowledge and cultural systems, in order to open these conceptions to the encounter with otherness, including non-human (Ferrante & Sartori, 2016; Snaza et al., 2016; Braidotti, 2019). Specifically:

to adopt a post-humanist perspective provides opportunity to analyze educational phenomena without exclusively focusing on humankind. The object of a post-humanist pedagogy is to study the ways in which the human and the non-human co-emerge and interact, and to generate new educational experiences. Learning is no longer considered as an

individual cognitive process or as a mere social realization. It could be rather considered as the effect of a complex system, composed by both human and non-human (Ferrante & Sartori, 2016, p. 185).

The third direction is to develop a complexity-oriented ecological vision, which allows the interpretation of the human by emphasizing what connects him or her to the environment (social and natural) and broader systems (Ferrante, Gambacorti-Passerini & Galimberti, 2022), so as to broaden the theoretical framework and the categorization models of adult education, also as a response to the challenges posed by the pandemic and climate change.

3. ECOLOGIES OF EDUCATION

Our proposal is to reassemble the human with the environment through a perspective we termed “Ecologies of Education”, thought as an inclusive theoretical vision of education aimed at grasping the multiple interactions involving people, technologies, objects, spaces, animals, living beings embedded in a world characterized by intense and unprecedented contaminations between different bodies, domains of knowledge, theories, fields, imaginaries and experiences. The challenge is to try to explore educational themes and issues through an ecological perspective, able to understand and analyze educational phenomena as situated, complex, processual and relational events, assuming contingent and dynamic forms, deeply connected to the environmental, technological, social, cultural and natural transformations of the contemporary world (Wals, 2017; Stankevičienė et al., 2011).

In fact, nowadays, it is essential to relate ecology to education, rethinking both terms of this relationship (Lynch & Mannion, 2021). Tackling issues related to climate change (Wamsler, 2018) and the environmental crisis in a globalized, hi-tech, multiethnic, fragmented society, marked by conflicts, discrimination, marked asymmetries of power and rapid and intense transformations that expose the planet and its inhabitants (humans and non-human) with disturbing drifts, involves not only changing behavior, recycling, reducing consumption and emissions of polluting gases, reviewing agricultural, industrial and energy policies or using “green” technologies, although all this undoubtedly is essential (Davis, 2014). More radically, it is a question of assuming more ecological models of thought and lifestyles that allow us to recognize ourselves as an integral part of the complex circle of life. It is therefore necessary to build the conditions for changing the individual and collective mentality, developing new ways of being in the world, fueled by visions capable of questioning and re-meaning the dominant paradigms. The latter, in fact, are pervaded by profoundly anti-ecological assumptions that have contributed and contribute in a decisive way to generate unsustainable cultural, political and economic assets from an environmental and social point of view. This calls into question (also) pedagogy - understood both as a specific area of knowledge and research and as a conceptual and operational perspective - and the educational professionals: while education alone is certainly not sufficient to counteract environmental degradation and social distress, however its contribution appears to be truly decisive for concretely promoting an ecological transition and a more equitable and inclusive society, as is widely attested in numerous national and international documents, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the same time, it is essential to redefine pedagogy itself through an ecologically oriented paradigm, in order to build sustainable processes, contexts and subjectivities in a complex and multifaceted historical situation.

Following this direction, an ecological gaze can be an interdisciplinary perspective (Guattari, 2015) to observe practices and actions, also in the educational field. An ecological approach can therefore be employed to analyze any living, working, educational, sociotechnical environment (Barnett & Jackson, 2019). The point is not the type of context we are observing, but the way in which it is conceived and interrogated. At this regard, these conceptual lenses interpret the practices through some basic assumptions: first of all, the units of analysis are ecosystems, therefore complex ensembles

consisting of interactions between networks of heterogeneous elements (Braidotti, 2013; 2019); the reference to the concept of “networks” is thought as a whole of hybrid actors (Fenwick, Edwards & Sawchuk, 2011), at the same time natural-cultural, discursive, social and material. In this sense, the focus should be placed not on individual agents, but on the relationships and processes that connect them; this perspective allows to problematize a context regarding the question of the relationship with otherness and the sustainability of the practices that take place in it.

Furthermore, an ecological perspective in pedagogy assumes the task of rethinking itself and expanding the field of experience of the subjects to help in problematizing and reconfiguring the relationships between humans, between them and non-human othernesses through multiple, sustainable and inclusive becomings (Postma, 2016). In this perspective, educating is a collective, located, problematic, reticular action, never guaranteed in its outcomes, which requires forces that connect multiple subjects and worlds, in order to translate desires and aspirations into contexts and concrete experiences, so as to disclose sustainable futures and to experience existential horizons of hope in the changing materiality of the practices within which complex ecologies continuously take shape.

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Embodied Research: Searching *on* and *through* the Body

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Abstract - The current pandemic has forced – in Italy as in many other Countries – school teachers to reconsider their way to intend and to embody their profession in everyday working life: the emergency exposed teachers as well as students to the risk of a considerable removal of embodied dimension in educational processes. These moments of change of normal relational distance and of alteration of methodologies in didactics could nevertheless reveal innovative frame of reference in the field of adult education and, in particular, in teachers training. Following the assumption of a Radical Embodied Paradigm (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1991) and Embodied Pedagogy (Gamelli, 2011, 2019), pandemic experience could encourage to focus on the importance and the value of a more embodied sensitivity and bodily consciousness in educational contexts. This contribution presents the final part of a qualitative, cooperative (Reason & Heron, 1997; Formenti, 2009) and performative inquiry (Haseman, 2006; Spry, 2016) with Primary School teachers, aimed at investigating the heuristic and transformative potential of the embodied dimension in teaching and learning processes (Bresler, 2004). It will be presented and described a video-performance that has been realized during the research process, which is based on data analysis of teachers embodied, professional narratives.

KEYWORDS: Embodied research, embodiment, embodied pedagogy, performative inquiry.

1. (RE)STARTING FROM THE BODY

Perception in experience leads us to contact the living matter: thinking should learn to frequent it, in order to rediscover the true origins of human knowledge, which is an intimately sensitive knowledge (Mortari, 2022, p.13).

The pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus has generated deep transformations in the school system and in the way teaching and learning processes are understood. The lack of physical presence and touch have conversely led to a renewed interest in all those aspects that constitute the physical and material texture that weaves the educational relationship. These moments of change of normal relational distance and of alteration of methodologies in didactics could nevertheless reveal innovative frame of reference in the field of adult education and, in particular, in teachers training.

“Doing school in times of pandemic continues to generate organisational and didactic reflection that aims to capitalise on the ‘lesson’ learnt, [...] becoming a precious opportunity to transform the difficulty of the moment into a flywheel for restarting and innovation” (Miur, 2021, p.3).

In the revolution of rhythms, spaces and organisation that invested the scholastic world during the pandemic events, the process of learning and teaching has been experienced – for short or long periods – in the partial or total absence of the material and sensitive texture on which the educational relationship unfolds: the embedded and shared experience.

Following the invitation contained in recent Italian ministerial indications (Miur, 2021), this forced absence can represent a precious opportunity to look with renewed interest at the bodily dimension in training processes: a reflection on the role of the body on the scene of education and training, in order to be sensitively tuned in to the contexts and in to people.

The pandemic experience has certainly renewed the invitation to look at the body as a category of thought and to outline a *making school* capable of “embodying itself in sensitive experience, aware of the corporeal roots of knowledge” (Manuzzi, 2006, p. 65). This is a trigger for promoting educational paths able to make the lived body the subjective, intersubjective junction, capable of bringing everyone’s story – of students first and foremost, but also of teachers – to school.

What about teachers' body in all this?

The opportunity given to children to experience learning in a global manner inevitably passes through the teacher's willingness to get involved, to cultivate his or her own *bodily gaze* on the processes of which he or she is facilitator (Gamelli, 2013). Indeed, a teacher needs to develop specific skills with respect to his or her own corporeity in order to accompany children in a process of genuine exploration and discovery of the body dimension.

“It is necessary to experience first-hand the corporeal roots of knowledge, so that educating means going beyond words and weaving the threads of an educational alliance founded on that capacity to listen to oneself and to those in front of us that has the corporeal pathway as its privileged pathway” (Manuzzi, 2006, p. 90).

The research, which will be briefly presented in the following paragraphs, takes on board the need to introduce more and more widespread sensitivity to bodily aspects at school, both in teacher training and in classroom educational practice: as an area of sensitive openness to others and to the world and as a fundamental instrument of knowledge, which cannot be replaced or reduced to other linguistic and cultural codes.

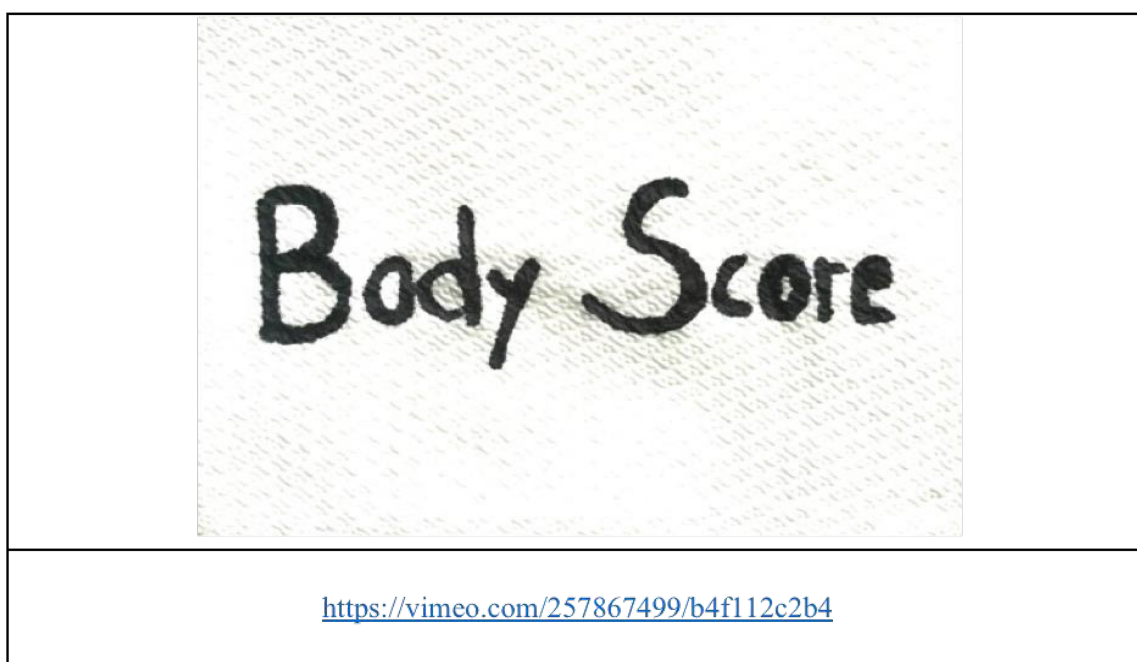


Figure 1: First screenshot from the video performance

2. EMBODIED RESEARCH

“It is timely [...] to try to address a shift of paradigm, according to an education of the corporeal sphere that indispensably means reflecting on a ‘pedagogical theory of corporeity capable of retrieving multidisciplinary contributions, especially in the fields of biology and neuroscience, on the one hand, and didactic hypotheses consistent with them, on the other” (Iavarone, 2013, p. 63).

The research/training that is the subject of this contribution is carried out with a group of primary school teachers and is aimed at investigating the reflexive and transformative potential of the embodied dimension in teaching/learning processes (Gamelli 2011): the embodied teaching (Bresler, 2004). Placed in the macro-paradigm of Embodiment (Varela, Thompson, Rosch, 1991) and in the framework of the Embodied pedagogy (Balduzzi, 2002; Isidori, 2002; Contini, Fabbri, Manuzzi, 2006; Manuzzi, 2009; Cunti, 2010; Gamelli, 2011, 2013, 2019; Iavarone, 2012; Antonacci, 2016;

Bellantonio, 2016; Gomez Paloma & Damiani 2021; Ferri, 2022) the study aims to investigate the embodied way in which each participant (teacher) interprets her professional role; at the same time, it intends to offer a context for exploring applicable tools in the daily classroom practice (Ferri, Gamelli, 2017).

This qualitative research has a participative background: a cooperative methodology is adopted (Heron, Reason 1997; Formenti 2009) in order to enhance the narrative and corporeal component and allow each participant to connect with the theme of embodied teaching in accordance with their own personal style. The design of the research-training fieldwork is made by using a somatic practice that disregards specific previous bodily experiences: Experiential Anatomy. This allows the creation of a *multi-level setting*, in which each participant can interrogate on a bodily, kinaesthetic, symbolic, representative level his or her own embodied way of experiencing teaching practices.

Each meeting focuses on a specific skeletal anatomical part and develops in listening to the resonance that that area of the body can have with respect to the posture, both symbolic and physical, of the teacher: how it becomes, through bodily and kinaesthetic activation, in contact and movement, a support for telling autobiographical and professional stories? After sharing teachers' writings, in the next step of the research process we try to bring out the implicit pedagogies in them, the local theories (Formenti, 2009). A cardinal element of cooperative research, in fact, is the use of a methodology that integrates, and enhances, different types of knowledge: *presentational knowing*, *propositional knowing*, *practical knowing* and *experiential knowing* (Reason, Heron, 1997).

Experiential Anatomy nourishes a reflexive dialogue and a constant search between awareness – of the relationships that structurally exist in our body/mind – and action. For this reason, it is a practice that offers interesting biological metaphors to reinterpret one's own professional practice. At the same time, it provides didactic, creative tools for exploring the human body – in its wholeness – with children.

Every cycle of cooperative research lean towards - and in some cases concludes with - a deliberate action: a purpose, a fragment of the research, that participants aim to bring into their professional lives.

“[Deliberate action] is not strategic action, aimed at external goals [...] but it is an intentional action that remains attentive to the meaning of the relationship: ‘who am I’, ‘who is the other to me’, ‘who am I to him’” (Formenti, 2009, p. 35).

In the research, each teacher is invited to imagine a way to turn into action the knowledge experienced during the meeting; at different levels: some intend to remain on a change of *posture* and on self-observation in relation to the students, while others feel the desire to experiment didactically in the classroom what they have gone through in the training meetings.

3. SEARCHING THROUGH A VIDEO-PERFORMANCE



Figure 2: Screenshot from the video performance: Containment

When I have concluded the empiric part of the research, I started analyzing the data, collecting together all the different kind of materials I produced in the research process: transcriptions of collective dialogues, teacher's personal writings and drawing produced during the meetings; written documentations of "deliberated actions", realized by some of the teachers in classroom with children and personal notes as researcher of each meeting. During the data analysis process using N-Vivo software, I realized that the narratives I was collecting were for me so "sensitive data" that I wanted to get in touch with them in the more sensitive and embodied way I know, as researcher, which is body practice, movement and dance (I have a background as dance educator and contemporary dancer). So, I turned into a more embodied dimension, taking a performative perspective. I began the challenge – as Robin Nelson says – of *housing the mix*: exploring performative and textual practices alongside each other.

Following Haseman (2006), I thought that the research outputs and claims to knowledge should be reported through symbolic language and forms coherent with my practice. "The argue that a continued insistence that practice-led research be reported primarily in the tradition forms of research (words and numbers) can only result in the dilution and ultimately the impoverishment of the epistemological content embedded and embodied in practice" (Haseman, 2006, p. 102).

I felt the need, as researcher, to explore more deeply this performative perspective, diving myself in a completely embodied and embedded research.

During the last two decades performative research methods gained increasing relevance as a methodological approach across the arts, humanities and social sciences. The *performance turn* in qualitative research, has reshaped entirely the debates around 'appropriate' scientific discourse, the technical and rhetorical conventions of scientific writing, and the meaning of research itself (Lincoln & Denzin 2003). The performative methodology used in the last part of the research is connected to the professional background of the researcher (as contemporary dancer and performer) and represents a

sensitive way to stay in touch with teachers' professional and personal engagement: the use of performance as research gives value to intimacy and involvement as forms of understanding (Conquergood, 1998). In the research, the video-performance uses an embodied language in order to create a resonant pattern able to deal with relational intensity in teachers' job (see Fig. 1).

Here, using the aesthetic dimension in the research process allowed me to create a composition (Formenti 2009) that offered teachers the possibility of mirroring themselves, thus becoming conscious observers of their own professional stories. The video performance that I brought to the teachers at the *returning moment* of the research, a video production of about 5 minutes, had a huge impact on the group (see Fig. 2). My "laying bare" as a researcher, physically entering into the data, in a radically embodied manner, produced great participation in the teachers: the restitution meeting was strongly self-managed by the group. The participants started a dense, rich and autonomous reflection on the bodily dimension involved in their daily work in contact with children, as had never happened during all the other research meetings. The introduction of the aesthetic/performative element within the school research setting proved to be a powerful activator, triggering a high level of participation in the group. The moment of restitution was a fundamental step in the process because the reflections with the participants that ensued transformed "my" performative composition into a shared thought with respect to the entire research process carried out together, relaunching it and opening up new questions and thus possible developments for future research related to the bodily dimension of the teaching profession.

4. CONCLUSION

The research highlights some peculiar aspects of teaching profession: in particular, the investigation through embodied and autobiographical narratives shows the constant physical and emotional strain in daily classroom work. Teaching is an immersive job and it requires huge energy investment, from a physical and also emotional-relational point of view. The research shows that this element is as obvious in teachers' professional perception as it is a relevant hidden data, because it is very few thematized at an institutional, educational and legislative level. At least in Italy.

The performative dimension in the research made possible to highlight participant's personal elements of subjectivity (and beauty) in presenting their way of embodying their profession. The research points out the relevance of a mutual support in the school environment when colleagues act as a supportive network. In particular, teachers pointed out that the embodied and performative aspect of the cooperative research process offered a participatory space, a supportive meeting place, which allowed an *honest* – as they say – professional dialogue.

If beauty lies in the connection, in the link between us and the world, it is an element that, under the sway of urgency and programs, schools often terribly need. The aesthetic dimension draws a necessary suspension time for any practice of listening and observation, whether it is directed towards research, as in my case, or towards educational or didactic action in the classroom, as in psychomotor practice, thus becoming valuable in enhancing the knowledge of the "practicals" (Mortari 2009). The beauty of a child's gesture in bodily play speaks to us of a harmony between needs and aspirations; that kind of beauty is realized when there is a state of ample, peaceful presence in the gesture that is performed, which is perfectly in line with one's needs and at the same time one's aspirations at that precise moment; and it is a beauty that produces recognition (Dallari 2017). The bodily dimension in educational research makes it possible to give a syntax and thus a tangible form to relational aspects that are often invisible, because it can interrogate a level of presence, energy, intrinsically relational and contextual that is difficult to detect unless the researcher is radically embodied, as happened in my work. And this, under the theoretical umbrella of embodiment opens up many creative and innovative forms of research on and with the body, which can feed on a fruitful cross-fertilization between heterogeneous practices of body matrix, education and research.

Beauty, embodiment and sharing: these could be some good, innovative seeds for teachers' well-being in future school.

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Social Representations during the first SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic Wave of 2020 in Italy. Learning from Emotional Education to Redesign a Resilient Future

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Abstract - From 2020, Sars-CoV-2 Pandemic has provoked forms of psychological distress, exclusion and marginalization in children, adolescents, adults and seniors. The research aims to: a) studying the representations and emotions experienced related to the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic Wave of 2020 in Italy; b) explore the prevailing emotions, changes in people's lifestyle, fears or hopes for the future; b) investigate the aspect of interpersonal relationships, the educational message generated by the health emergency and the judgment of people on distance learning that Italian schools and universities have activated. The research was conducted with an integrated approach: Medical Humanities included the theoretical reference scenario for reading the social representations of Covid-19; emotional education for the re-planning of existences, education for sustainability in eco-psychological orientation for the prospects of change.

KEYWORDS: representations, pandemic, learning, emotions, resilience.

1. INTRODUCTION

The research started from the observation, in the various contexts of family and professional life, of the impacts that the restrictions imposed by the Italian government had on the elderly, adults, adolescents and children in the first wave of SARS-CoV-2 in 2020, offering a stimulus to reflect on current changes and future prospects.

The objectives of the research were: a) to explore the prevailing emotions linked to the pandemic, changes in people's lifestyles and fears or hopes for the future; b) to investigate the aspect of interpersonal relations; c) to delve into the educational message generated by the health emergency and people's opinion of the distance learning that Italian schools and universities have activated.

The research was conducted with an integrated approach: the Medical Humanities included the theoretical reference scenario for the reading of the social representations of SARS-CoV-2, emotional education for the redesigning of existences and education for sustainability in the eco-psychological orientation for the prospects of change.

2. RESEARCH SCENARIOS

The article intends to read the current 'crisis' generated by SARS-CoV-2 as a problem of commitment and responsibility of research to build answers for the future, starting with reflection on the actions to be taken to redesign people's lives.

In this perspective, pedagogy and the other human sciences in general aim to build the future, with an eye towards all generations: so that they can re-learn to dream, to hope, to plan a life projected towards tomorrow (Buccolo, 2015).

Bauman (2009) depicts the time of modernity as a set of scattered dots that do not indicate any future trajectory, but invite us to live the present, without allowing projects, desires, dreams to be realised, but 'occasions' to be consumed

according to a logic that motivates only to enjoy the ephemeral possibility of the now, living in the dimension of the momentary as a form of a life without prospects.

The immobility of the present time, "suffered rather than experienced", emphasises the most negative aspects of a generalised global, material and immaterial crisis (Galimberti, 1994), with which we are accustomed to identifying contemporary society: we speak of a health, economic, political and social crisis; but also of a crisis of values and education (Tramma, 2008), grasping only the negative meaning of the term as opposed to the positive one of transformation, change, and therefore also of evolution and design of the new towards which this research focuses.

The image of such an unstable and pressing reality is linked to the concept of a liquid society (Bauman, 2002), complex (Morin, 2011), which is at the same time a source of opportunities and dangers that, in some cases, can lead to devastating consequences.

We note, therefore, the need to promote an educational action aimed at the person in his or her entirety and to give space to all his or her needs, embracing all the constituent dimensions, not limiting itself only to the cognitive-rational level, but also integrating the emotional one.

Education is called upon to support the person in his or her path of self-realisation, in line with what Nussbaum and Sen (1993) stated in the Capability Approach, for which the path to happiness is pursued through the discovery and development of one's own potential.

Education has the task of accompanying the individual to face and overcome the alienation, loneliness and uncertainty of the modern world, based on ethical and not exclusively economic principles, so as to build more inclusive and sustainable social environments.

It is therefore necessary to revolutionise our 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman, 2005) and activate actions to support the redesigning of existences in order to restore hope, depth to life and the search for serenity in everyday life.

In such a scenario, it is essential to recover the emotional dimension that has long been repressed (Damasio, 1996; Cambi, 2015) due to the suspicion and fear arising from its unpredictability, seen as an element of disturbance or disorder, while very little has been done to teach how to cultivate and protect it. Emotions influence cognitive skills and, conversely, certain emotional experiences give rise to cognitive representations and certain 'ways of thinking'.

Developing emotional competence, therefore, means acquiring awareness and responsibility for one's emotional life (Iori, 2009), that is, 'becoming emotionally literate' (Contini, Fabbri, Mannuzzi, 2006), learning to stay in touch with our deepest experience, including our bodily and emotional experience.

3. METHODS

3.1. Setting and participants

The exploratory work carried out moves within the framework of participatory action research (Orefice, 2006), following an integrated research approach that takes place at the time of the investigation through the collection and analysis of data, of education understood as self-education of the individual subject who develops a reflexive and transformative action (Striano, 2002) and of social action aimed both at the development of the awareness that we are all interdependent and participants in a common planetary destiny (Morin, 2016) and at the improvement of the living conditions of children, young people, adults and the elderly.

Those involved in filling out the online questionnaire were, in turn, activators of further internal research processes. The investigative action implemented, therefore, was not purely instrumental, but intentionally constructed to set in

motion the processes of activation of the subject, which made it possible to emphasise both the change in individual behaviour and points of view, and the importance of personal reflection and action for the transformation of the world.

3.2. Procedure

An online questionnaire (Google Forms) was used to collect the research data. However, the restrictions imposed by the quarantine did not allow the instrument to be validated by selecting an even larger sample of people.

Nevertheless, the research results represent an interesting starting point for further research into the phenomenon, which could be undertaken in the post-pandemic period.

3.3. Survey development

The questionnaire is divided into three sections with a total of 32 questions. The sections were identified from the need to explore social representations of Covid-19 (Farr Robert, Moscovici, 1989) and emotions (Buccolo, 2019), which will be the starting point for designing the necessary change (Morin, 2001).

The first section was dedicated to the collection of general data on the subjects participating in the exploration and on their socio-healthcare perceptions of Covid-19; the second section was aimed at collecting the emotional aspects related to the perception of the phenomenon; the third section stimulated reflections on the change of life in moments of health emergency.

The survey, addressed without any restrictions to all people resident in Italy, was sent via email and whatsapp to people and groups interested in this type of research, with widespread distribution via Facebook and published in online magazines and newsletters with national distribution.

The questionnaire, which was active from Tuesday 24 March to Saturday 18 April 2020, was filled in by 5,518 people.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the research can be summarised by taking the clusters of the survey constructed for this study: a) General data; b) Section I - Representations of the phenomenon: general aspects; c) Section II - Representations of the phenomenon: emotional aspects; d) Section III - Reflections on the change of life over time of COVID-19.

4.1. Research results – General data

Almost 80% of the sample collected was female subjects. The most represented group is between 51 and 65 years of age. More than half is employed. The majority has a high school diploma. Almost half live with their wife/husband and children. Note that almost more than 14% live alone at home at the time the questionnaire was completed. The nationality of the subjects is mainly Italian and the sample covers all twenty regions of our country.

4.2. Research results of Section I - Representations of the phenomenon: general aspects

Regarding the perception of Covid 19, almost the entirety considered themselves to be 'fully aware and informed' and almost 60% had a high perception of the danger level of the virus. The media most frequently used to keep abreast of the spread and consequences of COVID-19 are the official websites of the institutions and TV. The level of confidence in the COVID-19 containment measures taken by the institutions is, for the most part, quite high. According to most of the sample, COVID-19 was initially confused with a seasonal flu' and, moreover, more swabs should have been taken'.

4.3. Research results of Section II - Representations of the phenomenon: emotional aspects

Experienced emotions were anxiety, sadness, fear, vulnerability, resilience, acceptance, trust, confusion, empathy. Level of fear of being infected is “enough”. Concerning the self-management of emotions, most stated to 'take note of the situation and try to turn negative emotions into positive ones'. Experienced fear: nearly 80% YES, In particular: "not being able to see the people I love" and "not being able to return to normal life". Positive thoughts: nearly 96% YES. In particular, related to: "the small joys of everyday life". The first thing I will do after the national emergency period: "embracing loved ones"; "take a walk in nature". Emotions I will feel after the national emergency: joy, freedom, gratitude and others. Reflection; resilience; taking stock of one's life; listening, are the words that best summarize the educational message of the health emergency.

4.4. Research Results of Section III - Reflections on Life Change at COVID-19

Related to the question “How does it feel to be locked up at home”, more than half "quite at ease", but more than 26% "not at ease". Smart-working judgment is between "quite and very useful". Distance learning judgment: “quite effective" for more than half, but "not very effective" for almost 33%. Main problems on distance learning are:

- "many parents have more children at home: IT tools are not enough for everyone" (50.6%);
- “connection/network coverage problems” (48.2%);
- "lack of specific teacher training" (45.6%);
- “many parents already face daily family management problems and cannot also deal with distance learning for the learning of their children/teenagers” (41%).

5. DISCUSSION

The data collected confirm that pedagogy must be configured as a science that can and must provide its contribution in the education of the citizen (Callari Galli, Cambi, Ceruti, 2003; Sirignano, 2019) and of the education professional (Corbi, Perillo, Chello, 2018; Strollo, 2006), especially in this historical moment, which has invested all aspects of personal and social life. Moreover, special educational attention must be paid to the phenomenon of fake news (Ferro Allodola, 2021), for example in the topic of “vaccine confidence/hesitancy” (Biasio, Bonaccorsi, Lorini & Pecorelli, 2021).

The reading of perceptions and emotional experiences is linked to the "feeling" of people in the Covid-19 era in order to understand moods, reactions and construct paths of reflection that can lead to immediately assessing more or less sudden changes in the environment, reacting accordingly (Riva, 2004) and rethinking one's existence.

Anxiety, sadness, fear, anger are just some of the emotions we detected and which had a great impact on the reconfiguration of people's lives in their homes. The greatest fear expressed by people during the first wave of Covid-19, is certainly that of not being able to re-embrace their loved ones, followed by the impossibility of returning to normal life, the fear of contagion and death. The alternation of negative and positive emotions is clearly expressed, and most people are aware of their negative emotional experiences, but through resilience and listening they seek the foothold of positive thoughts to move forward.

Coming out of Covid-19 in a perspective view of reality, people expressed positive by putting reconciliation with loved ones first, regaining the small daily joys of life, from walking in nature to visiting friends and returning to practising their hobbies.

The educational message that that moment of emergency brought was represented by most people by the word 'reflection', followed by 'resilience', 'taking stock of one's life' and 'listening'.

The transversal reading of the data collected in the three sections of the questionnaire, requires pedagogical reflection to make its own contribution to the design of a sustainable change (Malavasi, 2003) that can, in turn, support the redesigning of existences even at times strongly characterised by the unpredictability of the flow of life.

A complex, eco-systemic approach to designing change in a pedagogical perspective (Formenti & West, 2018) presupposes overcoming the traditional separation of subject and object and developing design skills dedicated to reading the dynamism of social contexts and the complexity of the relationship between needs/responses.

The sustainable educational design that we need in order to reprogramme our lives will have to express a transformative possibility for the future that each person will live in common with others, aware of their action within the one Earth community (Birbes, 2019).

We need to consider Sense of Coherence (SOC - Antonovsky, 1979) as a potential resource that can foster the ability to cope with stressors among different cultural groups.

Mindfulness, for example, as an experiential learning practice in the educational community involving teachers, students and parents, to promote awareness and emotional competence.

The continuous transformations have especially affected the development of personal and social skills, which in 2020 gave rise to the creation of the European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence," known as LifeComp (Table 1).

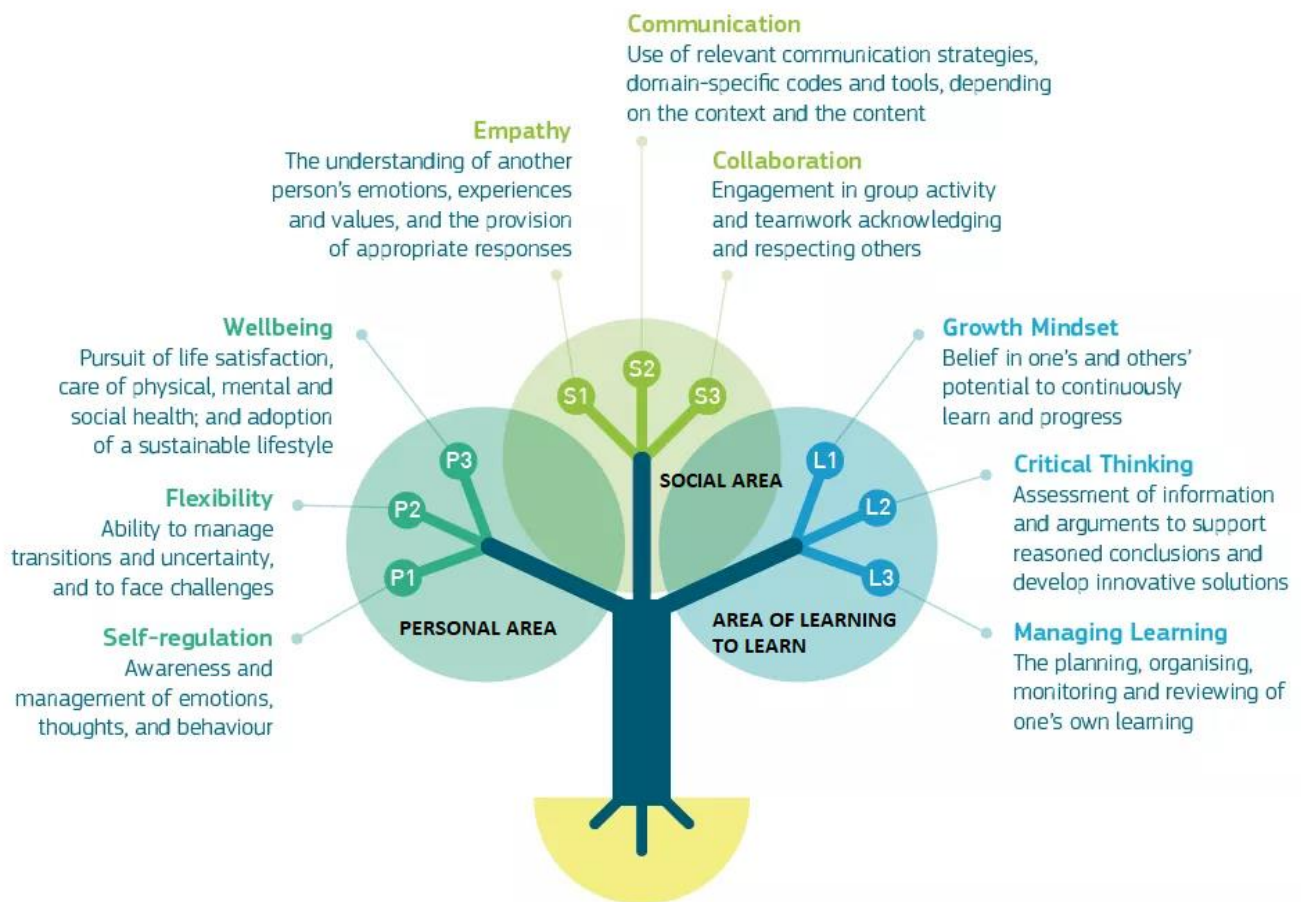


Table 1: LifeComp 2020, divided into the three areas (personal, social, learning to learn).

In LifeComp, therefore, awareness about one's own potential and emotional competence represent crucial skills for the development of psycho-physical and social well-being and enable the recognition in emotional experiences and affective states of the important role they play in the maturation of the individual. The research, moving from these reflections of a pedagogical and didactic nature, sought to highlight the importance of emotional life skills by linking them within the LifeComp 2020 Framework to re-design training paths centered on reading the needs of the subject. We can, therefore, state that in order to know how to recognize, express and manage emotions, we need to re-think continuing education that has at its center activities based on the development of emotional intelligence.

6. CONCLUSION

During the first wave of Sars-CoV-2 Pandemic, it emerged that the dominant emotions are fear and the spread of the perception of insecurity, and that these have undermined the feeling of trust at the foundations and increased a strong resistance to recognising the other and his or her needs.

The isolation and spread of negative thoughts and actions is a characteristic of these times, on which it is useful to focus new approaches to study and pedagogical research, proposing strategies, tools and methodologies that can help build more acceptable conditions of coexistence.

To be lasting, this result must be based on a project of social creativity and shared planning, as participatory as possible between the Institutions.

Authorship Attribution

Although the research was conducted jointly, paragraphs 2 and 5 are by Maria Buccolo, and paragraphs 1 and 3 by Valerio Ferro Allodola. Conclusion are common to the two authors.

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Digitalization and Democracy: A Context Paper

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Abstract - Through the perspective of adult education, this paper tries to conceptualize democracy in the context of digitalization, power circumstances, and dynamics in the digital realm, as well as digital politics and digitalization in the public space focusing on adult learners, teachers, and educators, their digital skills, and the role of ALE in Democracy and Digitalization. This co-production work, forged through international research, debate and co-working group discussions, aims to shift mentalities toward empowering the people in public decision-making and personal development, offering access to digital outlets and building safe spaces for active engagement in international digital contexts.

KEYWORDS: Digitalization, digitization, adult education, ALE, adult learning, democracy, democratization.

1. DEMOCRACY CONCEPTUALIZATION IN THE PREMISE OF DIGITALIZATION AND ALE POSITION

Recognizing the quality and practical imprint of power dynamics in the digital public sphere is vital when examining the impact of digital communities on democratic coexistence (Burkholder, Makramalla, Abdou, Khoja, & Khan, 2015).

Additionally, we should ask how does digital coexistence effects power dynamics? How might digital methods alleviate power disparities? To that, one answer was offered in Freire's work. He shows social, political, and economic 'codifications' (Peckham, 2003). Codification may be interpreted as (visual and/or aural) representations of common situations. Agreeing with this approach and considering it to be a valuable tool, we argue that educators may help people externalize codifications about themselves, the world, and others in the digital arena that they could not otherwise express.

Hooks (Hooks, 1994) sees visual artefacts as being made and consumed via political lenses of gender, racism, and class, adding the factor of quality, which may be especially intriguing in how digital space interacts with intersectional identities. We add to this the question of how these intersectional identities shape the adult education scene.

In digital space, the internal manifestation of the exterior community is always changing owing to button-click interactions. Because of low-threshold member contributions and interactions, online circumstances change constantly. Cyber, online, or digital communities are in many cases not confined by the coexistence of physical space, but rather the decision of sharing interests, disputes, shared behaviours, and ideals as well as the ambition to share (learning) experiences. Visible or invisible participation, unapologetic communication and learning, anonymous participation and virtual identity, the freedom to join and leave the community at any time, no formal reporting system, deliverables, or deadlines, asynchronous communication, and the lack of communication cues (body language and facial expression) are distinctive for this community building.

1.1. Public Space, Digitalization and Democracy

John R. Parkinson argues in "Democracy and Public Space" (Parkinson, 2012) that digital access to shaping information and creating content has broadened the conventional venues of democracy assemblies. In this context, it is interesting to review how this power shift has created digital public spaces, what dynamics are created and maintained there, and how democratic citizens are embodied, occupy space, struggle for access to physical resources, and perform democracy on physical stages at least as much as they engage with ideas in virtual space.

Techno-optimistic ideas and studies on digitalization stress the construction of a digital agora and enhanced participation options for society (Le Blanc, 2020), as well as the internet's ability to deepen democracy through inventive policymaking. Grass-root approaches (Decidim, Citizen OS, adhocracy) aim to digitally organize and engage citizens in public discourses, stress Open Data, and improve co-governance and participation. The demand for more transparency in governance is rising in many areas as digitalization, data generation and data sharing increase. This demand has already led to concrete government action and global re-thinking of information and data cultures, improving the digital agora and increasing democracy with technology. Using data to construct digital communities, however, raises questions regarding how and by whom digital citizenship and participation are defined.

Public space, whether physical, virtual, or social, exists via the people who create and operate in it. For a digital space to be considered an effective public space, we should ensure data transparency, access, and security, and develop a digital public space that includes and benefits its members. Here adult education comes into play, looking at it from the perspective of a source that generates skills to access, knowledge to understand and attitudes to participate. ALE is one major avenue through which we consider citizens can gain access, representation and substantial contribution.

The Internet is considered a common area to which all people should have access, but many Europeans lack the technology, due to financial reasons or availability, the necessary connectivity or appropriate digital skills to access all benefits of the internet equally, making digital citizenship unavailable to a large part of the population and increasing economic and racial inequities.

1.2. Digital Rights, the Digital Gap and ALE

As digital tools become an integral part of everyday life and participation in society, people without appropriate digital skills risk being left behind. Only 54% of Europeans aged between 16 -74 have at least basic digital skills, according to the European Commission's Digital Economy and Society Index 2022 (Commission, 2022). Technology is often seen as a solution to many societal difficulties and impediments, yet it is neither economically nor politically neutral. Skills Panorama (CEDEFOP, 2022), a joint project of the European Commission, DG ESA&I, and CEDEFOP, evaluated how digital skills are used in several European nations and states that in 2019, e.g. 59% of Dutch people compared to only 13% of Romanians had above-basic digital skills.

This is specifically problematic with major aspects of employment and social life depending on digital engagement. Therefore, adults without basic digital literacy abilities, let alone advanced skills, are disadvantaged (Vanek, 2020) not only in seeking full-time employment but also in pro-actively participating in democratic processes. Additionally, information only available online on education, health care, finding and keeping employment, as well as engaging with family, friends, and the community are also constrained not holding the required skills and/or access. Persons living with low-income and economic marginalization (LIEM), elderly, immigrants, incarcerated people, and others with poor education are therefore typically digitally disadvantaged and consequently subject to social marginalization.

Thus, the digital lifestyle brings its chances and challenges for democracy. Those challenges are touched by other global events besides the digital revolution though, e.g. some countries' populist shift to authoritarian systems that challenge the idea of democracy as the optimum political system. The pandemic and other natural disasters threaten the democracy of regions and entire countries as well. According to the Global Monitor of COVID-19's Impact on Democracy and Human Rights (IDEA, 2020) 61% of countries had implemented "illegal, disproportionate, indefinite, or unnecessary" restrictions in several areas of democracy by November 2020.

Although not having been able to include the digital change in his work (Boyd, 2016), Paulo Freire's contributions to our perceptions adult literacy is inextricable from a citizenship critique, and thus his primary pedagogical concepts, such as problem posing, discourse, praxis, and conscientization remain relevant today. Therefore, we consider his perspective on education's function and social responsibility to be able to provide valuable inspiration for educators.

With Digital literacy not just aiming for learners to "master technology", it must also engage and empower learners to foster a *human-first* digital society. Digital literacy has to facilitate the democratization of the digital gap through adult education. In this, educators must go beyond adapting adults and their skills to the contemporary digital world, where the digital gap remains, but rather pursue a wholesome approach, putting the empowerment of the learners in the centre of the process.

Reflecting on the prevalent values in digital technology use may allow educators and learners to co-design learning goals so that education becomes liberating for people typically disenfranchised by digital disruption and creates circumstances for fair learning for all.

To effectively bridge the digital gap and promote democracy, learning must inspire action. According to Freire's notion of praxis (Freire, 1970), learning should involve critical dialogue about acting on and in the world to be transformed.

Learners are a heterogeneous bunch. They are often stigmatized and isolated from society for numerous reasons. Some, notable migrants, cannot vote in general elections due to their citizenship. Some are so-called minorities, such as Roma, and experience prejudice in their social lives, jobs, and education. Social status and poor wages preclude some. All the same factors apply to technological engagement, as most members (Chapman, Cartwright, & McGilp, 2007) of these groups cannot afford the hardware and access fees. Age, socioeconomic position, and the ability to use media beyond social media are causing a split.

Learners have numerous technological participation options. Some have personal computers and can follow media-supported courses without problems, but many rely on their mobile phones to engage in learning and may thus be limited in their options. They are not acclimated to technology beyond social media and cannot utilize e-mail, etc., or learning platforms. Learners require help with media; they lack both hardware and software. Some learners are excluded because they don't know how to get a genuine email address, and even if they have one, they don't know what to do with it.

Adult education has to inform itself of these problems, and trainers and providers have to look at their learning provisions from a learner's perspective. We cannot force learners to use technology as we imagine it to function best, we have to adapt and adjust.

Additionally the past debates about European digitalization were all related to rights. Privacy, information and confidentiality in the debates about the GDPR, copyrights, property rights and also censorship in the debates about the copyright directive or other media market regulations (Zimmermann, 2020), human autonomy, nondiscrimination, access or freedom to choose and to decide in the context of the regulatory discussions about Artificial Intelligence, biometry and platforms. Therefore, education could give rights-related approaches (again) more emphasis also inside European societies and also regarding adult learners.

2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the research work of EAEA's Working Group on digitalization, on key issues raised in the elaboration of the Context Paper (EAEA, Digitalisation Working Group, 2021), in contributions from diverse experts in recent conferences about the theme (EAEA; EPALE; UNESCO; etc.), in the [Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st century: The Power and Joy of Learning](#) (Ebner & Motschilnig, 2019); the [EAEA response to the Commission's consultation on the Digital Education Action Plan](#) (EAEA, 2020); the [EAEA Reaction the council's conclusion on improving the well-being of older persons in the era of digitalization](#) (EAEA, 2021) and the [Manifesto for enhancing digital competences across Europe – ALL DIGITAL](#) (ALL-DIGITAL, 2021).

EAEA and its partners recognize the need to address digital shortages, such as Internet connectivity, subscription prices, and access to ICT equipment for both learners and educational providers. We acknowledge the need to improve Internet infrastructure, technological equipment and gadgets, connectivity, affordability, and rural, isolated, and low-density areas' reach. Decentralized digital learning and educational possibilities ensure the right to connectivity and education (Popović, 2021) as well as digital inclusion for all. Thus, we emphasize the need to promote knowledge, skills, and attitudes, as well as community engagement and empowerment. Investing in education is one of the best ways to ensure all learners and educators have access to continuing all forms of education, including informal and non-formal education. We must invest in people and examine EU and member state adult education spending.

The policy recommendations can also be found in video form here.

Against this background, EAEA and its partners are urging the European Commission and the European Parliament to:

1. Recognize and promote formal and non-formal adult learning and education in developing a human-first digital society. Value ALE as a vital approach for more democracy in digitalization for Europe.
2. Support adult education to teach life skills to adapt to a world of uncertainty and rapid change, and to predict and shape future developments to build a better society for all.
3. Create synergies between literacy, digital skills, and critical media learning and education, providing inclusive and meaningful integrated technologies in literacy programmes to ensure lifelong and life-wide learning and education for all, addressing the challenge of not leaving anyone behind and beyond economic qualification.
4. Support lifelong and life-wide learning and education, active citizenship, inclusivity, employment, and well-being via confident and critical use of digital technologies. Develop alternative ways the Internet can promote democracy, share them, and foster critical thinking and media literacy.
5. Digital citizenship extends digital competence in Education for Democratic Citizenship
6. (EDC) and Human Rights Education (HRE) In Europe and for adult learners, all education should emphasize rights-related approaches.
7. Support community learning and intergenerational learning. Boost and support international cooperation to promote digital education and learning to narrow the digital divide.

8. Vulnerable and marginalised adults face a double disadvantage in the present and future, so it is essential to ensure all adults have access to education and training for digital skills, not just as users, clients, or consumers in the digital world, but with critical thinking, as citizens exercising active citizenship and participating in building democracy. Considering the prospects and risks for older people in a digitalized environment, the elderly must be educated.

9. Promote in-service training, support, and develop communities of practice that allow educators to create and share knowledge that facilitates the integration of technology transversally in teaching and learning, not as tools but as empowering instruments to promote andragogical innovation, from a real perspective that technologies serve learning and education, empowers learners and educators, not bureaucratic based-control centralised systems.

10. Align educator/teacher professionalization with a European framework for adult education specialists, recognizing initial training, CPD, and practice-based abilities. A framework may also include educator/teacher attitudes and beliefs (e.g., tolerance).

11. Pedagogy and andragogy-driven research. Recognize and encourage neuro-diversity in learners and teachers, and invest in research on how digital environments affect neuro-diversity and learning/teaching performance.

12. Enforce data transparency, access, and security, and develop a digital public space that includes and benefits everyone. Digital literacy and democracy should emphasize interaction, representativeness, openness, and transparency.

We are also extending a set of questions to the professionals and the practitioners in the field of adult education, as a concluding challenge to our work:

- How can stakeholders in ALE be encouraged to help build democratic learning settings where both learners and educators interact in the collaborative production of knowledge and development of skills?
- How can educators help learners identify and critically understand specific digital cultures, which itself implies certain values, beliefs and power dynamics?
- How can educators collaborate with learners to interrogate the status quo and pursue a more equitable and just society toward full digital citizenship for all?
- What creative methods can educators employ to help learners engage in critical thinking activities as part of their learning efforts?

Against this backdrop, we are challenging the public sphere by posing the following question: Are ALE Educators who work towards Digitalization and Democracy effectively reaching all social groups and empowering all individuals, or are we simply reproducing existing inequalities and the status quo of power dynamics?

We believe neither of these provocative perspectives is accurate. Evidently, policymakers and ALE stakeholders have made substantial efforts to enable learners to overcome the technical and sociological obstacles of digital transformation. However, technologies are not economically nor politically neutral, and the causes of the digital divide persist.

In essence, this expose views ALE as strategically significant in order to stimulate thought about our modern digital-first culture. It also believes that ALE is crucial in facilitating the democratic transition into a digitally inclusive human-first society. Specifically, ALE can contribute by:

- promoting engagement and critical participation in digital public spaces;
- adopting Open Education Resources and Open Data best practises;
- and encouraging democratic and safe learning environments in which learners and educators co-contribute to the production of knowledge, skill development, and change.

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Coping With Change? How Swiss Adult Education Providers Adapt to Current Challenges at the Organisational Level

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Abstract - As we will show in the following paper, the disruptive changes in environmental conditions have exerted strong pressure on adult education organisations to adapt to the new circumstances. Firstly, we outline the current economic situation, specifically developments at the level of supply and demand and staffing. Moreover, we examine which factors lead to increased pressure for change in adult education providers. Finally, we look at the scope and goal of change of organisational structures and corporate strategies. We specifically focus on how Swiss adult education providers are adapting their organisational structures, offer and programme planning, and corporate strategies, to cope with current challenges.

1. INTRODUCTION

The last two years have seen major upheavals in the wake of the Corona pandemic and its social and economic impact. Partly because of the prevention of physical interaction, adult education was deeply affected. However, research to this point has primarily focused on the effects on teaching-learning interactions.¹ There is still almost no information about the effects on the organisational level. By presenting data on organisational change in Swiss adult education, we would like to contribute to closing this research gap. The data was collected with a survey conducted by the Swiss Federation for Adult Learning in spring 2022.

As we will show in the following paper, the disruptive changes in environmental conditions have exerted strong pressure on adult education organisations to adapt to the new circumstances. Firstly, we outline the current economic situation, specifically developments at the level of supply and demand and staffing. Moreover, we examine which factors lead to increased pressure for change in adult education providers. Finally, we look at the scope and goal of change of organisational structures and corporate strategies. We specifically focus on how Swiss adult education providers are adapting their organisational structures, offer and programme planning, and corporate strategies, to cope with current challenges. To this purpose, we draw on organisational theories of adult education research.

A particularity to Switzerland is its multilingualism. A big share of the adult education market works in the German speaking part. Slightly less are active in the French speaking part of Switzerland or in different regions simultaneously. Furthermore, categorising the education providers based on their institutional volume, most providers are small or medium sized institution. Only a share of less than 10% are considered large enterprises. Finally, the Swiss adult education market has a distinct character in the form of financing. Most adult education providers are privately owned, with roughly one in ten which are state-owned institutions.

2. METHODOLOGY

The Swiss Federation for Adult Learning conducts an annual online survey with adult education providers in Switzerland. At the moment, it is the only periodic observation of adult education institutions in Switzerland.

As part of a systematic monitoring process, the annual survey consists of recurring standardized questions which focus on four central dimensions of the adult education market: economic situation, demand, supply, and staffing. For each of the four dimensions the providers are asked to estimate the development in the previous year and the development of the upcoming year, since the survey is always conducted in springtime. With all four estimations for the previous year an index is constructed giving an overall impression of the situation of the previous year in the adult education market. A

¹ See f.e. Denninger and K apflinger, 2021; European Commission, 2020.

similar index is constructed for the estimations for the upcoming year, giving an overall estimation of the expectations in the field.

Moreover, the survey focuses on a changing key topic every year. The focus of the survey conducted between April and May 2022 was on changes on the organisational level of adult education providers. The questionnaire was sent out to 2'395 education providers. The net sample size of the analysis is at 210 valid cases. These data, analysed on a descriptive level, provide the basis for further qualitative research. The survey data for 2022 was further explored with three focus group discussions with various adult education providers. The group discussion is a particularly suitable method for organisational research, as the communication dynamics that arise in groups allow access to collective perceptions and interpretations on the one hand, and individual experiences on the other (Dollhausen, 2010, p. 97). In the following paper, we present selected findings from these discussions in order to deepen the quantitative data.

3. ECONOMIC SITUATION OF ADULT EDUCATION PROVIDERS IN SWITZERLAND

The corona pandemic and the related restriction have had an unmatched impact on the adult education providers in Switzerland. In both years (2020 and 2021) the Swiss adult education providers assessed their economic situation before the corona-pandemic (in retrospect) broadly positive. However, both times most respondents then estimated their economic situation at the time as rather difficult. Similarly, the development of the demand in 2021 (in retrospect) was estimated to be falling for 2020. At the same time, the adult education providers estimated an ongoing decline or sustenance for the demand in 2021. With these estimations from the 2021 data adult education providers did not seem to recover from the COVID-19 crisis.

The data from the 2022 polls, however, suggest a slow recovery of the adult education market. The participating organisations expect a mildly positive economic situation for the current year (2022). Half the respondents (50%) consider a positive development of their economic situation.

In contrast to the mildly positive expectations, the expectations for the staffing situation, however, is undecided (neither positive, nor negative). Most providers do not expect great changes in the staffing situation. On the one hand it might be a reluctance to recruitment because of the slow economic recovery and uncertain future. On the other hand, however, one might assume that the institutions are not able to find qualified staff. One underlying assumption is with an emphasis on the qualifications of the trainers. With the pandemic and the digitalisation trainers experienced a shift in their competences, such as in online-teaching. Another hint behind the stagnating recruitment might be the lack of trainers open to work. Research point out how freelancing trainers were laid off (Poopalapillai, Gollob and SGIER, 2021) and therefore, might have changed their career path (Probst, 2020).

To understand the overall situation of the adult education providers the survey asks for their current challenges. In the past years, the restrictions bound to the COVID-19 pandemic rolled a wave of digitalisation over the education providers facing them with a diversification in the offer. Therefore, many providers faced the challenge of combining online and present teaching in the best possible way. In the 2022 survey the digitalisation in the offer (as with the diversification) was mentioned once more. Digitalisation, however, seems to concern not only the area of the offer but the whole institution. Moreover, many adult education providers state the uncertainty as a major challenge. On the one hand this is still related to the corona pandemic as it is uncertain if the measures will be reintroduced. On the other hand, the providers face an uncertainty with their clientele. The providers struggle to understand and estimate the needs for the (future) learners.

4. CHANGE ON THE ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

Herbrechter/Schrader (2016, p. 1) describe adult education as a multi-level system. They distinguish the level of educational governance, the level of organisations and the level of teaching-learning interactions. In this system, adult education organisations are understood as differently designed "specific frameworks for teaching-learning interactions". Thus, the teaching-learning interaction is the core process of any adult education organisation.

The structure of the organisational framework is strongly dependent on its environment (ibid., p. 18). Adult education organisations have to respond to educational needs communicated by different stakeholders such as educational policy, the economy, the individual etc. This is why changes in the environment always require changes in the organisations themselves (Dollhausen and Schrader, 2015, p. 174).

The Corona pandemic as a moment of crisis (Alhadeff-Jones, 2021) led to massive changes in environmental conditions. The results of the Provider Survey 2022 show that the pressure for change at the organisational level is currently high. More than half of the Swiss providers consider the pressure for change at the organisational level to be large to very large. This is strongly linked to the developments in the wake of the Corona pandemic. 76% state that the pressure to change has increased due to the pandemic.

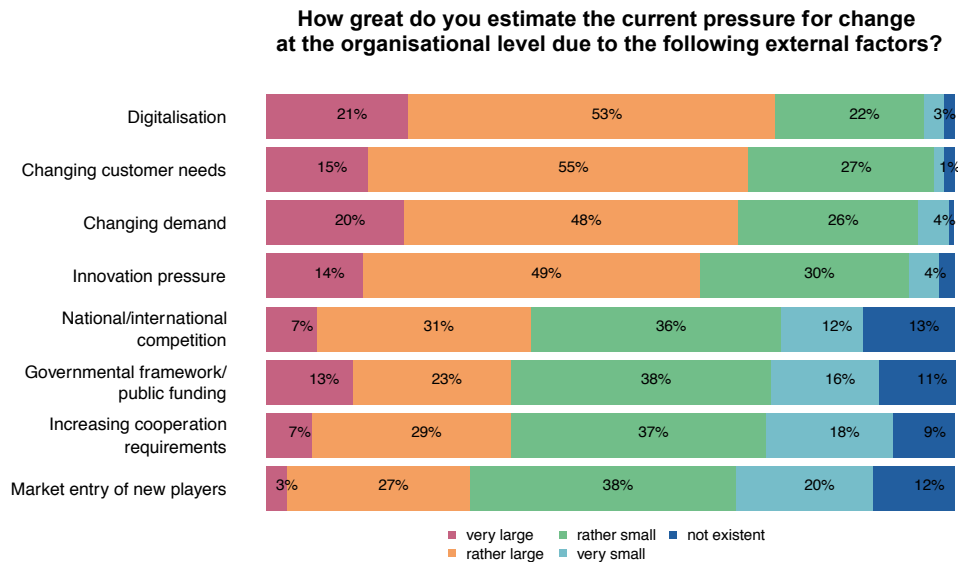


Figure 1: External factors of pressure for change, N=135

The pressure is particularly determined by external factors (see fig. 1). Many providers consider the pressure to change due to digitalisation (74%), changing customer needs (70%) and changing demand (67%) to be particularly high. But many also mention the pressure to innovate (63%). Less relevant for Swiss providers, on the other hand, are questions of competition and the state framework conditions.

In the group discussions it became clear that for many providers, the changing customer needs represent a particular challenge, as traditional course formats are often no longer convincing. Participants do not want to invest too much time and money. Instead, they want individually tailored offers. Companies in particular are also asking for shorter courses. They demand on-site courses that address concrete problems in everyday work. As a result of the pandemic, it has also become a matter of course that continuing education providers are able to implement parts of the courses online, depending on their wishes.

The pressure that is triggered by the demand side can also be seen specifically at the level of offer and programme planning (see fig. 2). Here, many providers consider the pressure to change in the areas of target group acquisition (74%) and marketing & public relations (71%) to be great to very great. But there is also need for change in the area of development of offers (72%). This shows that providers are under pressure to develop offers that meet the changing needs and to advertise them in order to convince new target groups.

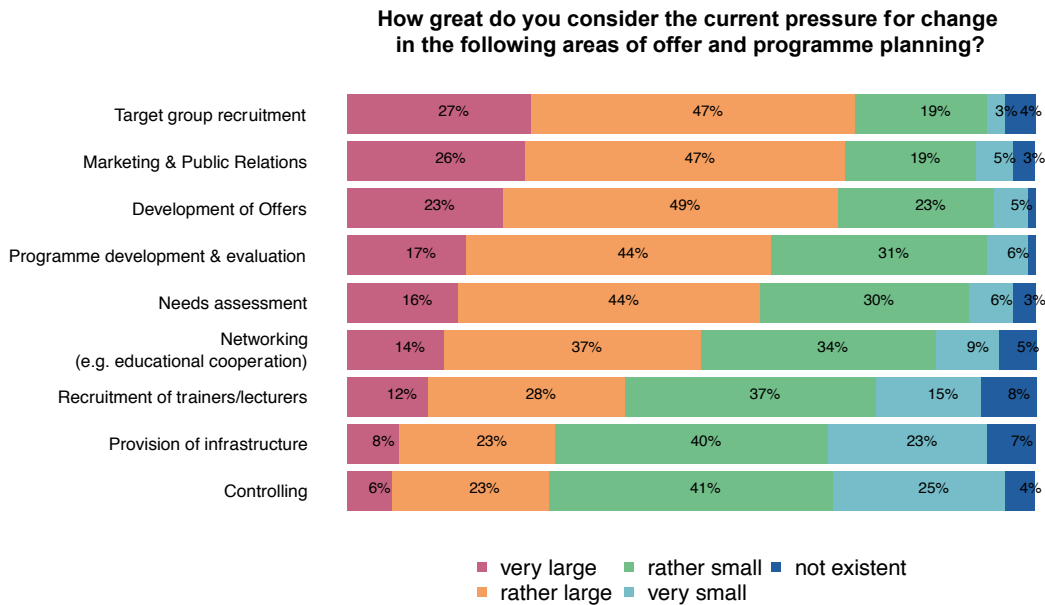


Figure 2: Pressure for change in offer and programme planning, N=186

Against the background of the great pressure for change that prevails, it is not surprising that a lot is currently changing at the organisational level:

90% of providers are making changes to organisational structures and processes.

80% are implementing changes in the area of offer and programme planning.

54% are undertaking a strategic realignment.

The changes made vary in scope (see fig. 3). Almost half of the survey participants consider the implemented or planned changes as targeted optimisation. Around 30% speak of a comprehensive further development and another 14% of a consistent realignment. In contrast, only 9% of the providers are undertaking a radical transformation.

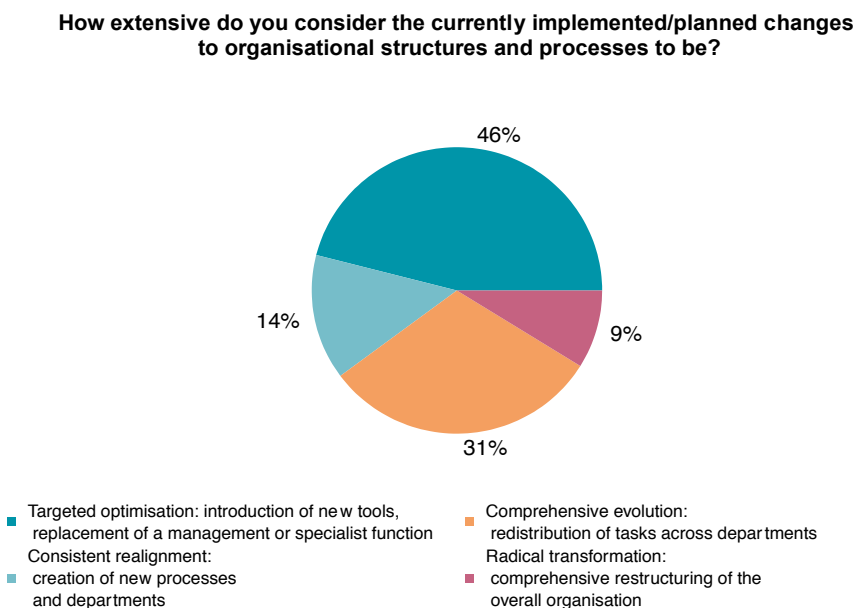


Figure 3: Extent of changes of organisational structures, N=113

This means that almost half of the providers are making targeted optimisations of processes and tools. In the group discussion it became clear that the targeted optimisation is mainly about the digitalisation of workflows and processes. This means, for example, becoming more paperless in the entire course organisation. For one provider, the optimisation consists of optimising communication processes, both externally with the participants and internally. In the course of a consistent reorientation, providers have created new departments to support digital teaching, both on the technical side and with training. These pursue the goal of supporting educational staff, but also of bringing about change step by step. For one provider who participated in a group discussion, digitalisation is the occasion for a comprehensive further development of the organisation. Since digitisation has happened very quickly with the introduction of new tools, the question currently arises as to how the organisation should be structured in the future. This means that it is now a matter of working out corresponding processes, generating strategies and concepts. An entire team is currently dedicated to this topic.

About one in ten providers is radically restructuring the organisation. One provider described the current change process in the group discussion as a radical transformation. The structures of the organisation have been adapted to create "semi-autonomous teams". The goal is greater autonomy for individual teams to become more agile. This is to be achieved by delegating more downwards and giving more responsibility to individual teams. Strengthening the autonomy and personal responsibility of employees in the context of transformation processes also leads to a change in organisational culture. It has become much more important that all employees, but also the clients, can identify with the organisation. Ultimately, this should also serve the acquisition of customers.

The providers were asked what goals they pursue with their changes on a structural as well as strategic level (see fig. 4). They were asked to indicate the first three priority goals. Many of the changes of structures and processes are aimed at increasing agility, but other topics such as developing the organisational culture and increasing turnover are also priorities for many.



Figure 4: Goals of organisational changes, N=114

The goals of the strategic realignment are very diverse (see fig. 5). The three most frequently mentioned goals are the adaptation of the target group/customer base, growth and digital transformation, whereby growth was most frequently mentioned as the first priority (cf. the orange bar).

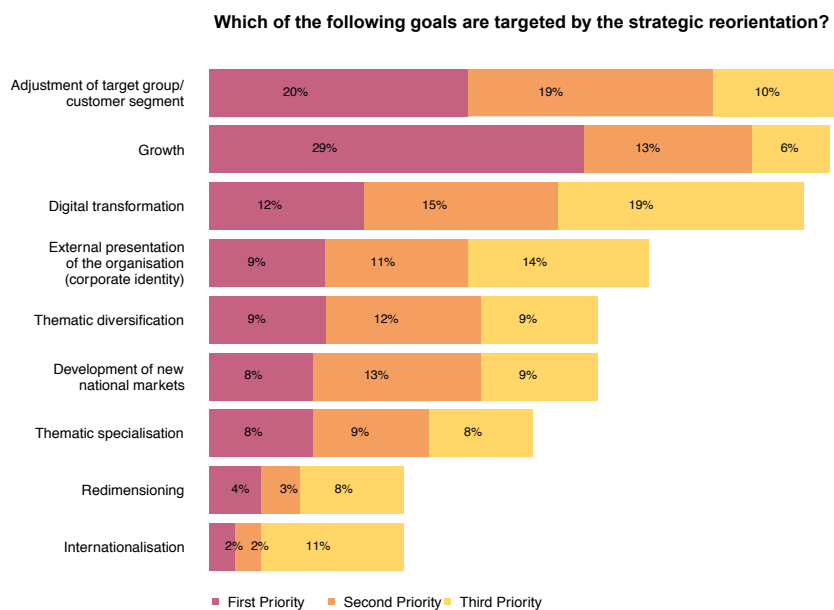


Figure 5: Goals of strategic changes N=101

5. CONCLUSION

Adult education organisations have been confronted with major challenges in the last two years. As in the rest of Europe, most providers in Switzerland were in an extremely difficult economic situation as a result of the Corona pandemic. For many of them, this was caused by a sharp drop in demand in 2020 and an ongoing decline for the demand in 2021. The data from the survey conducted in spring 2022 suggest a slow recovery of the adult education market. Nevertheless, roughly every fifth participating organisation assessed its economic situation as difficult. Many providers state the uncertainty as a major challenge, especially with regard to the development of demand. The providers are noticing a change in demand, as well as in learning needs but struggle to understand and estimate where this development is going. Digitalisation continues to occupy them as well, as pressure to innovate remains high. These challenges create strong pressure for change in adult education organisations.

Swiss adult education providers are currently focusing on increasing revenue and on growth. This can be explained to a certain extent by the fact that the drop in demand and the corresponding revenue losses of the last few years have to be made up for. Most providers want to reach new target groups which requires intensive marketing measures and needs assessment. Here they are under particular pressure to make adjustments. Since participation rates have stagnated at a low level since the beginning of the pandemic, people need to be motivated to participate in adult education again. Moreover, customer acquisition is very expensive and therefore must aim at keeping a customer for a longer period of time. The providers continue to invest a lot of time in the development of trainings which meet the specific needs of the participants. As our result show, a great challenge is to manage the balancing act between educational need and economic demand. Participants often ask for individually tailored and efficient trainings, but these do not always meet their effective learning needs.

Finally, the question arises to what extent the current developments lead to comprehensive changes in adult education organisations. Almost half of the providers who participated in the survey estimate the changes as targeted optimisation within the organisation. They have introduced new, mostly digital tools in their teaching activity and adapted internal processes and cooperation. This suggests that, at least for the moment, a comprehensive structural or strategic transformation has not taken place with these providers.

However, many changes go beyond pure process optimisation. One in two providers currently develop their organisation comprehensively or even transform it completely. The changes are mainly aimed at becoming agile, digital organisations to meet the ever-changing demand and facilitate the development of flexible formats and individualised offers. For example, providers have set up new departments to train and support trainers in their digital teaching. Shorter planning cycles require new forms of cooperation and communication. Moreover, employees are becoming more demanding in terms of opportunities for flexible working, both in terms of time and location. Thus, for many adult education providers, the digital transformation goes hand in hand with a development of the organisational culture.

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Critical Social Theory and the Ontology of Hope: Implications for the Future of Adult Education

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Abstract - This paper explores how critical social theory can serve as a resource for adult educators striving to be hopeful in a world beset by multiple global problems. Drawing upon the work of Freire (1994), it considers how “hope is an ontological need”. Challenging a narrow, neoliberal perspective, opportunities to develop more creative and imaginative approaches to adult learning experiences are considered. Multiliteracies is used as an example of a critical social theory that supports learning through multimodalities, is inclusive of learners from diverse culture and language backgrounds, explores the impact of emerging technologies, and is rooted in social justice.

KEYWORDS: Critical social theory, adult education, ontology of hope, neoliberalism, multiliteracies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Paulo Freire (1998) argues that ‘hope is an ontological need’ (p. 2). As adult educators grapple with the multiple challenges facing learners in a world reeling from the impact of a global pandemic, ongoing issues with political instability, tensions over racial and cultural inequalities, and the effects of climate change, it is important to focus on that need for hope and the belief that human beings have the capacity to make positive changes. This paper argues that critical social theory is a rich resource that adult educators can draw upon to try to make sense of their work and to inform their teaching. It begins with a definition of critical social theory and then considers how theory may inform adult education and lifelong learning discourses.

2. DEFINING CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY

Although some adult education scholars situate critical social theory exclusively in the realm of radical scholarship (Collard & Law, 1991), we argue that critical social theory exists across a spectrum and is informed by a consideration of how societal variables impact upon different learning contexts and thus on adult learners’ experiences. The influence of critical social theory on the field of adult education is linked to its historical roots of programs and educators informed by a social purpose orientation, ranging from the Miles Horton and his work at Highlander to Gruntvig’s folk schools. Critical social theory informs the work of less radical (but very influential) scholars such as Peter Jarvis or Jack Mezirow, who stress the importance of critical reflection for learning, to more radical thinkers who argue for the need for radical social transformation, such as Sharhazad Mojab or John Holst.

Critical social theory emphasizes social betterment, whether this evolves from individual growth and self-reflection about one’s life and one’s role in society, or a collective engagement in learning through community development, active citizenship, and/or social activism. Yet in recent years, critical adult educators have noted the pervasive and detrimental influence of neoliberalism as the ‘common sense’ of our times (Torres, 2013; Holford, 2016), which has shifted this focus away from education connected to social purpose. David Harvery talks about the ‘naturalization’ of neoliberalism, arguing that “for any system of thought to become hegemonic requires the articulation of fundamental concepts that become so

deeply embedded in common-sense understandings that they become taken for granted” (p. 146). With its emphasis on competition and individual choice, regardless of social, cultural, or economic circumstances, neoliberalism articulates a framework for lifelong learning that negates a social justice orientation. The responsibility for provision of adult learning opportunities shifts from the state to the individual, and the values of the marketplace are evident in terms like ‘academic CEOs’ for post-secondary leaders, ‘deliverables’ for assignments, and notions of ‘productivity’ assessed by ranked scholarly outputs. In this context, learners are encouraged to develop a flexible skill set to compete for economic success and the role of the educator is to deliver and then measure whether pre-determined outcomes have been achieved.

To challenge the impact of neoliberalism on learning, critical educators raise questions about the underlying value assumptions shaping policies and programs in adult education. Critical social theory draws attention to how adult learning experiences are connected to broader social contexts as well as individual identity. The discourses of critical social theory have expanded in recent decades to consider the importance of what Nancy Fraser (2003) speaks of as ‘recognition’ issues, such as identity concerns pertaining to gender, race, sexuality, and differences in ability, along with ‘redistribution’ issues, such as equity concerns in access, opportunity, and distribution of resources. Guo (2014) explains that Fraser’s (2003) approach argues that “change must redress socioeconomic injustice as well as cultural or symbolic injustice” (p. 493). Educational goals, programs, and policies, are never neutral. They always represent a selection of values, beliefs and ideas that inform decision-making processes regarding curriculum, pedagogy, funding, assessment practices, and program design. Through the process of critical reflection, which may involve individual transformation of perspectives (Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Brookfield, 1995) or through collective learning experiences that may entail greater citizen engagement and social action (Newman, 2006; Ramdeholl, 2019), critical social theory provides insights into how learning occurs within adult education contexts.

3. HOPE AS AN ONTOLOGICAL NEED

The concept of ‘hope’ has been explored by various theorists and researchers in adult education, many of whom have been influenced by the work of the radical literacy educator, Paulo Freire (Dubin & Prins, 2011; Fenwick, 2006). Fenwick explains that “educators, through their struggles, continue to hope – for social justice and equality, for active global citizens, for learning that can make a difference” (p. 16). She explores how debates about pedagogies within the field of adult education are advanced at different levels, with various types of focus and intent, critically questioning the premises of alternative approaches to teaching and learning. “Hope is an ontological need, wrote Freire (1994), that must be *anchored in practice*, that must be historically concrete” (Fenwick, 2006, p. 16). Ultimately, the goal of education is to effect change.

Freire (1994) explains that in order to have a pedagogy of hope, there has to be opportunity for people to envision alternatives that may precipitate change:

Imagination and conjecture about a different world than the one of oppression, are as necessary to the praxis of historical ‘subjects’ (agents) in the process of transforming reality as it necessarily belongs to human toil that the worker or artisan first have in his or her head a design, a “conjecture”, of what he or she is to make (p. 30).

Dubin & Prins (2011) draw upon Freire’s work to explore “the important role imagination plays in conceptualizing hope” (p. 27). Barriers to hope exist when life conditions are overwhelmingly dismal and restrictive, and people lose their ability to imagine anything beyond basic survival, as Freire (1998) talks about when he relates a conversation with a man

living in impoverished conditions in his native Brazil. When one's personal conditions are so dire, the possibility of anything better seems impossible to even dream about.

Another dampening effect on hope that Freire (1998) alludes to is when there is a 'bureaucratization' of the mind. An openness to alternatives or different possibilities is shut off when individuals become habituated to learning in a close-minded and restrictive way, ticking off the boxes by providing the expected responses, rather than thinking deeply or questioning taken-for-granted assumptions. Under the influence of neoliberalism, where educational policies are increasingly connected to a premise of scientific understanding which uses a narrow interpretation of what constitutes evidence-based learning, there are mounting expectations that adult educators will adapt a more bureaucratic approach in their own teaching practices. "Educators are under pressure to abandon their vision for a more just and equitable world and to consider themselves as technicians whose role is to train individuals to attain predictable, instrumental outcomes" (Atkinson, 2013, p. 6).

Without the lens of critical social theory, a critical questioning of the the intent and purpose of adult education may be lost. In his exploration of UNESCO policies and the need to retain this critical focus for adult education, Stanistreet (2020) argues:

As most educators will recognise, a sense of hope for the future can be critical in engaging learners, particularly those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged. The job of education is to offer such learners "resources of hope" in Raymond Williams' glorious phrase. (p. 6)

Williams' (1989) book, [titled with this same phrase] ruminates on concepts such as culture and delves into the importance of theory to help make sense of how societies are structured and how people learn and communicate with one another. He argues that theory not only supports critical analysis, but also supports 'new seeing', as people are able to imagine alternative frameworks for living and learning.

4. IMPACT OF CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY ON THE FIELD

Brookfield (2005) makes a compelling argument that insights provided by critical theory can help adult educators to articulate a rationale for the work that they do, thus providing them with a better framework to both carry out their teaching practices and to argue for curriculum changes and resources to support their work. For example, Alfred (2015), Morrice (2018), and Fejes (2019) each explore the impact of migration on adult education, considering issues of power linked to cultural and racial inequities, and raise questions about issues of inclusion and citizenship. In their analyses they draw upon a range of different critical social theoretical perspectives, including post-colonialism (Morrice 2018) and Foucauldian analysis (Fejes, 2019). Critical social theory also offers educators insights into possibilities for transformative or critical learning opportunities, such as exploring educational strategies for democratic learning (Brookfield, 2005), public pedagogy (Biesta, 2012), and citizenship (Alfred, 2015; Guo, 2014; Kruszelnicki, 2020).

This work resonates with our current research that focuses on the theory of multiliteracies as a way to enhance learning for adults in both formal and community-based contexts. As a theory, multiliteracies evolved from the work of the New London Group, a multi-disciplinary group of educators, who came together in the 1990s to explore shared issues and concerns with the need to develop more critical and creative approaches to teaching and literacy. In an interview with one of the initial members of the group, Allan Luke, Luke states that the New London Group emerged "as an educational response to a persistent unequal distribution of capital, wealth, and power; an emergent technological/scientific revolution; and challenging relations between state, capital, and corporation" (p. 74). Scholarship on multiliteracies

emerged as a way to address diversity and inequality issues in education, and although it has primarily been used in elementary settings, we argue that there are benefits to using this theory in adult learning contexts. Although it is similar in many respects to a New Literacy Studies (NLS) approach in how it incorporates a focus on both digital literacies and social justice concerns, a multiliteracies framework also emphasizes that “meaning is made by ways that are increasingly multimodal” (Kalantzis et al., 2003, p. 18). Cultural and linguistic diversity are taken up as important issues, and it is understood that “new technologies, and more broadly the changing social worlds of work and citizenship, require new educational responses (Kalantzis et al., 2003, p. 18).

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT EDUCATION

Support for adult education is often linked to the potentially ameliorative effects of learning for adults as citizens and workers. Critical social theory is needed to enhance the level of analysis of the concept of hope, to go beyond facile neoliberal solutions of the individual making wise choices that will improve their personal circumstances, which will also ultimately then benefit the larger economy and nation-state. Instead, hope needs to be tethered to broader notions of education for social purpose.

In a recent article, Leona English draws upon a term, “groundtruthing”, coined by Robert Chambers, a scholar at the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex in the UK, to argue that it “fits a very current need to be hopeful and inspired about the world and possibilities for change” (p. 79). Groundtruthing involves “thinking about relationship, immediate experience, and mutual discovery” (p. 80). Experiential approaches to adult education, where connections are made between theory and practice are necessary to be able to explore possibilities for learning that can make a difference. As Freire and other critical educators note, it is important for adults to be provided with opportunities for dialogical learning, where they may learn from one another and gain exposure to alternative perspectives and viewpoints. English offers several examples of this kind of learning, including the International Coody Institute and the Highlander Folk School. These kinds of immersive learning opportunities, where students may engage in short-term, residential programs, offer a unique chance for educators concerned with our global future to delve into substantive issues. Echoing similar points, Connelly and Finnegan (2016) point out that for over eighty years, Highlander has “served as a beacon of hope” (p. 122). As a gathering spot for educators, it has “offered space for generations of activists and several waves of social movements to develop strategies and hone practices linked to the struggle for freedom, democracy, and human dignity” (p. 123). In order to sustain hope, there is a need to make connections between the practical tasks and challenges confronting front-line educators in the field, and critical social analysis that can inform planning, decision-making, and policy formation.

Generating innovative approaches and ideas also requires thinking carefully about the types of curriculum learning opportunities adult education needs to foster. As our work on multiliteracies has demonstrated, there are benefits to learning in a range of both formal education and community-based sites. Multimodal experiences may foster critical opportunities for learning and engagement, and arts-based approaches often help to challenge learners to think creatively and imaginatively. Museums, art galleries, music sessions, and language and cultural support programs for newcomers, may all incorporate valuable opportunities for lifelong learning, if informed by a critical lens.

To address the multiple challenges facing our societies, adult educators require an understanding of how both local and global factors shape our unique learning contexts. An appreciation for diversity, capacity for critical reflection and a deliberative approach to moral considerations is needed to forge a better future as adult educators strive to nurture ‘seeds for transformative resilience’. As we move beyond this pandemic, the field of adult education/lifelong learning can offer strategies for learning that will address the problems of the future and prepare learners to both adapt to change and to ‘be

the change' – proactive scholars, educators, citizens, workers, leaders, and policy makers that can creatively envision a hopeful future for teaching and learning in the 21st century.

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Using a Multiliteracies Framework to Explore Adult Literacy Practices through Arts-Based Learning Organizations

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Abstract - This national research study funded by the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) focuses on examples of innovative arts-based adult education organizations that teach dance, music, drama, and visual arts consistent with a multiliteracies approach. A multiliteracies framework considers how multimodalities provide a range of opportunities to foster learning. This paper draws upon Carey Jewitt's four theoretical assumptions characterizing multimodality to in turn provide an analytical framework to investigate our own research findings and discussion. Arts-based approaches can infuse the work of adult educators to move adult learning beyond didactic pedagogies.

KEYWORDS: Multimodality, multiliteracies, adult literary practices, arts-based learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Arts-based learning provides a strong foundation for adult educators and learners to deepen their engagement with literacy, providing opportunities to explore complex issues during this time of ecological, economic, social, and cultural change. Butterwick and Roy (2018) note that “artistic and creative expression, thoughtfully carried out, can enliven adult learning, promote risk taking and empathy for others, and move toward relations of solidarity (p. 3). Literacies, the ability to communicate effectively, can be learned through artistic approaches that take into account the cultural mores, social relations, and personal emotions of adults. A multiliteracies framework considers how multimodalities provide a range of opportunities to foster learning. Arts-based approaches can infuse the work of adult educators to move adult learning beyond didactic pedagogies (Clover, 2018; Holloway & Qaisi, 2022; Jarvis & Gouthro, 2015).

This paper explores the use of arts-based learning in adult education contexts that draw upon a teaching framework that is consistent with a multiliteracies approach, whereby technologies are used appropriately for learning tasks at hand, multimodalities are considered in the teaching context, and pedagogies that employ an interactive approach to engage learners from diverse backgrounds are used. The paper begins with an assessment of the value of using arts-based learning in adult education contexts, provides a short discussion of the theoretical framework, and then overviews the research study and methodology used. Findings are shared, and an analysis is developed, drawing upon a multiliteracies framework, and in particular, using Carey Jewitt's explanation of theoretical assumptions underpinning multimodality. Implications from this research for using a multiliteracies approach in the field of adult education are then considered.

2. ARTS-BASED LEARNING IN EDUCATION

Arts-based approaches have been explored as a medium for fostering adult education in a wide range of contexts, and findings from these studies indicate the benefits of using arts-based approaches to delve into challenging issues such as inequities or discrimination, to foster learning in professional and workplace learning contexts, and to create opportunities for learning within civil society. Butterwick and Selman (2020) argue that participatory arts may be used “as a way of contributing to community ownership, inclusive critical analysis, coalition, and resilience” (p. 35). Similarly, Brann-

Barrett's (2011) work with young adults using photo-narratives explores issues of identity and citizenship engagement in poorer, rural communities.

Joe Norris (2011) builds on a First Nations circle metaphor to explore the value of the arts in education, and although he works primarily with teacher educators, his points also resonate with adult educators. He states that there are benefits in having students explore the use of different forms in art, even though they often lack skill and expertise in areas such as writing poetry or performing in live theatre. Norris argues that "we must be pedagogically patient as we witness our students experimenting with form as they create meaning for themselves and others. Through exposure, they are moving towards the arts as dynamic forms of expression" (p. 5). Gaining the ability to articulate or investigate different meaning perspectives through various forms in the arts is valuable learning.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) is similar in its premises to New Literacy Studies (Tett, Hamilton, & Crowther, 2012); the latter is better known in the fields of adult education/lifelong learning. Multiliteracies and New Literacy Studies both contend that language is always a socially-situated, fluid practice that is informed by larger cultural and political systems that influence how literacy is practiced in communities as well as shaped through policies.

Multiliteracies' distinct emphasis on multimodalities provides further tools to analyze expanded forms of literacy. Cope & Kalantzis (2006; c. 2000) argue that there is an "increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning making, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioral, and so on" (p. 5). Multimodalities refers to the combination of modes (visual, linguistic, audio, spatial, tactile) to allow for more powerful ways to communicate. These different kinds of modalities are often used in arts-based approaches in adult education, that may incorporate, for instance, elements of dance, painting, or poetry. Cope & Kalantzis (2006; c. 2000) claim that "to find our way around this emerging world of meaning requires a new, multimodal literacy" (p. 6). The theoretical framework of multiliteracies helps provide insights and a rationale for the benefits of using arts-based approaches in a range of different adult learning contexts.

4. RESEARCH STUDY

This Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded study explores how multiliteracies can be used in adult education contexts. The study looks at adult education sites in both Nova Scotia and Ontario, Canada. In the larger study we are exploring multiliteracies pedagogy with adolescents as well as adults. This paper focuses on examples of innovative arts-based adult education organizations that teach dance, music, drama, and visual arts through educational strategies consistent with a multiliteracies approach.

Using a Comparative Case Study approach (Stake, 2005), the research includes semi-structured face-to-face interviews approximately 1 hour in length; in-depth observation visits of 3-4 hours approximately 4 times over 1 to 3 months; and document analysis of teaching materials including lesson planning or exemplars. Our study also includes original film footage of various adult learning spaces that is showcased on our website found at: www.multiliteraciesproject.com.

5. METHODOLOGY

Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) methodology requires researchers to acknowledge and be conscious of their own positionality. Charmaz comments that researchers must be reflexive about the research process. She states, "we are not scientific observers who can dismiss scrutiny of our values by claiming scientific neutrality and authority" (p. 27). Constructivist grounded theory is an iterative methodology. It involves (1) *codes* that use gerunds and line-by-

line coding; (2) *focused coding* creating short summary points and making comparisons across the data; (3) *memo-writing* to develop thick description and analytical perspectives.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Although most of the community-based organizations that we studied did not name multiliteracies as a framework for developing their programming (as many were unfamiliar with the theory), throughout our research, participants discuss the power of multimodalities to increase the scope of ways to communicate. The mandate of many arts-based organizations is to broadly connect with the public who may not feel comfortable in more traditional venues like concert halls or classrooms. Adult education is often situated in community-based contexts, ranging from centres for literacy and immigration to museums and local recreation halls.

In her introduction to *The routledge handbook of multimodal analysis*, Carey Jewitt (2017) articulates four main theoretical assumptions underpinning the concept of multimodality, which we employ here in relation to our Findings and Discussion as a way to analyze the data that has emerged from our research study on adult learning in Canadian arts-based community contexts. Since multimodalities is a defining feature of multiliteracies theory, in coding and analyzing the data, we have paid particular attention to multimodality in all of our data sources. Jewitt's four theoretical assumptions to characterize multimodality provide an analytical framework to investigate our own research findings. In what follows, we examine the ways that multimodality offers insight into adult arts-based pedagogy.

7. LANGUAGE IS ONLY ONE MODALITY AMONGST MANY MODES TO COMMUNICATE

Jewitt (2017) expands on this first theoretical assumption underlying multimodality:

Language is widely taken to be the most significant mode of communication; this is particularly so in contexts of learning and teaching. Multimodality, however, proceeds on the assumption that representation and communication always draw on a multiplicity of modes, all of which have the potential to contribute equally to meaning. (p. 15)

In our research, Linda Lord, is an adult educator in the organization Arts Can Teach who believes that arts-based education and multimodality tap into adults' emotions and experiences. She also has her own practice in which she works with adults and youth in recovery programs. Over the span of many years, Linda has facilitated sessions with women who have experienced trauma (often due to domestic violence). In her own words, Linda invites them to "use expressive writing to bring meaning and understanding to things that have happened to them in their lives that really defy meaning." Linda explains why multimodality contributes to therapeutic expressive arts-based pedagogy:

Just knowing that when you are able to layer modalities, every experience goes deeper into the next modality. So if you and I just did a drama exercise, it would be okay. If I had you listening to music, then you would be able to have a richer drama experience. If I had you doing meditation and movement and then drama, that experience would be even deeper because now I have connected your mind, your body, and your soul. And then we are using everything that we have available to us.

Linda observes that journaling is greatly enriched when combined with other modalities in reflective learning experiences through drama, music, meditation and movement. Traumatic experiences require patience and great courage to work through. By giving more attention in teaching practice to modes not always traditionally recognized for their value to contribute toward providing adult learners with ways to broach their emotions, these modes might offer learners transformative learning possibilities to engage in "exploration for options for new roles, relationships and action" (Mezirow, 2008, p. 94).

To return to Jewitt's point that a multiplicity of modes "have the potential to contribute equally to meaning" (p. 15), we see that music can be a powerful form of communication across diverse cultures and languages. One of our participants, Amy Ley, is the Director of 4th Wall Music, a chamber music group that breaks down barriers (the 4th wall) between audiences and musicians. Amy speaks to the emotional dimension of music and her comment suggests that music has the potential to convey meaning as much, if not more so, than oral or written language in some instances:

You can be in a room full of people who do not speak the same language and all listening to the same piece of music and you can all be crying even though you cannot verbally communicate with one another, you can all experience the feeling that the music is expressing.

These unique concerts promote an openness to considering possibilities for what arts-based pedagogy can look like in theory and practice. At one 4th Wall concert that took place along a riverbank, the gurgling water as well as birds singing in unison with the opera singer and string instruments invited listeners to engage all of their senses through multimodality. Similarly, Magro and Pierce (2012) call for designing curriculum "in meaningful, artful, and socially-relevant ways" (p. 192) to invite learners to develop their creative capacities in building expanded forms of literacy.

8. EACH MODE DOES DISTINCT SOCIAL COMMUNICATIVE WORK

Jewitt (2017) elaborates on this second assumption that each mode serves its own specific purpose in terms of social engagement and communication. She points out: "Multimodality assumes that all modes have, like language, been shaped through their cultural, historical and social uses to realize social functions" (p. 16). At a touring exhibition held at Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, in partnership with Eyelevel Gallery, several Indigenous artists from across Canada share their artistic views on colonialism through a broad array of modalities. Drawing upon Indigenous cultures and histories, multimodality allows for creative representation of the difficult subject of decolonization. The exhibit is entitled *Taskoch pimon konak ah nip muskoseya, nepin pesim eti pimachihew/Like the winter snow kills the grass, the summer sun revives it* is curated by Missy LeBlanc for TRUCK Contemporary Art.

Art educators disrupt stereotypical views of cultural histories. In one of the multimedia exhibits, a video shows the artist, Tšēmā Igharas, spray painting the cut-out word "esghanānā" (which translates as "reclaiming our culture") on an animal hide. For adult learners, it takes a moment to realize that this film is being projected onto the *actual* animal hide, which is being used as a screen to display the video. In the video, a stark contrast is set up between nature's gentle sounds and images in the forest versus the modern, industrial spray paint can, which makes a jarring sound as it is shaken and sprayed repeatedly by the artist. The art seems to point to the uneasy tensions of settler colonizers' tools being superimposed on the natural world of Indigenous peoples and their worldviews. From a multimodal perspective, we need to interpret the very materiality as well as the symbolism of the animal hide in this art piece. The artist swings the animal hide onto her back like a cape with the cut-out word "esghanānā" emboldened in the centre. The red of the spray paint, the fine hair of the animal hide, the movement and contours of the hide on her back – these modalities only take on distinct meaning because of the word "esghanānā," pointing to Indigenous cultures' resilience and strength. Adult learners as spectators bear witness to a type of decolonization as visualized by this artist drawing upon her cultural knowledge and traditions. As a part of our document analysis, we quote from a booklet given out as a part of the exhibit:

Historically, Indigenous peoples learned our languages from spending time on the land and intergenerationally through our parents, grandparents, aunts, and elders. Stories and teachings would be told about the land of how things came to be. Land based intergenerational learning is still the best way to learn an ancestral language, but this is difficult when you do not live on or have access to the land....How are we expected to survive when we don't have the words to fight?

Igharas offers an Indigenous vision of "esghanānā" or "reclaiming our culture" through artistic form.

9. SPECIFIC INTERTWINING OF MODES CONTRIBUTES TO MEANING-MAKING

A third assumption underlying the theoretical framework of multimodality is explained by Jewitt (2017) in this way: people “orchestrate meaning through their selection and configuration of modes. Thus the interaction between modes is significant for meaning-making” (p. 16). Film maker and adult educator Kim Nelson conceptualized the Live Doc Project, which is an interactive documentary experience between artists, musicians, scholars, and live audiences. The Live Doc Project focuses on the intertwining of modes to generate meaning. For example, in one of these live shows, local ethnic Arabic foods from the Windsor, Ontario community filmed in the documentary were simultaneously being consumed by the audience in real time while they watched the documentary. The audience experienced taste as a mode to “consume” the documentary. Kim notes this theme for the Live Doc Project focuses on food and identity within the local Arabic community that spans across the international Windsor-Detroit border. Adult learners are directly engaged in a live, communal response to the documentary. The answers are not just verbal – the adult educators on stage respond using a variety of modes tailored to the specific questions or comments made by the audience in that moment.

10. SIGNS WITHIN MULTIMODALITY ARE SOCIALLY SITUATED

Social environments play a large role in how people interpret and communicate with each other according to Jewitt’s (2017) account of the fourth theoretical assumption of multimodality. Arts-based education often draws upon this principle to teach in innovative ways. For example, at Pier 21, Canadian Museum of Immigration, one of our research sites, visitors are asked to role play that they are European immigrants from the early 1900s. They have 10 artifacts in front of them, but they can only pack 5 in their bags. Which ones will they choose? Why? In asking these visitors to interact with these historic artifacts through the eyes of immigrants who know they may never return to their country of origin, the visitors attain a more empathetic perspective for how difficult these decisions would have been.

These historical artifacts (objects such as a pair of boots, a musical instrument, a favourite doll) are an example of what is called a “sign” in the fields of structuralism and semiotics. Jewitt (2017) writes that signs

are shaped by the norms and rules operating at the moment of sign-making, influenced by the motivations and interests of sign-maker in a specific social context. That is, sign-makers select, adapt and refashion meanings through the process of reading/interpretations of the sign. (p. 17)

Sign-making is about representation and comprehending the cultural and social significance attributed to objects in the material world. Research within New Literacy Studies (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Street, 2003) contends that literacy is always socially situated. Or, as Street (2003) puts it, “literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles” (p. 77). The museum visitor in this role play is a sign-maker who must make sense of an historical object by understanding its social value contextualized in another time period. The museum visitor tries to infer its personal, social, and cultural significance to the immigrant who decided this object was more valuable to bring than the many other possessions s/he were forced to leave behind. Arts-based educators create opportunities to engage in learning through artistic practices that include multimodal thinking, interaction, and judgments.

11. IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

This research is gathered from arts-based organizations that engage adults in lifelong learning opportunities to explore socially situated literacies learned through artistic forms. Multiliteracies theory asserts that “a theory of transformation or redesign is also the basis for a theory of learning” (Kalantzis et al., 2016, p. 224). Deepening our understanding of

multimodality provides analytical tools to critique communicative practices within arts-based educational spaces. Arts-based learning challenges how we construct our world views and current patterns of expressions throughout the life span.

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Digitalization Resistances of German Employees in the Pandemic – Vocational Education and Training between Emancipation and Adaptation

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Abstract - This article presents results of a qualitative study in which works and staff council members from various sectors were interviewed on digitalization-related changes in occupational work and on possible employee resistances concerning the use of digital media in vocational contexts. The article is focussed on the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to an expansion and diversification of resistances through an acceleration of digital changes, and it is asked which influencing factors can be named as relevant to strengthen or reduce digitalization resistances in company contexts.

KEYWORDS: Digitalization, resistance, employee representatives, emancipation, adaptation.

1. INITIAL SITUATION

Today, the digital change is reaching almost all areas of social, political, and economic activity at varying speeds. More and more workplaces are increasingly influenced by digital technologies, which are driving the extensive computerization in the form of complex software programs, artificial intelligence, robotics, and the use of big data. A trend that has clearly accelerated as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the technologization of the modern working life and the growing influence of digital media in the work process are no longer merely perceived as facilitation. Employees are also becoming aware of opportunities of misuse with regard to digital observation, which presents itself more and more as an act of external and self-measurement. The efficiency thinking of modern business in the digital transformation thus underlines a logic of self-exploitation that increasingly seems to be all-encompassing so that hardly any employee can avoid it. Especially in company contexts, a permanent obligation to learn arises, which more and more results from a technology-related necessity to adapt and which largely excludes emancipative or resistant coping strategies.

Based on existing findings referring to resistances in educational contexts (e.g., Bolder/Hendrich 2000; Faulstich/Grell 2005; Holzer 2017), this article presents results of a qualitative study in which works and staff council members were interviewed on possible employee resistances concerning the use of digital media in vocational contexts. The article is focussed on the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to an expansion and diversification of resistances through an acceleration of digital changes, and it is asked which influencing factors can be named as relevant to strengthen or reduce digitalization resistances in company contexts. It is also examined in how far resistance as an emancipative behaviour can yet be considered meaningful and desirable from the perspective of employee representatives.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMING

2.1. Resistance in learning and training contexts

Especially at the beginning of the new millennium, extensive theoretical and empirical research on resistances in educational contexts was presented. On the one hand, the focus was on learning resistances, its different forms of expression and its differentiation with the help of categories (e.g., Grell 2006). On the other hand, resistances to continuing education were investigated, which could be shown in different "phenotypes of non-participation" as resistant behaviour of those who refuse to participate in continuing education (cf. Bolder/Hendrich 2000, pp. 37f). While resistance in

educational contexts had previously mainly been interpreted and investigated as a disruptive factor in a successful teaching process, as interruptions in class lessons or as the failure of a learning process, a new understanding of resistance became apparent that sought not only to overcome resistant behaviour (cf. Ludwig/Grell 2017, p. 130). The more recent understanding of the term resistance thus significantly differed in its accentuation from the idea of a disorder, a personal deficit, or an inability. Rather, the concept of resistance was then used to refer to a person's ability to act and to decide, which is influenced and endangered by impositions from outside and against which this person defends himself or herself in a specific way (cf. *ibid.*). According to that, resistance was largely reconstructed as a *subjectively* meaningful form of action, which, although not always necessarily reflected, led comprehensibly to different strategies of action against a subjectively perceived background (cf. Grell 2006, p. 247). Only current theoretical research suggests that the understanding of resistance in educational contexts as a negation of content, forms of learning, expectations and constraints needs to be broadened so that resistance can also be understood as *objectively* meaningful and as a potential collective interest (cf. Holzer 2017, p. 404).

2.2. The approach of the critical-emancipative vocational and business education

It is mainly the approach of critical-emancipative vocational and business education that interprets resistant behaviour in vocational contexts, and thus also in company education contexts, as not exclusively to be seen needful to overcome. Therefore, a broad understanding of emancipation is assumed, which always strives to free individuals out of dependencies to reach further autonomy (cf. Büchter 2019, p. 3). Already Lempert as one of the major representatives of the critical-emancipative theory attributed emancipatory interests to the original interest of man to expand possibilities of determining their own lives (cf. 1971, p. 318), just as Blankertz, who called for "a higher reflection level, a higher emancipative awareness" (1964, p. 460) to reach a higher level of maturity (autonomy) that is necessary to master technical processes, social changes, and political participation. They both aimed at the "qualification for a meaningful, purpose-oriented and critical complexity control in a world of indirectness, abstraction and change, determined by technology and science", to foster a critical thinking that offers more "distance and resistance to the limits contained in foreign organized learning processes" (Kell/Kutscha 1977, p. 366). Today more than ever, the "primacy of economic effectiveness and the creation of labour force as a consistent and ever-present purpose of vocational training" intends the integration into the "reproduction process of capitalist exploitation mechanisms" (Kaiser/Ketschau 2019, pp. 19f) and thus tries to reach the adaptation to existing circumstances. Vocational training processes as a result of largely instrumental educational efforts thereby still range in a field of tension between economic and pedagogical objectives, which at best focus on the self-development of the individual, but in the worst case remain limited to the optimization of performance for the economic creation process. Consequently, in the more recent reception of critical-emancipative vocational education theory, the possibility of resistance is explicitly offered as one fundamental outcome of emancipative vocational training, which is based on a refusal of unreflective integration into existing conditions. "Substantial educational processes" are demanded for company contexts, which surpass the purely "utilitarian limitations of vocational competence development" (Kutscha 2019, p. 6) and imply the possibility of contradiction and rebellion in order to enable the individuals to develop themselves by overcoming operational and social heteronomy and to support personal development that fosters a critical questioning of existing circumstances (cf. Kaiser/Ketschau 2019, p. 22).

3. METHODOLOGY

The leading assumption for this article is that resistance to digitalization is expressed differently at present than it could previously been shown in relation to learning resistances and resistance to further training. Especially in work contexts,

resistance to technology-induced changes must increasingly be interpreted as a possible threat to an individual's ability to work and thus as a threat to future job security. The exploration of resistance to the use of (new) digital technologies is correspondingly difficult in operational contexts if those who are involved cannot be addressed directly due to the special sensitivity of the information. As a consequence, expert interviews were carried out, which enable an initial orientation in thematically diffuse fields and offer the reconstruction of complex knowledge even if the access to the field is complicated by taboo subject areas (cf. Meuser/Nagel 2016, p. 343).

The selection of the interview partners focused on employee representatives, who can provide information both about individual resistance tendencies of single employees and about collective forms of resistance on a company-policy level. The survey included a total of nineteen works and staff council members from nine different sectors, employed in companies of different sizes and different production orientations. The interview partners were sampled due to a limited access to the field with a maximum of diversification, with no restriction on a branch of industry, the number of employees, the sales volume, and the legal structure. The evaluation of the expert interviews followed the logic of reconstructive social research based on Meuser/Nagel (2016). Comparable text passages from different interviews were bundled and grouped into categories to open up latent meaning structures, which were finally condensed to influencing factors on digitalization resistances.

4. “DIGITALIZAION RESISTANCES” AND THE INFLUENCE OF COVID-19

Based on the findings of this study, very different subjects, action strategies and causes of digitalization resistances could be identified, which in the perception of the works and staff council members were mostly experienced as “fears”, “retentions”, “anguishes” and “concerns”. Digitalization resistances can therefore be understood on an individual as well as on a collective level as resistances to the use of digital media as work equipment, to side effects of digitalization (removal of work boundaries/surveillance/substitution) and to adaptation qualification measures (cf. Kukuk 2022, p. 13). Especially in occupational contexts, the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to a significant acceleration of technology-induced changes and has thus promoted the expansion of the use of (new) digital media. As a result, the percentage of employees with regular contact to digital media has grown significantly, so that dealing with new technologies and adapting to digital requirements have increasingly become a mandatory requirement for maintaining individual employability.

While a direct correlation between pandemic-related changes and increasing digitalization pressures became visible in the perception of the interview partners, a simultaneous increase of digitalization resistances in the sense of a linear automatism can only be confirmed to a limited extent. On the one hand, both employees who already showed open or hidden resistance before the pandemic and those who became more tech-savvy and media-enthusiastic during the pandemic revealed an increase in resistant action strategies. On the other hand, some previously resistant employees have also been convinced of the advantages of digitized work and are using digital media more than ever before. Accordingly, a highly differentiated influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on digitalization resistances must be assumed, even if various shifts in resistance potential cannot always be clearly identified in a dichotomous way. Nevertheless, tendencies can be identified that develop either an intensifying or a mitigating effect (see Figure 1).

4.1 The pandemic as an intensifying element of resistance

In the perception of the interviewees, an increase of digitalization resistances during the pandemic can be demonstrated by two fundamental changes in working conditions and processes, which are becoming apparent both on an individual

and on a collective level: a) The mandatory implementation of homeworking and b) The radical and abrupt launch of (new) digital systems in everyday work.

a) The employee representatives surveyed attributed a clear resistance-enhancing effect to increased mental stress during homeworking phases. On the one hand, a part of the increased mental stress is attributed to the further removal of work boundaries, when familiar daily routines are changed, rituals are abolished and working hours are extended during home office phases. On the other hand, an enhanced intensification of work is noticed, which, due to exceptionally well-filled order books and more difficult production conditions at the same time, leads to an additional burden for both the employees in production and those working at home. An additional burden, which is caused by new forms of digital communication, especially for homeworking, which also encourages the emergence of new forms of resistance. For example, during online conferences (Zoom, Teams, etc.) when both the camera and the microphone can be switched off or when additional support systems can be installed to suggest a non-existent physical presence. These new forms of resistance created new opportunities for individual relief and other advantages (e.g., self-protection/flexibilization of working hours etc.), employees on shop floor level could not use. This resulted in a split of staff into those who were allowed to work at home and those who had to remain at their workstations despite of an increased health risk. In the perception of the interviewees, this started the emergence of internal conflicts during the pandemic and led to increased individual and collective resistance.

b) At the beginning of the pandemic, only a few companies were prepared for that special kind of scenario, so that the extent of using digital media before the pandemic largely determined the form and speed in which employees could be enabled to work. The lack of hardware equipment at homeworking places therefore appears to be a further reason why increased individual resistances occurred, which also led to collective resistances. While in some companies the few available laptops were only awarded to hand-picked employees, other companies allowed to take home the complete office equipment. Correspondingly, increasing resistances arose in particular from those employees who were obliged to guarantee appropriate framework conditions at home – without any support or reimbursement of costs.

Another factor that fostered an increase in resistance was seen by the interview partners in the lack of qualification-offers for recently launched software solutions. Both the implementation of new systems and the lack of training measures led to significant additional burdens. By replacing these measures through online tutorials or delegating them to the individual employees through "trial and error" variations, this contributed to an intensification of resistant attitudes towards (new) digital media. Moreover, missing knowledge about the function of new digital media finally fuelled vague and unrealistic fears that the extensive implementation of new software solutions was used by the employer as an additional monitoring option to spy out private data during homeworking phases. A fact that, despite of valid company agreements, could not always be ruled out. In particular, since the pandemic required decisions to be made at high speed, so that the limited involvement of employee representatives in the implementation of new digital systems is clearly seen as another factor that is causing an increase in resistance both at an individual and collective level.

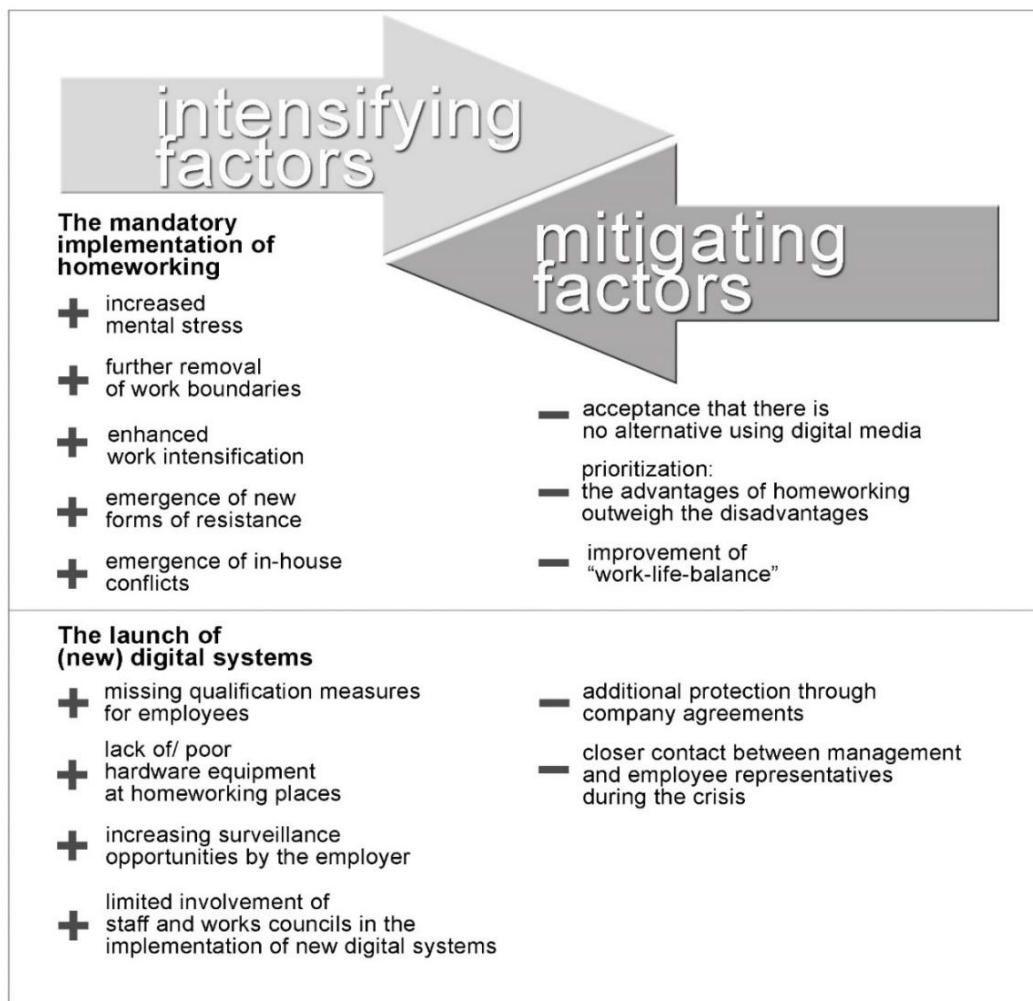


Figure 1: "Digitalization resistances" and the influence of COVID-19: Intensifying and mitigating factors (own figure).

4.2 The pandemic as a mitigating element of resistance

While in numerous interviews changes that foster resistances were often explicitly named, the mitigating effect of digital changes caused by the pandemic had to be reconstructed using concrete examples. Thus, the acknowledgment of missing alternatives in dealing with digital media remained one of the fundamental factors why, in the perception of the interview partners, resistance to digitalization related changes in the sense of an absolute refusal did not occur or only occurred to a limited extent. Despite the existence of previous resistances shown as critical requests or precise work orders to the works and staff council, single employees finally surrendered to the understanding that they must deal with media innovations to maintain their own employability. This tendency was reinforced by the fact that numerous employees who were initially critical could be convinced of the advantages during the pandemic by simply weighing up individual advantages and disadvantages. In the communication of the works and staff councils, a clear prioritization of the advantages finally led to a sustained broad acceptance of digital changes, so that resistant employees were marginalized as single cases and objections remained without consequences.

Two other factors which, in the perception of the interviewees, have contributed to a mitigation of resistances both on a collective and subsequently on an individual level are a closer contact between the management and the employee representatives as well as the additional development of company agreements. Even though many problems had to be solved during the crisis, which, in the interest of both parties, were often dealt with "in a rush", many topics were discussed more intensively, and mutual consultations took place more frequently. Respectively, both the flow of information and

the influence on management decisions were significantly increased, resistance was reduced, and the acceptance of necessary changes was broadened.

It is noticeable that with regard to the mitigation of resistances, the connection principle appears to be reversed. While in case of intensifying factors of resistance, the reaction chain usually leads from individual to collective resistance, this seems to be contrary in the case of mitigating factors. Due to the task of employee representatives to protect their staff and to enforce legal requirements against the management, collective resistance reduced individual resistances in many cases.

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that, with respect to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, different influencing factors can be named which, in the perception of the works and staff councils surveyed, contributed, and still contribute to the change of digitalization resistances. But even if intensifying influencing factors seem to predominate quantitatively, it still depends on the particular single case in which relation and under what framework conditions certain factors lead to either intensifying or mitigating effects. Especially the frequent overlap and simultaneity of differently directed factors mean that change tendencies of digitalization resistances rarely remain clear and constant in their impact, even with regard to their subject and their form of expression.

Furthermore, resistance to technology-induced changes must still be interpreted as a possible threat to the individual's employability and thus as a threat to future job security. In the perception of employee representatives, resistance is still seen as something to be overcome, so that in fact there is presumably no space and little potential for emancipatory action strategies such as resistant behaviour. With regard to the increasing acceleration of digitalization, company training efforts that lead to emancipative mindsets are still opposed to the constant need to adapt employee qualifications to rapidly changing technologies. This applies in particular to the pandemic, in which the implementation of digital technologies had to proceed faster than employees could be qualified, in which the preservation of work ability was prioritized in order to persist on the market and to "survive" the pandemic. In most of the cases existing resistances became marginalized, negated, and circumvented. In some cases, they became tolerated and only in very few cases they became processed by imparting missing knowledge through qualification offers or dissolved by counteracting them through increased educational work and communicative support work. Concrete strategies that supported resistances in the sense of emancipated behaviour and that affirmed both the subjective and objective legitimacy of resistance could not be shown by the interviews

For the future, it remains to be examined, which (new) competencies are required for employee representatives to accompany technological changes adequately on an organisational level and to perceive existing resistances on an individual level in order to help the employees manage the impact of the digital change. It will be more than ever assigned to VET to develop and sustainably reinforce these competencies with suitable (further education-) formats and strategies.

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The COVID-19 Pandemic as a Major Crisis in Adult Education in Quebec: Chronology of Events and Impact on Student Attendance¹

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Abstract - This paper aims at understanding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on adult education in Quebec (Canada). More specifically, we look at how the Adult General Education (AGE) sector has been impacted regarding student attendance and the composition of their student body. We look at significant internal and provincial management events during the pandemic, and their impacts on AGE in Quebec. We used a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses. In our discussion of the findings, we explore the potential implications of these changes for adult education, and what the management of the pandemic tells us about the place of AGE in Quebec.

KEYWORDS: Covid 19, adult general education, student attendance, student enrolment.

INTRODUCTION

Viewed sociologically, pandemics can be seen as major crises – what Mauss (1950) calls total social facts – due to the extent of their effects in many sectors of social activities and the magnitude of the changes they bring about. As such, these crises create significant upheavals in different spheres and at various levels of social action (Meszaros, 2017). They also reveal institutional and organizational problems and inefficiencies (Hansman, 2022). At the same time, the effects observed can also be the result of the ways in which the pandemic was managed, and the decisions that were made to contain it.

During the COVID-19 crisis in Quebec, government policy aimed to ensure continued access to health services by avoiding an overheating of the demand for services, which were already experiencing major organizational difficulties. To do so, the classic strategy for fighting epidemics was deployed: reducing the spread of the virus by avoiding contact between individuals and closing various non-essential social activities. The education system was one of the first sectors targeted. Teaching activities were to be carried out through distance education, due to the closure of schools between March 2020 and September 2021. Physical access to schools at all levels of education was prohibited. At different rates, depending on the level of education and the institution, but always in a rush, teachers adapted their teaching methods for distance education.

This paper analyzes the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on one sector of education, namely Adult General Education (henceforth, AGE) in Quebec (Canada). This secondary education sector consists of a variety of activities, leading to qualifications or not. Some are remedial courses that allow students to obtain a Secondary School Diploma, to

¹ This paper was made possible through the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Fonds de recherche québécois, culture et société.

acquire the necessary prerequisites for entry into vocational training, leading to the Diploma of Vocational Studies or the Attestation of Vocational Specialization², or to meet the requirements for college (*cégep*) education. The other activities are literacy, francization (especially for immigrants) and social and vocational integration programs.

The analysis of adult education during the pandemic reveals its paradoxical position of being, on the one hand, a strategically important training pathway to give adults a second chance of schooling and, on the other, lacking legitimacy. We will address the impact of the pandemic in relation to both these aspects by answering the following questions:

- Has the pandemic changed access to different adult education services?
- Has the way in which the pandemic was managed changed the relative position of AGE within the education system?

1. METHODOLOGY

To meet our objectives, we first conducted an information trawl, which aimed to 1) identify media articles regarding adult education and the pandemic; 2) identify government orders regarding adult education and the pandemic. This information trawl covered the period from March 2020, the start of the pandemic in Quebec, to May 2022.

In the most-read newspapers in Quebec, we selected articles that addressed the subject of AGE in Quebec in relation to the pandemic. We aimed to identify the presence and absence of AGE, and to note its connection to other sectors of education. Next, we consulted the websites of various AGE associations in Quebec to retrieve the articles that they published or shared with their members. Government decrees, health instructions and ministerial orders were all available on the Quebec Government website. We mainly consulted the documents published by the Minister of Education.

In our analysis, we focused on the events themselves, with particular attention to the concerns and issues raised. In this way, we assembled a database that includes an overall summary, and a synthesis of the concerns found in each article, decree or order that deals in some way with adult education. This process made it possible for us to see the similarities and differences between the messages and concerns highlighted by the different documents analyzed.

In addition, we were interested in the changes in AGE enrolment in 2020-2021, compared to the pre-pandemic years. We consulted the publicly available data on enrolment in the various AGE services offered in Quebec between the 2004-2005 and 2020-2021 school years. Descriptive analyses were conducted to highlight the major trends and differences over the years, specifically in 2020-2021.

Finally, we conducted interviews in two adult education centers in Quebec: the first in an urban center in a suburb of Montreal, the second in a rural setting, in an area considered to have little or no connection to a major urban center (INSPQ, 2019). In total, we interviewed three principals, two vice-principals, and two teachers. We asked them questions about the communications between them and the government, the students, and the other adult education workers. We were interested in their perceptions of what they thought they did right, and what they could've done better in their management of this crisis. Our questions helped us to gather information about the impact of the internal management of the pandemic, and the impact it had on students.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF AGE IN QUEBEC

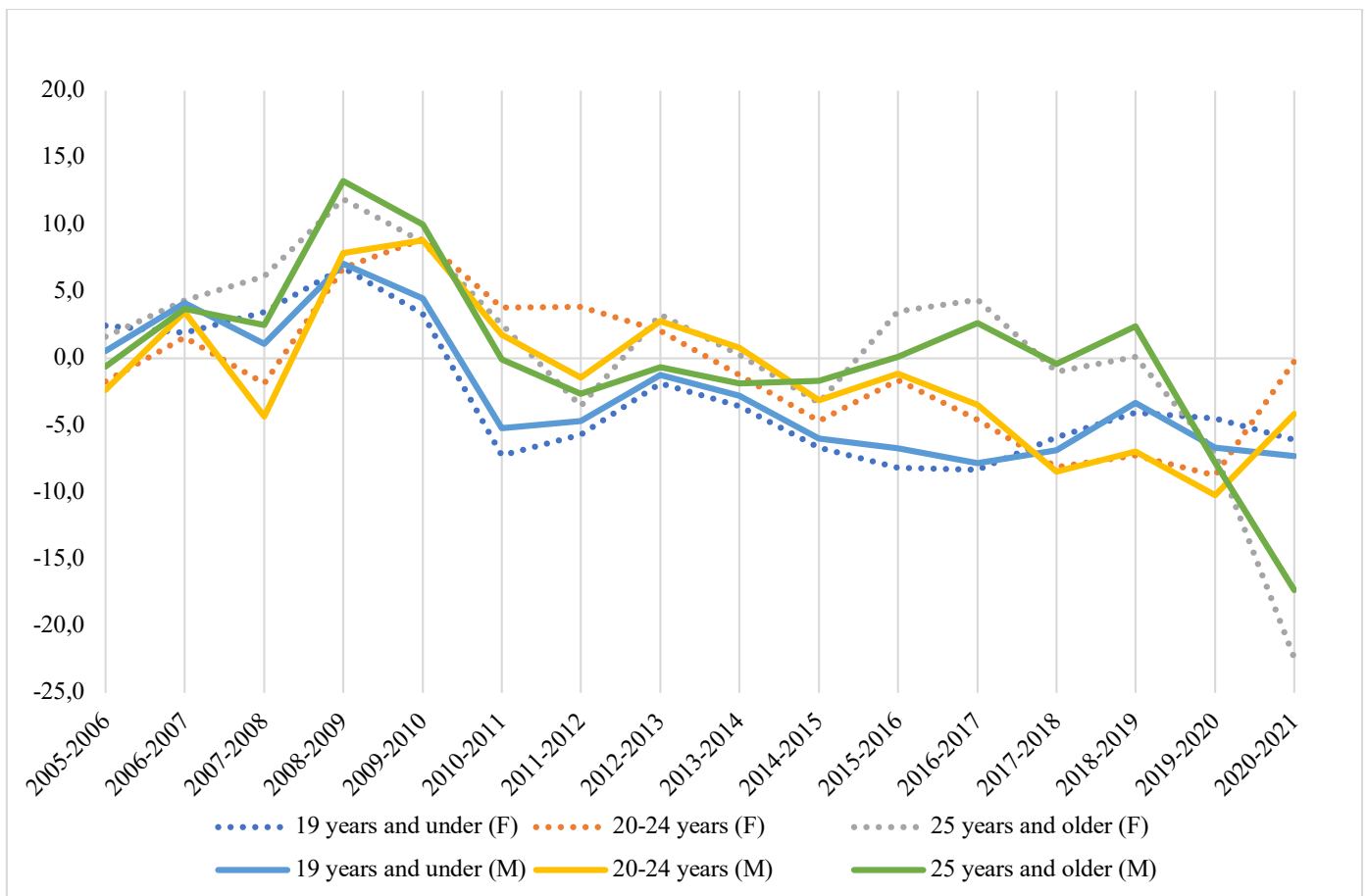
² Here are the original names of these diplomas, in French, in order: Diplôme d'études secondaires, formation professionnelle, diplôme d'études professionnelles et attestation d'études professionnelles.

In Quebec, AGE was created in the mid-1960s. At that time, it offered objective-based programs and individualized instruction (AQIFGA, consulted in August 2022). Its goal was to "encourage adults to return to school and raise the basic level of qualification of the adult population" (Doray & Bélanger, 2014, p. 216 [our translation]).

Access for younger students was achieved gradually. First, in the 1990s, in response to the school dropout problem, AGE became accessible for young people aged 16 and over. Programs then began to diversify to meet the needs of the changing student body. The big leap came in 2009, when the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) integrated AGE into its School Success policy. Adult education became a 'second chance' school for young people in difficulty in regular secondary schools. It should be noted that according to the *Education Act*, which governs schooling in compulsory education, a person becomes an "adult" at the age of 16, i.e., at the end of compulsory schooling (AQIFGA, consulted in August 2022).

The levels of demand on each of these services within AGE have changed over the years. The most important moment remains 2009, which showed significant growth across all the different age groups, as shown in Graph 1.

Graph 1: Annual Enrolment Growth by Gender and Age in AGE, From 2005-2006 to 2020-2021



Source: MEES and ISQ (2022)

3. KEY MOMENTS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PANDEMIC IN QUEBEC

As mentioned earlier, crises can reveal organizational and institutional shortcomings, and AGE in Quebec has not escaped this. In the media, there was very little discussion of issues related to AGE and vocational training. When it was mentioned, it was often associated with secondary school or colleges. However, we know that these kinds of education

sector have different realities, different needs and answer to different populations than AGE (Villatte, Corbin & Marcotte, 2014). On the government side, decrees usually mention the other sectors of education, but ignore AGE. The instructions given are therefore unclear and uncertain for the various workers in AGE.

The pandemic had a significant impact on enrolment in AGE, as attendance dropped in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, only in this education sector. College education and universities did not experience such a drop. Part of the reason for this is that AGE enrolment is continuous throughout the school year. Thus, as soon as lockdown was imposed early in the onset of the pandemic enrolment stopped. The decline continued in the following months. Our data source does not yet allow us to know what happened during the year 2021-2022.

A transition to distance activities has clearly not occurred as in other educational sectors, which accounts in part for the drop in attendance. The decline is felt in non-credited services such as francization, social integration, socio-professional integration, preparation for vocational training and even literacy. Among the other services, offering courses leading to qualifications, we note an increase in attendance. In fact, the economic and social lockdown has affected these services differently.

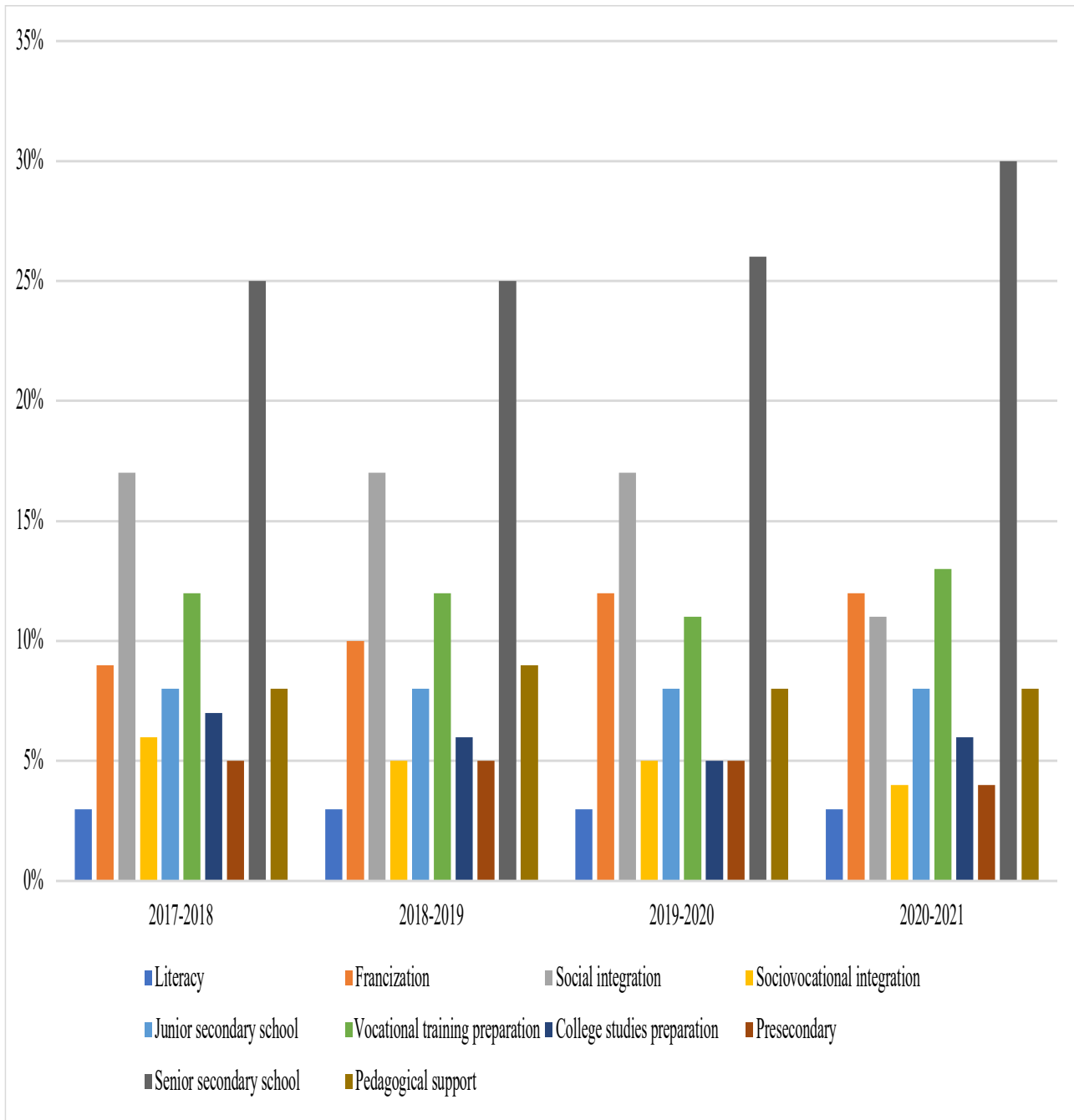
Graph 1 can also show us that, since the pandemic, the number of male and female students 25 years of age and over has drastically dropped, while the number of 20- to 24-year-olds has grown a bit, and the number of 19-year-olds and below stayed similar to previous years.

Table 1: AGE Enrolment by Gender and Age, 2004-2005 to 2020-2021

| | 2004-2005 | 2005-2006 | 2006-2007 | 2007-2008 | 2008-2009 | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 | 2014-2015 | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Female | 81 097 | 82 087 | 84 663 | 88 004 | 96 475 | 103 522 | 103 804 | 100 915 | 102 804 | 101 897 | 97 518 | 97 640 | 97 953 | 94 926 | 93 218 | 86 781 | 72 680 |
| 19 years and under | 22 065 | 22 608 | 23 036 | 23 836 | 25 450 | 26 297 | 24 391 | 22 997 | 22 564 | 21 757 | 20 307 | 18 647 | 17 094 | 16 087 | 15 434 | 14 738 | 13 843 |
| 20-24 years | 15 354 | 15 087 | 15 322 | 15 037 | 16 051 | 17 481 | 18 142 | 18 838 | 19 229 | 18 986 | 18 100 | 17 807 | 16 991 | 15 611 | 14 482 | 13 215 | 13 186 |
| 25-34 years | 17 247 | 17 126 | 17 542 | 17 471 | 18 983 | 20 469 | 20 750 | 20 201 | 20 570 | 20 202 | 19 081 | 18 759 | 18 894 | 19 346 | 18 951 | 17 425 | 17 977 |
| 35-44 years | 12 418 | 12 076 | 12 355 | 12 492 | 13 440 | 14 094 | 13 965 | 13 185 | 13 435 | 13 259 | 12 708 | 12 726 | 13 004 | 13 381 | 14 028 | 12 915 | 12 093 |
| 45 years and above | 14 013 | 15 190 | 16 408 | 19 168 | 22 551 | 25 181 | 26 556 | 25 694 | 27 006 | 27 693 | 27 322 | 29 701 | 31 970 | 30 501 | 30 323 | 28 488 | 15 581 |
| Male | 77 149 | 76 704 | 79 619 | 80 034 | 87 989 | 94 885 | 93 502 | 90 639 | 90 538 | 89 107 | 86 112 | 84 180 | 82 688 | 79 409 | 78 529 | 72 265 | 63 485 |
| 19 years and under | 27 097 | 27 250 | 28 379 | 28 685 | 30 713 | 32 089 | 30 409 | 28 988 | 28 631 | 27 835 | 26 163 | 24 401 | 22 490 | 20 940 | 20 240 | 18 887 | 17 507 |
| 20-24 years | 16 842 | 16 447 | 17 015 | 16 276 | 17 556 | 19 104 | 19 441 | 19 157 | 19 685 | 19 843 | 19 220 | 19 001 | 18 343 | 16 788 | 15 615 | 14 018 | 13 435 |
| 25-34 years | 15 082 | 14 706 | 14 809 | 14 492 | 16 409 | 18 073 | 18 457 | 17 978 | 17 802 | 17 148 | 16 844 | 16 567 | 16 788 | 16 801 | 16 860 | 15 520 | 14 623 |
| 35-44 years | 9 982 | 9 690 | 9 996 | 9 909 | 11 030 | 11 830 | 11 457 | 11 124 | 11 140 | 10 978 | 10 641 | 10 346 | 10 618 | 11 077 | 11 675 | 10 740 | 9 257 |
| 45 years and above | 8 146 | 8 611 | 9 420 | 10 672 | 12 281 | 13 789 | 13 738 | 13 392 | 13 280 | 13 303 | 13 244 | 13 865 | 14 449 | 13 803 | 14 139 | 13 100 | 8 663 |
| Total | 58 246 | 158 791 | 164 282 | 168 038 | 184 464 | 198 407 | 197 306 | 191 554 | 193 342 | 191 004 | 183 630 | 181 820 | 180 641 | 174 335 | 171 747 | 159 046 | 136 165 |

Source: MEES and ISQ (2022)

Graph 2: Distribution (%) of Students by AGE Department, from 2017-2018 to 2020-2021



Source: MEES and ISQ (2022)

Table 1 presents AGE enrolment by gender and age from 2004-2005 to 2020-2021. In relation to the pandemic, we can see that the total number of enrolled men is currently at an all-time low since 2004-2005. Furthermore, we can also notice a decline in the number of adults 45 years of age and over.

Graph 2 presents the distribution (%) of students by AGE department, for the school years 2017-2018 to 2020-2021. There was an increase of students enrolled to complete their senior secondary school program in the AGE system.

In short, we note that the visibility of AGE, which characterizes its position in the educational system, was weak at the beginning of the pandemic, when the only instructions its staff had to follow were those designed for young people in the secondary school system. It then increased because of pressure from AGE Principals and teachers. Even when the Ministry of Education finally issued instructions for AGE, the chronological record shows that this sector of education was still barely visible in the media.

3.1 Internal management of the pandemic: the case of two adult education centers in Quebec

This section presents the preliminary findings from interviews conducted with various adult education center stakeholders. We have categorized these results into four themes: management, communication, the move to online instruction, and the students' educational pathway.

First, in relation to management, school staff feel that they have adapted well to the hazards of the pandemic by adopting continuous management practices supported by regular meetings, both within the centers themselves and in the regional school service centers or school boards. They have also been able to exploit the vague nature of the guidelines by adapting the measures to their respective realities.

In terms of communication, the various school stakeholders point out that the guidelines from the Ministry did not initially concern adult education or concerned it very little, which is consistent with what we found in the review of media and government communications. When some guidelines eventually concerned this level of education, they were only communicated later. In addition, schools often learned about the guidelines during the Premier's press conferences (which were held daily at the beginning of the pandemic and then less frequently as the months went by). Despite this, participants noted that there was a good chain of communication within the school service centers.

The transition to online education required adjustments. School stakeholders had to make multiple adaptations to make computer equipment accessible to all, but online teaching was not possible for all programs (especially those requiring a lot of hands-on teaching). There has also been a significant shift of students to distance learning (a mode of learning previously offered that involves learning through workbooks to be completed at home).

In terms of students' educational pathways, school stakeholders have noted an increase in the dropout rate due to online teaching and the wearing of masks. In addition, the new teaching methods proved to be very difficult for people with additional support needs, who benefit greatly from face-to-face learning. Finally, exams were completely suspended for a period of time, which made it difficult for students to keep up their motivation to learn.

CONCLUSION

We approached this study by asking, on the one hand, whether the pandemic had changed access to various adult education services and, on the other, whether the management of the pandemic had changed the relative position of AGE within the Quebec education system.

It is still difficult to comment on the changes in access to adult education services brought about by the health crisis. However, it is possible to see an overall decline in enrolment in AGE for the 2020-2021 school year, compared to all previous years since 2004-2005. In addition, school stakeholders are also seeing an increased decline in attendance, particularly due to distance learning and mask use. They also see some change in type of enrolment, with more and more students signing up for distance learning.

The information gathered from the media review and the interviews allows us to draw several conclusions about the impact of the management of the pandemic on adult education in Quebec. They also allow us to highlight the place that adult education occupies in relation to other sectors of education in Quebec. Unfortunately, adult education in Quebec has always seemed to take second place to secondary, college and university education. This conclusion is confirmed by the lack of mention of adult education in the ministerial communications and newspaper articles consulted, and by the experience of the school stakeholders interviewed. Nevertheless, we can see that these school practitioners have shown flexibility and resilience in adapting to the new and often unclear measures. So, did the pandemic change the position of adult education in Quebec in relation to other sectors of education or did it simply highlight a certain relationship between educational settings that was already present? Further study is needed to fully understand this relationship, but it is already possible to suggest that the neglect of adult education so early in the pandemic management process reflects an already established order in which adult education takes a back seat in both the media and government departments.

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Digital Cultures of Care

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Abstract - The pandemic has been a delicate time for intimacy and the quest for human connection. Did relationships take up new forms? Is this bringing to new learning spaces and digital environments? With the aim to address these questions, the following paper presents a collective case study about new emerging learning spaces for sharing and rediscovering a sense of meaning and collective action. Since social life increasingly played out online during pandemic, *digital methods* have been used as an epistemological approach. The analysis shows resilience and transformations in the ways we take care of ourselves and of our proximal systems.

KEYWORDS: Community care, post-pandemic world, digital care, digital methods.

1. GROWING COMMUNITIES THAT CARE

In contemporary societies the fearful experience of loneliness is quite vivid, so the sensitivity to rejection, the fear of sharing vulnerability, and of uncertainty, due to the absence of community and of communities of care. Our well-being and ability to care for ourselves is inextricably tied to our relational context. Our capacity to heal and make moves, even when impelled by the self, is also given space and witnessed by others (Abdul Hadi, 2020). Realizing that you are a part of a delicately intertwined system that is bigger than yourself can be liberating. But what does a community that cares mean nowadays?

When we engage with social representations of care and care practices, the first contributions in literature we find are feminist researches on the “Ethics of care”. One key influence is the work of Carol Gilligan (1982) followed two years later by Nel Noddings (1984). Both authors define care as a universal experience and care relationships, starting from the archetype of mother-child relation, essential for our existence. However, the first formulations suggest a controversial link between care and feminine morality that raised a vast debate. Tronto (1990) Held (2006) and Kittay (2007) criticized the equation between feminine and care proposing a renovating definition. They question the equal, free and independent individual of the liberal model as a distorted representation of reality, redefining autonomy as the ability to modify and cultivate new relationships, and reflecting on how the recognition of the condition of dependence and vulnerability, invisible in the most widespread representations of society, is essential for making equality really possible. Tronto and Fisher see care as “everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible” (Tronto & Fisher, 1990). Maria Puig de La Bellacasa (2017) will modify these parameters to include relations that maintain and repair a world so that humans and non-humans can live in it as well as possible in a complex life-sustaining web. Haraway (2016) will explore human-nonhuman relations in natural cultural worlds. In 2020 the Care Collective, a feminist, queer, anti-racist and ecosocialist collective born in 2017 to understand the different forms of crisis of the concept of care, publishes *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence* putting care at the heart of the debates of our current pandemic, economic, financial and environmental crisis, where carelessness reigns. According to their analysis, the upstream causes date back to the individualistic ideology of capitalism which pathologized dependence on care instead of recognizing it as an integral part of the human condition. The authors want to re-imagine the role of care in our everyday lives, making it the organizing principle in every dimension of life. The pandemic has been a delicate time for relationships, intimacy and the quest for human connection. Is this generating changes in how we take care of ourselves, others and the world? Did relationships take up

new forms? Does adult education and learning promote new collective and critical practices? Is this bringing to new learning spaces, new digital environments, and new forms of ecojustice sensitivity?

With the aim to address these questions and to understand the ways in which care can be transformative and revolutionary in all its forms and contexts - not least virtual ones - between sharing vulnerabilities, empowerment, exposure and dialogue, the following collective case study analyze new emerging learning spaces for sharing and rediscovering a sense of meaning and collective action. Since social life increasingly played out online during pandemic, *digital methods* have been used as an epistemological approach in this case study research. In order to understand how online communities form and function, as well as how networked digital spaces foster discursive activity, positions, I interacted with the community both as a researcher /observer and as an individual who wanted to learn more.

Grant et al. (2015), West (2016), and Hinson (2016) took an approach to understanding online communities as places that center on collaborative knowledge production, shared experiences, and interactivity, while digital scholars Postill and Pink (2012) argued that researchers should interrogate the use of the word community to describe online networked interactions. They contended that the concept of community is problematic because it encourages researchers to focus on what it means to belong to a community rather than on the “routines, mobilities and socialites” of online groups. Ultimately, Postill and Pink suggested that attending to the fluid interactions and activities of online groups positions researchers to better understand “the qualities of social relationships rather than their being part of a ‘community’” (De Hertogh, 2018). I’ve personally integrated their approaches in the observations and research, interested in exploring both the nature of interactions and the feeling of being part. Data collection includes:

- Virtual participant observation of online communities (using mainly Zoom).
- Conducting online surveys and direct interactions (using Microsoft Forms, Instagram and Telegram).
- Using the internet as a data source - analyzing websites/blogs/articles.

2. AEQUA

We are people who have stories to share, and we are learners seeking new perspectives. We are people who show up for others. We know that we are more than individuals, especially in a world that teaches us scarcity and that we must compete to survive. We reject the lie that ‘there is no alternative’ by striving to create that better world we dream of every day. We have seen the transformation – individual, collective, emotional and political – that comes from working together in solidarity. We have felt the connection, security and dignity that comes from growing something new.

Aequa is a Community Centre in Wedding for mutual support and social equity. It’s an intersectional community united by the dream of a world in which everyone can thrive. People are brought together by the desire to share and learn different perspectives, and to support each other. As a network that includes many marginalized people, they promote reflections on realities of systemic oppression. In 2020 they expanded online (and internationally) to keep their spaces accessible during the Covid-19 pandemic. Having personally joined some of the workshops and “community check-in” held on Zoom, I’ve witnessed their commitment to the constant listening, dialogue and learning, and to make shared spaces as safe as possible for everyone. Here some of the projects they run online:

- “Social Equity Foundations” a community learning series (interactive online meetups) on key topics like emotional intelligence, non violent communication (decolonial perspective), needs and boundaries that includes workshops on: social equity and anti-oppression; empathy, inclusion and interpersonal communication; equitable

organizing better practices; purpose and value-finding at the individual and organizational level; leadership and teamwork.

- Queer Futures writing room: monthly online writing session exploring near and far speculative realities of technology, science, bodies, ecology and community.
- Aequa Radio.
- Community check-in : regular digital community meet up - an online gathering focused on quick updates and taking care of each other.
- Capitalists anonymous: held every second Tuesday of the month is a community space to grow collective consciousness about the grip that capitalism holds over our lives.

The method they use is called **conversation-based learning**, and it's based on the belief that each of us is an expert in our own lived experiences, and that those experiences are valuable stores of knowledge that others can learn from. They hold interactive and dynamic learning spaces, where reflection, conversation and practice are possible and use human-centered design to place people's needs at the core of every step of the learning design. At the centre of their method there are five Social Equity Mindsets:

1. We are all on a learning journey.
2. We give space to learn and grow. We normalize the possibility for transformation.
3. We listen to learn. We share our perspectives while understanding there are many.
4. We aim to fight systems of oppression, not each other.
5. We care for each other and ourselves on the way.

Practicing equitable and inclusive facilitation means acknowledging the social, political and economic structural systems, and deliberately creating safer spaces where the voices, experiences, and viewpoints of marginalized voices can be amplified.

3. GEN Z DIALOGUES

Sharing emotions, practicing self-care, showing yourself vulnerable - what used to be hidden in private spheres is more and more commonly recognized as highly political. Insecurities, doubts, grief, frustration, anger, helplessness and fear are not to be concealed and buried by shame.

It certainly takes courage to speak up but in the end, we're all human. What does a world look like in which we decide to look at a stranger with empathy? What does a world look like in which we are not afraid to bring our fragility to the light and use it as our fuel to evolve? (Francesca Melandri, Europe Talks, 2020).

Gen Z Dialogues is a research project born in March 2021, it invites us to reflect on how we experience the world we naturally live in and what we can do actively to make this world a global community. It's an online exploration of vulnerability and collaboration that includes workshops/group dialogues to share, think, imagine and reflect together. Creators have the feeling that a collective conversation about how we feel and want to feel in online spaces, about how we can express ourselves and connect with each other in more vulnerable and human ways, is a conversation that we all need in order to make the most of the present moment. Conversations touch upon topics such as gender identities, toxic competition, social activism and empowerment, planting some new seeds of inspiration within the intimate frame of the dialogues.

Global changes? Societal questions? Where to start? The first seeds are sown within the very personal experience. Within our physical, emotional, mental experience. I'm glad I get to plant some new seeds of inspiration within the intimate frame of the dialogues. And I hope I can play at least a tiny role in this collective exploration of allowing more vulnerability and honesty into our lives in (online) communities (Naomi Hattler, creator of genzdialogues).

Naomi Hattler (Zuyd University of Applied Sciences) originally conceived Gen Z Dialogues with the aim to explore online dialogues as spaces for vulnerability, creativity and empathy, engaging in intimate conversations all over the world. These dialogues have come together in a collection of artistic research all around the struggles and challenges, as well the potential/possibilities of meeting each other online. The project has evolved into an international network of co-creators from Spain, Canada, Ukraine, Indonesia, Belgium, The Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and Germany that was merely built through online communication. The main themes analyzed addressed in thirteen dialogues analyzed follow:

- 01: Self-presentation, feminism, stalking and the vulnerability of online privacy.
- 02: Power of fake news and the influence of an overload of educational content on Social Media.
- 03: *What does it actually bring us if we openly listen to people with a different perspective or political opinion?* Talk about identity formation, agency and creativity online.
- 04: Authenticity and inspiring honesty on Social Media (vs social media felt as full, loud, overwhelming, fake)
- 05: Redefining and reflecting one's self-image (sharing your honest thoughts and feelings can be scary and makes you vulnerable). Talk about the influence of online culture and social media on identity development.
- 06: *"You see a phone video from the other side of the world and your perspective shifts"*. Talk about seeing our own actions and lives in a global context.
- 07: *Sometimes, it feels as though the world is coming closer, clearly challenging our personal comfort zones. Borders become more and more fluid. On one hand: fertile soil for change, new encounters and a generation that celebrate diversity. On the other hand: the uncertain dynamics of our world fuel polarization, radicalization and the wish for security and predictability.*
- 08: Fake and hate, inspiration and empowerment. On Social Media, contrasting intentions are clashing. Talk about how scary but valuable it can be to show yourself authentically.
- 09: Social media profiles can be platforms of authentic self-expression as well as illusive shows that convey a romanticized or harmful image of reality.
- 10: How important is radical listening? How does it look like and who dares to listen to those with clashing convictions? Talk about the fight for social equality and the recognition of all gender identities.
- 11: *How does care look like? How do we ask for it and will a pandemic make us more compassionate?*
- 12: Exploration across past, future and present realities about making your hobby a job and the privileged challenges of being able to strive for fulfillment. Talking about the explorer's mindset and the power of your own action.
- 13: Talk about campaigns next to studying remotely. *How do we actually feel in our physical bodies when we're online scrolling, posting, sharing, commenting - oftentimes all at once? Our physical well-being is left to our own responsibility.* Talking about the struggle of prioritizing self-care.

Art dialogue method declined by Debora Heijne has been used as an inspiration source and approach to conduct the dialogues held online.

I have a strong belief that truly getting to know each other will help us to realize that our differences are a fruitful source of making the world a better place, instead of being afraid of one another because of these differences. I am curious about the other, precisely because they are different. Based on this conviction, I am working to develop a didactic approach based on Art Dialogue Methods (Muijen & Brohm, 2018). I do this together with Wytse Lankester from the Hogeschool Arnhem Nijmegen University of applied sciences and a focus group of young professionals from the social and artistic domain. The Gen z dialogue research is a beautiful and exemplary example of an Art Dialogue. In these dialogues imagination plays a role in answering and exploring important questions together. I hope that way of entering into a conversation can get a more natural place in all areas of our society (Heijne, 2021).

Another source of inspiration for the project has been Daniel Schimmelpfening, futurist and systems ecologist and his zoom chat about “evolution of cooperation” and the question of how we can build intimate trust networks in which we transcend competition and self-destruction to evolve together. He says about the project:

The mutual learning journey we are going through offers us an invitation to begin to sense the in-between of our relationships. Sensibility and vulnerability are more than just words. We are indeed a social species, but our capabilities evolve or wither away depending on the rituals we practice, when we re-invent, or which don't yet exist. Each generation and even each individual varies and simultaneously we are all one. The Gen Z Dialogues exemplify this learning of a social organism. We carry inherited information within us, epigenetic memory, and thus, the moment we embrace the intimate trust network, we can begin to self-reflect and question our assumptions together. What might the pluralistic futures be? What could they become? Our realities are created within each and every single encounter with one another.

4. PIRATE CARE

Pirate Care is a transnational research project and a network of activists, scholars and practitioners that proposes to examine how we can learn to compose answers to crises across a range of social domains, and alongside technologies and care practices. As international networks of tinkerers that are re-imagining their terrain of intervention, it becomes vital to them experiment with a changed conceptual framework that speaks of the importance of the digital realm as a battlefield for the re-appropriation of the means not only of production, but increasingly, of social reproduction (Gutiérrez Aguilar et al., 2016). In resonance with contemporary modes of care thus invites different ways of imagining a paradigm change it offers a free learning access tool through *Memory of the World Library*. They provide a tool for supporting and activating collective processes of learning from these practices, encouraging everyone to freely use this syllabus to learn and organize processes of learning and to freely adapt, rewrite and expand it to reflect their own experience and serve their own pedagogies.

The case studies analysis was followed by a small cross-cultural study (which will be the subject of further studies) using Microsoft Forms and a convenience sample (see Table 1), aimed to explore ideas about care practices, and safe and inclusive accessible learning spaces free of racist, sexist, patriarchal, homophobic, transphobic and classist thoughts. Results from the survey suggest that self-care consists in acceptance, in the possibility of a space and a time for themselves, and in feeling part of a network. They also suggest that a perception of empowerment comes from the feeling of being autonomous and being simultaneously connected to others, from being able to be themselves, from receiving and giving support. Furthermore, safe settings are intended as spaces that meet individual and collective needs, that are respectful and tolerant, inclusive and where it is possible to be vulnerable.

| Age | Gender/Pronouns | Country of residence |
|-----|-----------------|----------------------|
| 27 | Female | Germany |
| 20 | Female | England |
| 19 | Female she/her | UK |
| 19 | She | Germany |
| 20 | She | Netherlands |
| 23 | Male | Chile |
| 20 | She,her | India |
| 31 | Man | Belgium |
| 57 | Ms. | Usa |
| 66 | Mr. | Usa |
| 65 | Male | Usa |

TAB. 1: Sample data

5. WHAT NEXT

The case studies analysis shows how pandemic experience is generating creative resilience in the form of digitization of connections, and transformations in the ways we take care of ourselves and of our proximal systems; nurturing interdependencies and questioning neoliberal policies based on individual responsibility and autonomy.

The rejection of self-centered individualism produces a new way of combining self interests with the well-being of an enlarged community through environmental inter-connections, to assert the need for loving respect for diversity (Braidotti, 2013).

Creating brave learning/caring spaces everyday to build regenerative narratives would mean questioning the role of education and preparing contexts of transformation and liberation. It would mean considering education as the process to show different ways of going through life in the autonomy of each other's choice. Next question is: to what extent are emerging digital learning environments shaping new practices and changing old ones?

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A Socio-Material Approach to Professional Learning for Engineers in Industry 4.0.: In Response to the Emergent Human-Machine Interaction

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Abstract - With a pragmatistic and humanistic orientation of adult learning in the background, this study employs the adult learning theories with the socio-material orientation in designing a learning activity that enables a participatory inquiry into the changing dynamics between humans and machines in Industry 4.0. This study presents a learning activity to better facilitate engineers' professional development in the emerging socio-technical landscape, using the socio-material approach. The design of a learning activity potentially encourages learners to situate their knowledge in relation to others, including other-than-human entities, and thus fully embrace the complexity of alterity of the future of work.

KEYWORDS: Sociomaterial, inquiry, professional learning, engineering, complexity.

INTRODUCTION

In Industry 4.0., wherein advanced computational technology exerts more agential power and control in manufacturing practice with its highly autonomous capacity, a new socio-material condition emerges (Bartodziej, 2017; Thekkilakattil & Dodig-Crnkovic, 2015). Undeniably, in Industry 4.0., engineers are considered to be the designer of the socio-material condition who can instill their moral values into the design and decision-making, possessing a greater professional responsibility as a designer of the socio-technical system (Martin et al., 2021; Picon, 2004; Wajeman, 2019). A paucity of pedagogical studies that seek better educative ways in response to the enlarged professional of engineers education in engineering solicits for the pedagogy study with a socio-technical orientation that enables a participatory inquiry into the new material structure that the profession is situated in (Conlon & Zandvoort, 2011; Herkert, 2000, 2005; Martin et al., 2021; Polmear et al., 2019; Steele et al., 2016; Zhu & Woodson, 2020). The position of adult learning in the context of automatic society, in this respect, becomes an interesting topic to explore given its long-established humanistic and pragmatistic orientation to generate a more conscientious workforce in response to the increased complexity of the socio-technical landscape (Watkins & Marsick, 2016; Marsick & Nicolaidis, 2016; Marsick et al., 2017).

This paper employs the adult learning theories (Fenwick, 2016; Nicolaidis, 2015) with the socio-material orientation to design a learning activity that enables a participatory inquiry into the changing dynamics between human and machine in the Industry 4.0.. The changes in the human-machine interrelation signal a different socio-material structure that possibly reshapes the position of adult learners (Fenwick, 2016) or more extensively, the process of human individuation and human existence (Levinas, 1981; Westerman et al., 2020). We observe these changes as a potential to transform the educative practice for engineers who are responsible for the design of socio-technical system. The development of a scaffolding activity that aims to purposefully facilitate learning through socio-technical complexity responds to the solicitation for pedagogical studies on education in engineering, embodying socio-technical interest.

1. SOLICITATION FOR MORE SITUATED AND PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY INTO ENGINEERING PRACTICE

Responsible enactment of engineering expertise and knowledge in the practice has been the central theme of engineering ethics education (Colon & Zandvoort, 2011; Herkert, 2000, 2005; Li & Fu, 2012; Martin et al., 2021) as a

contribution to the general welfare of humanity is the main impetus of the evolution of engineering practice (Picon, 2004). Engineers' professional responsibility relates to the commitment to the promotion of the general prosperity of humankind through their quest for problem-solving knowledge and expertise (Colby & Sullivan, 2008; Herkert, 2000; Mitcham, 1994), naturally including social responsibility (Børsen & Botin, 2013; Mitcham, 1994) in both the micro-ethical domain (i.e., enactment of ethical behavior in the practice) and the macro-ethical domain (i.e., philosophical reflection on the broad social implication of technology) (Herkert, 2000). The ethics of engineering translates into the basic currency of engineering expertise (i.e., scientific knowledge) and everyday practices (Picon, 2004).

Despite the importance of ethics in engineering practice, ethics in the context of engineering education has been overlooked and pushed to the margins of developing the future engineering workforce (Polmear et al., 2019; Steele et al., 2016; Zhu & Woodson, 2020). Engineering education, in spite of its continuous effort to better the pedagogical effort of teaching ethics, lacks the evidence to prove its efficacy and impact, threatening its legitimacy (Steele et al., 2016). The prevalent technological-social dualism in the culture of the engineering field prioritizes the technological perspectives over the social, positioning ethics teaching as “fluff”, and marginalizing ethics education in engineering (Polmear et al., 2019, p.876). Most importantly, the current pattern of providing a stand-alone course in ethics with a fabricated case study makes it difficult for students to develop a connection between ethics education and ethics in practice, inevitably deterring the development of a self-reflective capacity that constitutes a major part of engineers' professional development (Zhu & Woodson, 2020).

The prevalent individualist, problem-based approach of the current engineering ethics education separates the learning process from the actual engineering practice. The socio-material perspective to professional development (Fenwick, 2016) may inspire some solutions by discouraging the problem-based approach and situating knowledge production in relation to the environment, rules, tools, and social relations of the practice. Fenwick and Parsons (1998) warned about the reductive nature of the problem-based approach to professional learning. According to them, the problem-framing activity of the problem-based approach reduces the complexity residing in reality and creates silos between learning and practice, which is discussed as the limitation of the current ethics engineering education practice (Polmear et al., 2019). Furthermore, the problem-based approach to ethics training prioritizes reductionists' logic towards the complexity of the practice, “ensuring the continued epistemic privilege accorded to performativity and control” (Fenwick & Parsons, 1998, p.54). Doing so perpetuates the assumption that ethics education is a naval-gazing exercise, as shown by a dominant management-oriented perspective embedded in the current designs of ethics education benefiting only those in positions of power (Picon, 2004). Engineering practice, as one subset of professional practices, is an embodied activity of engineers which enacts their knowledge and their relationship with the more-than-human (Gherardi, 2014). Professional learning for engineers in this respect should go beyond the individual acquisition of knowledge and provide a reflective space and learning activity that integrates situated, participatory, and relational inquiry into their professional enactment.

Nonetheless, the socio-material perspective lacks the substance of ethics education. In what context the inquiry into the professional enactment can be situated? What kind of contextual changes are expected to happen in the practice and need a reflective engagement of the professionals? To answer this question we look into the contextual changes and their implications on human-machine interaction.

2. DESIGN OF THE INQUIRY-BASED PEDAGOGY FOR ENGINEERS IN INDUSTRY 4.0

Industry 4.0 is a new concept to explain a paradigmatic shift in manufacturing practice that innovates the manufacturing practice via the growing predictive capacity of algorithms (i.e., smart factories), signaling a new paradigm for mechanical engineering (Bartodziej, 2017). In Industry 4.0, not only humans but also machines have the capacity to make decisions

and exert an agential influence on the system. Such a fusion of human agency and machine agency in the technologically advanced manufacturing practice explicitly entangled the deployment of artificial intelligence and colonizing the decision-making process. The new socio-material structure within the transformation of the manufacturing practice signals new ethical challenges that require a different and robust reframing of the concept of responsibility. As humans and machines are entangled in the whole process of decision-making, it is hard to discern who or what is to blame in case of systemic malfunction (Thekkilakattil & Dodig-Crnkovic, 2015). With the presence of both human and machine agencies, thus, the complexity of ethical issues inevitably increases.

With the machine agency foregrounded in Industry 4.0, reconceptualizing the machine-human interaction is necessary to facilitate the inquiry into the changing dynamics between human and machine agents. This reconceptualization enables the interpretation of the relationship between the two as mutuality. Indeed, several studies on human-machine interaction view technology as a social actor with the potential capacity to reach an “I-Thou” relationship (Westerman et al., 2020) that requires careful yet endless attentiveness to the strangeness and unfamiliarity of the otherness. The newness of this experience in an open space in proximity to the alterity signifies the possibility of another way to construct oneself (Levinas, 1981). The mutual interrelation between humans and machines then surfaces the ethical question by enabling the “proto-experience of the other (Purcell, 1996, p.134)” and activating “the context in which the text of knowledge unfolds (p.135).” The effective scaffolding of learning in the new socio-technical landscape then needs to increase the awareness and capacity of engineers to take up responsibility for the alterity humans experience in proximity to machines.

Encountering the alterity of the machine means opening up a portal into the unknown, inviting curiosity. Generative knowing theory (Nicolaidis, 2015) treats learning as a way of being and becoming while undergoing the mysterious part of the experience; the experience of having an experience (Nicolaidis, 2022). Generative knowing theory explains that adult learners can attune to the territory beneath experience where knowing is still taking shape and has not yet been actualized in action. Through vigilant engagement with a generative inquiry, the human-machine interaction becomes a rich source of experience inviting adult learners’ curiosity and the emergence of generative knowing. In what follows we detail how generative knowing theory can be used in designing a pedagogical activity that scaffolds learning as an ongoing process of inquiry, effectively responding to new ethical questions in a socio-material Industry 4.0.

2.1. The sensation of different human-machine interaction through cultural references

Generative knowing theory explores the territory beneath the experience of having an experience (Dewey, 1934). This is a form of tacit knowledge (Polyani, 1966), which is difficult to verbalized, yet becomes the source of inquiry that excites generative knowing. Industry 4.0 signifies the infinite possible scenarios of different human-machine interactions, with the exponential development of technology. This potentially entails different intentionality of technology, meaning that the human-machine interaction will be enacted in different forms. To demonstrate the diverse technological intentionality, learners can vicariously experience the wide spectrum of human-machine interaction through conceptually representations in different fictions (De Visser et al., 2018), including the fictional characters such as TARS, CASE in the movie *interstellar*, Samantha in the movie *her*, R2D2 in the movie *Star*. The animated images and videos of the agents invite learners to sense the intensified experience of human-machine interaction vicariously.

2.2. In-scending: Scaffolding the inquiry process

According to generative knowing theory, an encounter with the unknown opens up a space for inquiry, which also needs enough scaffolding in order to become immersed in the space of inquiry for a deep reflection on their experience of rapture. Scaffolding inquiry process engages multiple ways of knowing (Crippen & Archambault, 2012; Brown &

Pendleton-Jullian, 2018). Crippen and Archambault (2012) developed a scaffolded Vee diagram that helps learners connecting their knowing and doing through intensive research on the object of their interest using digital technology. Similarly, Brown and Pendleton-Jullian (2018) suggested a concept of worldbuilding that plug inquiry into potential future scenarios generating a story with plausible and coherent details after extensive research and meaning-making. Both examples involve divergent thinking (i.e., reflection, story-telling, imagination) and convergent thinking (i.e., documentation, knowledge integration, story-making). Inviting learners to walk into and through the inquiry process to encounter big, critical questions with intentionally designed scaffolds in practice will enable learners to get immersed in the disruption they experience. In the case of Industry 4.0., the facilitators can pose questions related to issues of agency, trust, and responsibility helping the students walk through the inquiry process using both modes of inquiry: convergent and divergent thinking.

2.3. Awaring: collaging metaphors of becoming engineers in the future of work

The immersive experience formulated during the in-scending phase can be sublimated into a free act of creation, which is called awaring in generative knowing theory. Awaring denotes a liberation from and for the world, through which learners learn to reframe their inquiry into the complexity of the human-machine interaction with a novel perspective and generate new meaning. Offering the participants a chance to embody their inquiry through creation of a metaphor, using digital affordances, would be one way to enact the principle of awaring. Metaphor involves understanding “one domain of experience ... in terms of a very different domain of experience” (Lackoff, 1993, p.5). It enables learners to better grapple with “slippery opaqueness of ambiguity (Nicolaidis, 2015, p.186).”. Creating a metaphor based on their imagination of becoming an engineer in Industry 4.0. offers students a chance to materialize their inquiry into a tangible artifact that leads into new inquiry.

3. FUTURE WORK & IMPLICATIONS

Situating their knowledge in relation to others, including other-than-human entities (Fenwick, 2016), and thus fully embracing the complexity of reality they might face in the future (Lim & Nicolaidis, 2022) is an area ripe for deeper and ongoing inquiry and deserves further investigation to better develop practices of teaching ethics in response to the increased complexity of the automatic society. Our proposition to employ generative knowing, an emerging adult learning theory is one of the numerous ways to cultivate the reflective and imaginative capacity of learners within the increased complexity of human-machine interaction.

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The Two Levels of Digital Adult Education: Adult Educators as Learners and Providers of Digital Services

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Abstract - Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, adult education had to develop new, digital services. Based on data and experience collected during a training series on digital adult education, this paper will examine both hurdles in the process of digitalization and ways to support adult educators in this process by offering training. The results reveal that infrastructural issues and a lack of necessary hardware and software hamper digitalization. Still, by applying appropriate didactic principles, and a high standard of technical and organizational preparations, it is possible to support the practitioners in the implementation of digital methods.

KEYWORDS: Covid 19, adult education, digitalization, family, counselling.

1. INTRODUCTION

Adult educators are tasked with anticipating and analyzing the needs of their clients and planning appropriate courses and programs accordingly. While assessing the needs of their clients, adult educators have to factor in current events and issues such as large-scale migrations, (political) crises and changes, or the ongoing process of digitalization, to provide suitable services (Freide et al., 2021; Schmidt-Hertha, 2020). This became particularly evident with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the beginning of 2020, when both the needs of the clients and the ways in which to interact and work with the clients suddenly changed. This challenged learners and adult educators alike – and is particularly true for the specific field of adult education on family-related issues: these offers, focusing on mainly parents of babies and toddlers, generally take place in group-settings on-site and greatly benefit from intimate and direct personal exchange. While parents especially suffered under the pandemic, measures to reduce its spread, such as lockdown and contact reduction, made it difficult and in some cases impossible to implement these conventional methods of adult education. Thus, the respective facilities had to quickly initiate innovative ways of meeting their clients' demand for support.

Based on the challenges induced by the pandemic, we researched two levels of digital adult education. First, we focused on adult educators as providers of digital services in times of crises: How do adult educators adapt to the changed requirements for effective (digital) work and which hurdles impede the digitalization of services? Second, we focused on adult educators as learners and recipients of digital adult education: How can adult educators be trained in digital methods? In this paper, we will assess the reported experiences of adult educators with the transition of their work from a traditional offline setting to an online environment and reflect on adult education methods to train adult educators in the usage of digital methods.

2. DIGITALIZATION OF ADULT EDUCATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Adult education is a multi-layered field with manifold tasks, target groups and aims. One of these is the training of parents on educational and family-related issues, often within the framework of child and youth welfare. In this context, adult education aims at supporting parents and young adults in coping with their everyday family life and in carrying out educational tasks. By offering courses, classes and low-threshold peer learning (e.g. drop-in parents' breakfasts), they

strengthen family resources, teach everyday skills and provide opportunity structures for exchange, information, and networking in order to help families to help themselves (Rupp et al., 2010).

After the outbreak of Covid-19, and in order to contain the pandemic, the adult education facilities had to reduce or restructure their offers in 2020; some facilities even had to close down completely. In addition, some staff members were themselves affected by problems of compatibility due to the closure of day-care centers and schools. As a result, sources of income were lost and some facilities feared insolvency (Lüken-Klaßen et al., 2020). Thus, the adult education within the child and youth welfare system faced massive challenges in adapting to changed conditions, in terms of both structure and content (Buschle & Meyer, 2020; Flammang & Böwen, 2020; Mairhofer et al., 2020; Müller-Giebeler, 2020).

In order to be able to conduct adult education with parents despite the adverse conditions, first institutions installed exploratory digital services such as online courses as early as in spring 2020. Those few who had implemented these services, often reported to have had such good experiences that they plan to continue them even after the pandemic. Numerous obstacles, especially the lack of knowledge and experience with digital methods, however, seemed to hinder the process of digitalization (Lüken-Klaßen et al., 2022). To manage this, adult education institutions need infrastructural development in regards to available media devices and internet connection and further qualifications for their educational staff to use said devices appropriately, which then enables the use of new didactic methods (Kühn & Robak, 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

To promote and boost the process of digitalization and to get valid information on the current situation, we designed a digital training series on digital education and counselling. Thereby, we gathered feedback as well as a (self-)assessment both from and of the participating adult educators. The training series encompassed 32 digital sessions including lectures, workshops and (world) cafés, conducted between November 2020 and March 2021, and a large digital conference in July 2021. Across all sessions, we accommodated 1,250 participants who work as adult educators in parenting programs, counselling and early intervention.

Directly after each session, we invited the participants via e-mail to fill in a standardized, anonymous online questionnaire to provide feedback and a (self-)assessment. From this we gathered 603 questionnaires for the sessions between November 2020 to March of 2021 and an additional 75 for the conference in July 2021, for a total of 678 responses. Considering a total of 1,250 participations, this results in a raw response rate of roughly 54%. One has to consider, though, that the data may be skewed because some adult educators attended several sessions and thus were able to fill out the questionnaire several times. Since the amount of feedback per session is proportional to the amount of participants, however, the data is not estimated to be influenced by a particularly (un-)popular session. The main part of the standardized online questionnaire consisted of multiple four-point Likert scales, on which the participants could indicate how much they agreed with statements in regards to the session. In addition, we posed questions regarding the process of digitalization, and asked how the professionals assessed their ability to cope with digital change. For these, we used five-point Likert scales. Beyond the quantitative data, we gathered qualitative data by means of open questions in the questionnaire, by saving chat data as well as by postscripts, journaling our experiences during the sessions, including including accomplishments, challenges and pitfalls.

To process and evaluate the qualitative data, we created data matrices with Excel, the quantitative data was processed and evaluated using the statistics software R (R Core Team, 2021) with the extension RStudio (RStudio Team, 2022).

4. THE TWO LEVELS OF DIGITAL ADULT EDUCATION

4.1. Adult educators as providers of digital services

When faced with the first lockdown, digital services for parental education were considered a promising measure. Thus, we will analyze: How do adult educators adapt to the changed requirements for effective (digital) work, and which hurdles impeded the digitalization of services?

To establish a point of reference for the potential hurdles in regards to digitalization, we requested the participants to rate their digital competence before they attended one of our sessions. On a scale of 5, more than half (57%) of the attendants rate their digital competence at one of the two lowest levels, i.e. as beginners; a third considers themselves to be advanced or at an intermediate level of competence, and only 10% rate their digital competence higher and consider themselves an expert in regards to digital matters. If split by type of institution, the professionals who work in early intervention tend to self-evaluate as less digitally competent compared to their peers.

Further, we asked in which area professionals witness the biggest challenges concerning digitalization. An astounding 20% of adult educators responded that even the most basic requirement for digital education, a stable and sufficiently fast internet connection, was not adequately fulfilled. In addition, 30% of the respondents faced further infrastructural issues, such as a lack of hardware like computers, microphones and cameras. During the events, we repeatedly noticed problems such as poor internet connections and insufficient or completely lacking hardware. More than a few professionals – including ourselves at the beginning of the pandemic – resorted to using private computers and cameras. Next to these infrastructural and hardware issues, half of the professionals named a lack of software licenses as the greatest challenge and even if the necessary software is available, about 40% of the attendees claimed a lack of familiarity with its handling as their greatest issue. Whereas most of the previously mentioned issues could potentially be fixed by an increase in funding, the next (and biggest) issue is of a didactic nature: 55% of the attendees mentioned the digitalization of services as the biggest hurdle. This includes both the transition of offline services into digital services and the conceptualization of new digital services.

Besides these hindrances on the side of the adult education itself, problems are located on the side of the clients, too: some participants reported that their clients lacked adequate internet connection, hardware, software or familiarity. Finally, nonetheless importantly, digital methods have their practical and didactic limits, since, for instance, babies and toddlers simply cannot interactively learn via tablets or computers.

When evaluating the occurrence of a certain hindrance in relation to the self-assessment, the data shows that the professionals who rated themselves as more competent tended to have fewer issues with the usage of software. Inversely, the professionals who rated their digital competence more favorably selected the digitization of existing services comparatively more often as problematic as those who rank themselves as less competent. One possible connection might be that, in order to even attempt to digitize their services, previous hurdles such as hardware and software availability have to be addressed and the necessary knowledge has to be acquired. Thus, people who rated themselves as less competent might not even arrive at the point where the digitization can become a hurdle. Additionally, the professionals with higher competence tended to select fewer barriers compared to the professionals with lower competence. Furthermore, the data suggests no correlation between competence and the availability of adequate hardware or software licenses, pointing towards further infrastructural issues.

Conversely, if evaluating the biggest hindrances by institution, it is noticeable that the professionals who work in early intervention tended to mention more barriers than their peers did. Additionally, the professionals working in early intervention reported to have more issues with the usage of software, whereas the professionals working in family education saw their biggest hurdle in the (more ambitious) digitization of existing services.

4.2. Adult educators as learners of digital services

While infrastructural and technical hurdles can potentially be fixed with increased funding, didactic hurdles can (or rather need to) be overcome with suitable training and expertise to provide helpful information and stimulate good practices. However, how can adult educators be trained in digital methods in order to stimulate the exchange and spread of good practice? According to the feedback collected during and after our events, the practitioners appreciated the high standard of organizational and technical preparations, application and performance and highlighted the usefulness of the training series.

We managed to meet the latter by relying on four didactic principles: target group orientation, topic orientation, participant orientation and actionability of information (von Hippel et al., 2021). We defined adult educators, working with families in Bavaria, as the target group for our training series. Thereby, we were able to anticipate the participants' needs and could plan the sessions accordingly. Based on our expertise and discussions with external experts, we identified relevant topics such as digital family education formats and forms of digital counselling. We anticipated the participants would have differing levels of familiarity with digital methods, so we organized sessions for both beginners and advanced users and offered different methods, such as lectures to give a broad overview over a topic, but also in-depth workshops in which we were responsive to issues brought up by the participants. To ensure actionability, we focused on applicable information by presenting good practice examples, tools, software and guidelines for the attendees to use and familiarize themselves with.

In regards to technical preparations and implementation, the practitioners valued the speakers' professional technical equipment, such as high quality cameras, dedicated light sources, quality microphones and the expertise to use the full functionality and features of the call software. By showing the difference achieved by using professional equipment and presentation techniques, the speakers were able to act as role models for the attendees and sparked an interest in upgrading their own digital events, either in regards to equipment, their presentation methods or both. To minimize technical difficulties due to inexperience or user error, we planned for some buffer time before the beginning of the event, in which the attendees could familiarize themselves with their hard- and software. Afterwards, we started each session with a technical introduction, in which we gave a quick overview over the features of the meeting software and video-call-etiquette. In order to make sure the speaker could fully focus on their presentation and interacting with the attendees, at least one member of our research team assisted the speaker by providing technical support to the attendees, watching over the chat messages and highlighting questions and valuable input, as well as giving feedback to the speaker about volume and pacing. This division of roles and responsibilities allowed a more efficient use of the speaker's time and attention, while also making sure that the attendees could fully focus on understanding the presented information.

5. CONCLUSION

With this paper, we aim to elucidate the transition of adult education in traditional offline settings to an online environment and analyze adult educators' experiences with digitalization. Our findings reveal a great need for both better technical infrastructure and for further training to strengthen adult educators' digital skills. In the field of adult education with families, this includes the unconditional and definite need to develop specific digital formats for education and counselling and to adapt methodological and didactic concepts for these in order to reach different target groups – including those difficult to reach – and thus to be able to adequately support families. To support the practitioners in managing this task, it is advisable to proactively show the potential of digital methods, thereby applying didactic principles and ensuring a high standard of technical and organizational preparation.

Although various barriers, especially the lack of technical infrastructure and the lack of familiarity with digital didactic methods, hinder the process of digitalization in many places, the data and experiences gathered in our project shows an

impressive interest in and powerful motivation to implement digital services and the practitioners realized and then praised the potential for adult education with parents. Despite the challenges imposed by the pandemic, they proved resilient to initial setbacks, and showed the necessary creativity and resourcefulness to continue to provide parents and families with high quality adult education offers. This includes both the transition of offline services into digital services and the conceptualization of new digital services which embrace potential opportunities afforded by digitalization.

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Lying on Your Back. Awareness through Movement as New Form of Ecojustice Sensitivity

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Abstract - This paper presents autoethnographic reflections about informal research generated with a group of adult participants of Feldenkrais lessons that the author (she) has been conducting online during the coronavirus pandemic. Most of them are women with a background in the humanities and who do, or have done, work in education. In particular, she analyses critically different materials – text, drawing, and photograph – she received from three of them in which they describe the experience of lying down to sense and feel better the connection between mind & body and their broader environments as a new form of ecojustice sensitivity.

KEYWORDS: Autoethnography, embodiment, reflexivity, Feldenkrais Method®.

1. INTRODUCTION

During an aesthetic and embodied experience of Feldenkrais Method®, participants are lying down most of the time. In this way, lying on their back reduces the influence of the external representation of the world and allows learners to pay attention to their body-centered signals (Unwalla, Cadieux, & Shore, 2021). Their body moves as their mind moves. A lesson, called Awareness Through Movement (ATM), is a somatic practice (Hanna, 1970). The pedagogy of Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984), the inventor of the method, is embodied and developed from the first half of the 1900s onward, anticipating current neuroscience research on brain plasticity (Dalla Pergola, 2022). In the last three decades, the Feldenkrais Method has been integrated into performing arts programs in Higher Education (Igweonu, 2019) and it is also being explored by adults in different contexts outside the academy (e.g., gyms, contemporary dance courses, seminar for musicians, studios of somatic practices). Moreover, in the last two years, the practice of the Method¹ online has spread as a strategy of self-care during the coronavirus pandemic.

2. DIARY OF A BODY

In this paragraph I share the circumstance that the circumstances that led me to begin teaching Feldenkrais and how reading a novel inspired some of my reflections on the experience.

2.1. How I started teaching

Just during the pandemic, a series of life circumstances, the main ones being the end of my research grant and the need to make ends meet in a time of global economic crisis, led me to start conducting online cycles of individual and group Feldenkrais Method classes (ATM). I have been a teacher since 2017, but I had not taught online as my main professional activity before then.

The heart of teaching is learning (Feldenkrais, 1990) or rather learning to learn (Bateson, 1973) but it is not easy to describe the practice in words, being a bodily experience that therefore presents a gap between what we tell and the

¹ The terms Feldenkrais®, Feldenkrais Method®, Awareness Through Movement®, are service marked terms of the International Feldenkrais® Federation (IFF) and Feldenkrais professional guilds and associations in many countries. In keeping with academic conventions, they will not be service marked in the entire text as may be required in nonacademic use, but only for the first and most prominent use of the terms. In recognition that these phrases are formal terms referring to specific practices within the Method, and to the Method as a whole, capitalization of all the words in each term has been retained.

sensations and perceptions we experience (Damasio, 1994). The practice teaches how to listen and give voice to the sensitive body, an essential element from which derives the ability to learn, choose, act and be well (Dalla Pergola, 2022). In those months I would make long phone calls to a friend, a literature teacher, telling him about my uncertainties and the first small satisfactions of teaching the Method online. It was he who suggested that I read a novel by Daniel Pennac (2012). In its evocative and literary form, I found a new way to understand the meaning of learning for those who practice the Feldenkrais Method.

2.2. A novel by Pennac

Starting from a not very original idea (pretending that this is a real diary) Pennac sets his novel in a very special place: a human body. In fact, although the protagonist (or rather, the master of the body) lives in France, that is not where the story takes place, but in his teeth, his stomach, his arms, his penis, his legs, and his anus. Trying to discern bodily sensations from mental ones, Pennac isolates the messages that the former gives us trying to free them from the filter of the latter, to deliver to us in the form of the written word the essence of the human body. The diary, set between 1936 and 1987 and given to the protagonist's daughter on the day of his funeral, captures the experiences of her father between the ages of 12 and 64. In the excerpt below, the protagonist is 13 years, 3 months, and 20 days old, and through the experience of teaching his younger brother (Dodo) to blow his nose, he describes unabashedly what it means for every human being raised in the West (we can say in the last two centuries) to learn to be aware of his/her/its own body:

“But he wouldn't blow. [...] Or he wouldn't blow at all, he would blow inside, and it would swell up like a balloon and nothing would come out. At that time, I thought Dodo was dumb. But he wasn't. It's that on one's own body the human being must learn everything, absolutely everything: we learn how to walk, how to blow our nose, how to wash. [...] In the beginning the human being knows nothing. [...] We hear, but we need to learn to listen. We see but need to learn to look. We eat but need to learn to eat meat. [...] Learning means first learning to be masters of our own bodies.” (Pennac, 2012, p. 33, my translation from the Italian version of the novel)

Although we are made to learn, most learning that involves the body remains unconscious. In this sense, Pennac's literary artifice of choosing to have the protagonist of his novel jot down all his sensory experiences attracts our attention and arouses interest because although when we perform an experience through our own senses a trace of it remains within us, this most often remains invisible. We are not aware of it. This is even more true for habits that are obvious. Bringing awareness to the obvious, understanding our dysfunctional actions, and questioning the mutual circular influence of actions or movements, thoughts, feelings, and self-image (Feldenkrais, 2015) are the main goals of the Method. To return to Pennac's example, in a Feldenkrais class it is possible to explore and experiment with how we swallow or how we inhale and experience all actions that are fundamental to learning to blow our nose. As with the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (1962), for Feldenkrais, “the body provides the access point for mediation between the subjective self and the world” (Baude, 2016, p. 7).

Our bodies and minds are interdependent on the natural environment. But unless we have an education in bodily sensitivity, we cannot realize this. As the novel's protagonist says, we see but don't look; we hear but don't listen; or as activist Greta Thunberg argues, “We are on the edge of a precipice” (tweet, July 21, 2022). Certainly, however, we live in a fragile and complex time (Bainbridge, Formenti & West, 2022), but in order to understand the climate crisis and the social tensions in front of us, we cannot disregard an understanding of the environment around us that is changing so

rapidly. The absence of contact with our bodies coupled with the lack of frequenting nature is leading many of us not to understand, not to get an autonomous, personal, and sensitive idea of what is happening.

In the next paragraphs I will try to tell from my experience and autoethnographic reflections (Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2015) how practicing the Method, and exploring its basic principles, can bring class participants closer not only to their own bodies but promote the generation of ecojustice sensitivity. I refer an ecojustice approach (Bowers, 2006, 2011, 2012) in Adult Education “to focus on understanding of the ecology of all life systems—including the nature of sustainable communities” (Bowers, 2017 p. 54) for reforming education “within a paradigm that does not colonize other cultures, and that provides an awareness of community-centered traditions that enable people to live less consumer and thus less environmentally destructive lives” (Bowers, 2017, p.54).

3. FEELING SUPPORTED

The Feldenkrais Method is based on the support of the skeleton talking to the nervous system. For not only do our bones hold us upright, protect our internal organs, allow us to move our limbs, and are a storehouse of minerals to make nerves and cells work (calcium and phosphorus), but also every day their spongy inner tissue, the marrow, generates hundreds of billions of blood cells that carry oxygen, fight infection, and clot blood in case of injury. Bones are an exceptional tissue very different from the empty, static Halloween skeleton image we generally have of them. Practicing Feldenkrais means lesson after lesson means reframing the image, we have of them: feeling the hard matrix that gives the skeleton its strength, whereas we generally think of using only muscles to move, but also discovering how bones participate in complex conversations with the rest of our bodies. Although scientists over the past two decades have begun to study the ways in which bones send signals to various organs much remains to be deciphered about how they interpret and respond to molecular messages from other parts of the body (Dance 2022).

From the individual point of view of subjective perceptions, the basic principle of moving slowly promoted through the practice of the Method reverberates in the daily lives of class participants, succeeding in developing a different, and sometimes surprising, way of contacting one's own weight in relation to the environment, others, and the force of gravity. Lying on the ground reduces the pressure of gravity, and it is easier to feel how we move—that is, how we use our skeleton and how we activate our muscles to move. Here is how Flora describes her experience in an email addressed to me last February with the subject line “a little reminder”:

“Dear Silvia,

I am writing to tell you that I am doing a lot of reflecting around your Feldenkrais classes and what I feel is happening to me.

Is it ever possible that, in so few classes, I feel so different? Am I dreaming?

As if I have gained more lightness and softness, but not just in my body, but in my whole being.

I walk and say to myself but look how I can weigh less on the earth. A little bit I "twirl," at my fair age, and I have fun.

I feel like doing things in a hurry, and I tell myself no, come on do it right, calmly, and gently.

I feel tired, and I don't insist on doing, I don't force. I listen to what I hear, and I slow down, rest.

Meekness, care, gentle touch toward myself and others. How beautiful, how delightful.”

(Extract from Flora's email, February 18th, 2022, my translation)

Flora is 66 years old and has a background as an editorial director in a publishing house. She learned about the Method years ago through a trial run with one of her co-workers who was training to be a teacher. In her words, she describes

how she feels and asks herself and me questions. She recounts not only how she feels lighter, that is, supported by a stable internal foundation, but also how the questions asked in lessons continue to move with her in the following days producing unexpected outcomes.

Awareness of one's movements and dialogue with the various parts of one's body – especially the skeleton and nervous system – begins in the participant's learning of this Method and points to when we might support the fundamental need for safety of every living organism. So, working on the ground, unconscious muscle activity calms down and a feeling of lack of fatigue and lightness is created. Once we are standing, this information will transfer by walking to the upright position, allowing force to flow through the entire organism reducing muscle strain and joint wear and tear. Feeling more comfortable on our feet also means we feel more confident, more comfortable in encountering each other and the world around us. It makes us feel more available to encounter as narrated by Flora.

4. IMAGINE YOURSELF

The pandemic and climate crisis are, individually and collectively, changing the way we imagine the future. If during the early acute stages of the coronavirus pandemic thinking about the future seemed impossible now the feeling, at least here in Italy where I live, is that dreaming about the future is increasingly complicated. We have entered the age of great uncertainties, argues the French philosopher, sociologist, anthropologist, Edgar Morin (2020), a scholar of complexity in the humanities. Faced with the danger of a great regressive process linked to the crisis of democracy, the ecological question, and the crisis of globalization, he proposed to change the path we are taking if we wish to cure these ills. In summary, Morin hopes that the planetary crisis of gigantic proportions caused by the coronavirus, which is closely related to the ongoing climate and environmental impacts caused by humans, will be perceived as a symptom, perhaps an extreme one, of the crisis of the current way of thinking and acting, in a word, of the current techno-mechanist paradigm (Morin, 2020), and thus induce a change of course, a paradigm shift. He is aware as few are, thanks to his decades-long association with issues of complexity, that a paradigm shift is a long, difficult process that faces enormous resistance from current structures and mindsets. It is a work that must move the new categories from people's heads to their bellies.

As an adult educator, I try to offer experiences where, starting from the belly i.e., the body, participants can give weight listening and time to a process of knowledge embedded before naming, defining, measuring, and objectifying all the complexity we experience through movement together.

This is the case in my experience with Gemma, a 42-year-old psychotherapist with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (SED), a very rare genetic connective tissue disorder that causes her painful hypermobility in her joints resulting in, for example, daily ankle sprains and difficulty walking or severe migraines. We worked online, in individual lessons, to reduce muscle tension caused by pain and, slowly, create a space and time to be in touch with body sensations in the absence of suffering. Since she could not move the joints without being afraid of getting hurt or causing tension that would generate pain in the following days, I used one of the most original strategies of the Method: embodied imagination (Dalla Pergola 2017). Imagining oneself, enriching and clarifying one's self-image, does not consist in representing oneself as in a photo. It is perceiving oneself and at the same time seeing oneself with the mind's eye. Although we generally associate imagination with a mental event, neuroscience has shown us instead that when we see an object and imagine it, our motor system and all our senses are activated even when we are not moving (Gallese & Guerra, 2015). This also applies to our body: when we imagine we are moving, our nervous and motor systems are activated (Gallese et al., 1996). Therefore, the imagination is a fertile element of learning because it favors the conscious connection between the different sensory channels, the actions, and its purposes. Imagining how we move reduces our efforts and the will to succeed. After a lesson devoted to imagining hand movements by visualizing a flower Gemma related that she clearly felt her hand as a flower and wanted

to draw it. In the following days she sent me via WhatsApp her flower without adding any words (Figure 1). The next lesson she told me that brown represented the support of the earth while the green and blue represented the lightness of feeling part of nature.



Figure 1: Gemma's drawing, January 12th, 2022

5. OCCUPYING SPACE

The Method uses the relationship between posture, volumes, and breath. In some lessons, a lot of space is dedicated to listening and breathing. How we breathe is a matter that is very dear to me because during my PhD I became aware of not being able to breathe fully (Formenti & Luraschi, 2017). The practice of the Method and today the teaching, help me to continue my personal path of softening the chest to let me breathe freely. In fact, it is precisely by listening to the breath that we slowly perceive being supported by the skeleton as told by Flora or we feel the interior and exterior spaces differently as designed by Gemma. But the same experience can also open to another discovery. This is the case with Marina, a mental illness health educator, was advised by a mutual friend to try the Feldenkrais Method to take some time for herself. She is a lively woman; she is just over 50 years old and has extensive professional experience in the field of job inclusion of young people with mental disorders. Right from the start she took part in the lessons and shared with the group her curiosity for the practice that led her to share the floor of the house with her three cats (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Marina's cats are waiting the ATM, April 8th, 2022

Thanks to the mutual friendship, Marina had my phone number and started sharing photos of her cats with me while she was waiting for the lesson. During the course she told me that she had discovered how they too participated in the lessons standing next to her. At the first lesson they were very agitated: they went around her and led them to approach

her face, perhaps to feel if she was breathing. From the second on, they sat next to her. Marina said she felt supported by their presence. They have become masters from which to learn to move as greater agility and elegance.

6. CONCLUSION

Listening to your body moving means talking to it, or to use Pennac's (2012) metaphor, it means writing, through awareness, a diary made up of words and images capable of representing fragments of sensations, emotions, perceptions, and feelings. The experiences I have analyzed in this paper show how the practice of the Feldenkrais Method helped to generate in the three participants greater awareness not only of their own body, but also of the connections with the quality of relationships with other people (Flora), with the surrounding environment (Gemma) and with pets (Marina).

Today we find ourselves in a dramatic situation for the ecosystem, totally unthinkable (Ghosh, 2016) until a few years ago. This increase in cognitive and media awareness about climate change, combined with concern for the future, is generating a growing sense of helplessness and anxiety in people. The practice of the Feldenkrais method, because it is bodily or experienced through the senses, starts instead from a different awareness, and so offers to those who experience it a series of alternative actions.

As the participants in this study show by their text, drawing and photo, their experiences of Feldenkrais suggest that feeling in the body offers the possibility to look for these alternatives, which include the experience of connection with human and non-human others and the surrounding environment. These lay the foundations for the promotion of an ecojustice sensitivity capable of guiding us to change route (Morin, 2020) or to reshape the corporate habits often harmful to the Planet.

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Embodied Learning in the Liminality of Pain. Exploring the Body and Its Experience

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Abstract - Chronic pain is a widespread issue in modern society, defined as pain lasting beyond the typical course of disease or injury. This article delves into the complex and liminal nature of the chronic pain experience, necessitating individuals to redefine their sense of self and place in the world. During this prolonged liminal experience, a new spatial-temporal structure may emerge, affecting personal identity. Using performative-visual artistic methods and an autoethnographic approach, this study explores chronic pain's liminality. While pain can catalyze significant learning, the findings reveal that it can also be characterized by disorganization, lack of coherence, and inconsistent insights and changes.

KEYWORDS: Chronic pain, autoethnography, liminality, learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The chronicity of pain creates a sense of uncertainty and vulnerability, as well as interruptions in daily life. Due to the inability to perform normal activities, life slows down and the individual's sense of self and space is diminished. Pain not only limits physical movements and relationships, but also demands that individuals redefine their sense of self and place in the world. It becomes both a part of one's identity, yet also separate from it, requiring a balance of acceptance and active change in understanding and addressing its causes.

Pain is a complex experience, acting as both an enemy and a friend. It requires individuals to accept their dependence on others and the need for support, as well as the need to slow down, become less productive, and adopt a more passive role to life. These characteristics are often viewed negatively in Western society. Studies on the lived experience of chronic pain have noted its liminality (Honkasalo, 2001; Jackson, 2005), as the cause is often unknown and therefore difficult to classify within a biomedical framework. This results in feelings of anxiety and misunderstanding from others, further complicating the individual's healing process.

While acknowledging the potential for romanticizing pain, it is important to consider whether this forced liminality can be seen as an opportunity for learning. To what extent does a change in circumstances and approach to life aid in healing and can exploring the experience of pain lead to a deeper and more spacious existence?

Elaine Scarry, author of the influential book "The Body in Pain" (1987), highlights the challenge of verbally expressing physical pain. She argues that pain has no voice and belongs to an invisible geography that increases the gap between the person suffering and their reality and surroundings. Due to the liminality and indeterminacy of the cause of pain, there is no possibility of adequately sharing the lived experience, and a person in pain is often perceived as exaggerating their suffering, leading to social isolation and loneliness. For the person suffering, the pain is so undeniably and incalculably present that it becomes the only certainty, while for others, it is an object of doubt. Scarry (1987) further suggests that pain, unlike other experiences, has no external referential content and that the interiority and limitation of the body make it particularly difficult to express, understand and accept. That psycho-physical state that is experienced as an unquestionable reality requires the presence and help of others, yet at the same time leads to isolation.

Can the lived experience of pain, which disrupts previous forms of living, also serve as a catalyst for learning? Bendelow and Williams (2002) study the phenomenological nature of pain, emphasizing its subjective experience. They

argue that the loss of self is the fundamental backbone of suffering because a person who is betrayed by their own body also loses self-confidence. One way to overcome this situation is to discipline the body in order to regain productivity in everyday life, but it also requires a reconsideration of societal norms surrounding the ideal body.

This raises the question, what constitutes an "able-bodied" person? Does modern culture, with its emphasis on youth and health, further stigmatize pain and create feelings of shame and inadequacy in individuals? In pain, we begin to reflect on the conditions of life and societal assumptions that led to these difficulties. The insistence on productivity and the pressure to perform as many tasks as possible can lead to the passivation of the body, resulting in a variety of problems. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced a decrease in movement and an increase in isolation, leading to a greater awareness of the vulnerability and mortality of the human body. In the contemporary society, the body is always in purpose; we often assume that it serves our own will and desires: it needs to be restrained, disciplined, soothed, and directed to perform its duties. I propose that a body in pain is actually a rebellious body that asserts its agency. Matter unexpectedly dominates our lives, becoming loud and demanding recognition of its presence. This thesis, as well as its theoretical foundation, will be discussed in the following chapter.

The idea that crisis brings about disorientation, which is a necessary trigger for change, is a common thesis in theories of transformative learning. However, in this paper, I will try to emphasize the liminal phase inherent in the process of transformation, which indicates the period during which the existing view of the world is no longer relevant and useful, and the new one has not yet been formed. I will outline the theoretical basis of the concept of liminality and the space between as a means for the learning process, but within the time/space seen in non-Western tradition. The term "MA" comes from Japanese aesthetics and is translated as "void," "interval," or "negative space." I suggest that the intersection of the concept of liminality and MA creates the possibility of entering the unknown as a consequence of the duration of pain.

As I was going through the process of chronic back and neck pain that has lasted for about a year, I have been confronted with the imperfections of my own body and the reality that it is decaying, which often brings up thoughts of mortality. Something (a body) that used to be a source of movement and pleasure has become a source of suffering. The fear of not knowing the cause of the pain and the inability to predict when difficulties will occur is overwhelming. Accepting the dysfunctionality of the body also led to facing my own unproductiveness and lack of focus, especially since sitting and working at a computer increases the feeling of pain and hinders problem-solving. I agree with the authors Bendelow and Williams (2001) who state that the dominant feelings are shock, confusion, insecurity, anger, and jealousy. I observed people on the street living without pain and envied their ease of life, the somewhat privileged position of having a functional and healthy body.

In the research part of the text, I will use autoethnography based on artistic research methods. I will try to illuminate my own lived experience of pain in 2020 and 2021. Building on the assumption made by Elaine Scarry that the state of physical pain is difficult to articulate verbally, I will use visual-performative methods in order to start shaping the narrative. The very activity of making body prints on paper served as a kind of healing practice and an attempt at understanding the materiality of pain. This paper represents only the beginning of the research process and will therefore remain unfinished and incomplete, reflecting the very liminality of the subject being treated. The goal is not to show the readers the whole narrative, but to offer the possibility of identification with the work considering the universality of the situation which I am describing, that is, the fact that we are all living through a pandemic. This paper represents a prologue to further research.

2. ON BODY AND PAIN

We can also notice the dual nature of pain and its role. Morris (1994) poetically calls it a "soundless scream" because it can serve as an impetus for deconstructing the habitual world. However, Western culture stigmatizes pain, and contrary to the natural tendency to express it, modern individuals often deny and suppress it with medication. This is due to the accepted social response that suppression is the appropriate way to deal with painful conditions. There are no adequate meanings or rituals to help a person tell their story and reinterpret their biography in the context of newly-created suffering. We are illiterate when it comes to pain. The only discourse available is biomedical, which turns bodies into objects, further distancing us from the possible meanings that would help us understand suffering. However, new narratives are necessary for preserving the coherence of life (Frank, 1995).

The human experience is largely rooted in the physical body, yet in everyday life, our relationship with the body is often taken for granted and its functioning is seen as unproblematic. This gives us the freedom to be and act, but our bodies are "highly articulated, yet in a state of (continuous) disappearance" (Bendelow & Williams, 2002, p. 159). Ann Marie Moll (2003) views the body not as a singular, limited entity, bounded by the skin, but rather as something that expands and connects with other human and non-human bodies, practices, technologies, and objects. Stacey Alaimo (2010) introduces the concept of transcorporeality, emphasizing the porousness of the body and the idea that beings are interconnected with the dynamic and material world that surrounds them. This world transforms us, but we in turn change it. In an effort to overcome the binary nature and separation of culture and nature, the author challenges the concept of Western humanistic individualism, which imagines itself as transcendent and removed from the world. A new, more complex understanding of matter is needed (Alaimo, 2010) to break through this notion.

The concept of transcorporeality refers to the interconnectedness and exchange between the human body and both living and non-living nature. According to new materialism, the body is constantly being created through its interactions with the environment. It is not an isolated and independent self-regulating entity, but a multiple matter that is not immutable or passive. It also does not serve as a fixed support, location, or source of sustainability for discourse (Barad, 2007). The transcorporeal subject is generated and intertwined with biological, technological, economic, social, political, and other systems, processes, and events, at different scales (Alaimo, 2018). The assumption underlying this view of the body is that materials do not have inherent inertness, but rather agency. The novelty in relation to biological essentialism is precisely the claim that matter is not fixed, determined, and unchanging, but active and acting. Therefore, some bodily acts may be seen as a form of resistance against societal norms and discipline.

Relying on a neo-materialist approach to matter, I postulate pain as an expression of the body's agency, which in interplay with the environment initiates and implements the change of existing life, resisting the imperative of accelerated productivity as a requirement of neoliberal world. By becoming passive and slow, we can speculate that it actually becomes alive, seeking to reconnect with vitality, chaos and eros. The presence of the body due to the experience of pain becomes necessary and this inevitability disables the execution of daily activities and requires a radical change. By default it becomes visible, and control shifts to the plane of the body.

Leder (1990) uses phenomenological analysis to identify multiple levels of pain, starting with sensory intensification. This level is characterized by the heightened awareness of certain parts of the body, as they become the center of perception during pain. Another characteristic of pain identified by Leder is its episodic structure and temporality. Unlike other stimuli that typically decrease in intensity over time, pain receptors do not adapt and can become more sensitive, leading to chronic pain that is overwhelming and burdensome.

The next feature of the pain experience identified by Leder (1990) is affective action, which refers to actions taken to remove or alleviate pain. These may include attempts to relieve pain through activities, as well as efforts to remove the environmental causes or triggers of the pain. According to Leder, pain is a specific and unique way of being in the world that reorganizes our relationship to time and space, others, and ourselves. It is characterized by intentional disruption.

The painful experience leads to a new way of being in the world, which is characterized by a rapidly changing experience of life. The body is perceived as "felleric", or even dysfunctional, which requires the individual to confront their diminished power of action and adapt to a new reality where action is limited by their imperfect and painful condition. Intense pain can be experienced spatially as a contraction of the universe in the immediate vicinity of the body or as a swelling that fills the entire universe (Scarry, 1987). As Leder (1990) notes, "Space loses its usual orientation, and the world ceases to be a place of purposeful action" (p. 75). The flow of time is transformed into an interval, an empty space, a liminal phase where the self wanders and attention is focused solely on the pain.

3. ON LIMINAL AND INTERVAL

The concept of liminal space is derived from ethnographic studies of social rituals of transition conducted by Arnold van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969, 1995). Van Gennep states that "Whoever moves from one territory to another is physically and magically-religiously in a special situation for a certain time: he oscillates between two worlds" (van Gennep, 1960, p. 18). During the liminal phase, a person is between past and future identities. Van Gennep (1960) identifies three distinct phases in rites of passage: separation, transition, and incorporation. During the first stage, the individual is separated from their usual social structure, social position and identity. The second phase, which is crucial for this work, is defined by an ambiguous state of being, where a person is outside the normal space and time frame of their society, and whose identity and worldview are dissolved or contested. This middle phase is the liminal phase, a transition that marks the boundary between the two phases. The liminal phase is a space of contradictions, characterized by doubts, turmoil, and the experience of loss. It creates a feeling of isolation from external reality, where space is foreign and strange, and identity is undergoing reconfiguration. The third stage, incorporation, marks the individual's re-entry into the regular social structure, but they themselves have changed as a result of the liminal experience.

The study of epistemology in learning, relevant to the topic of pain, calls for exploring non-linear concepts of time and space found in different cultures. This deviates from the Western linear concept of time and three-dimensional material space. The Japanese word "MA" represents the intersubjective experience of space and time as a place-making process, not just a physical factor. The ideogram depicts the moment of the Moon streaming through the entrance groove, potentially expressing two components of experiencing a place: the goal, the given aspect, and the subjective aspect. "MA" represents the gap and interval in time and space, indicating an interval and "space between". It has both subjective and objective meanings, connecting time/space to an event.

The intersubjective quality provides a framework for examining the liminal as an interconnected, not solely subjective, phenomenon. The liminal is perceived as a blend of spatial, temporal, personal, and relational elements, transcending binary oppositions of internal and external. It is reflected in "MA," also known as imaginary space, with ontological and epistemological implications for learning. Learning is no longer solely seen as an internal change driven by external stimuli or new knowledge, but instead reflects the concept of transcorporeality previously discussed.

4. PAINFUL BODY - PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE PILOT STUDY

The present work displays photographs capturing impressions of painful places, often covered with creams to alleviate the pain. These mirror images of the body offer various vantage points on the lived experience of pain which is fragmented, episodic, and intermittent. Elizabeth Pierre (2014) highlights the frequent contradictions and inconsistencies in research's theoretical and methodological framework. For example, some research reports describe poststructural theories of language in their literature review but then switch to positivist data coding in the methodology section, treating words as data like numbers. The separation between theory and methodology is a common practice in research. However,

Pierre (2014) rejects pre-made research proposals and argues that by carefully examining the theoretical underpinnings of a study, the research methodology will naturally emerge. Post-qualitative inquiry prioritizes hands-on experimentation and creation over confirming existing ideas (Pierre, 2014).



Figure 1: No title

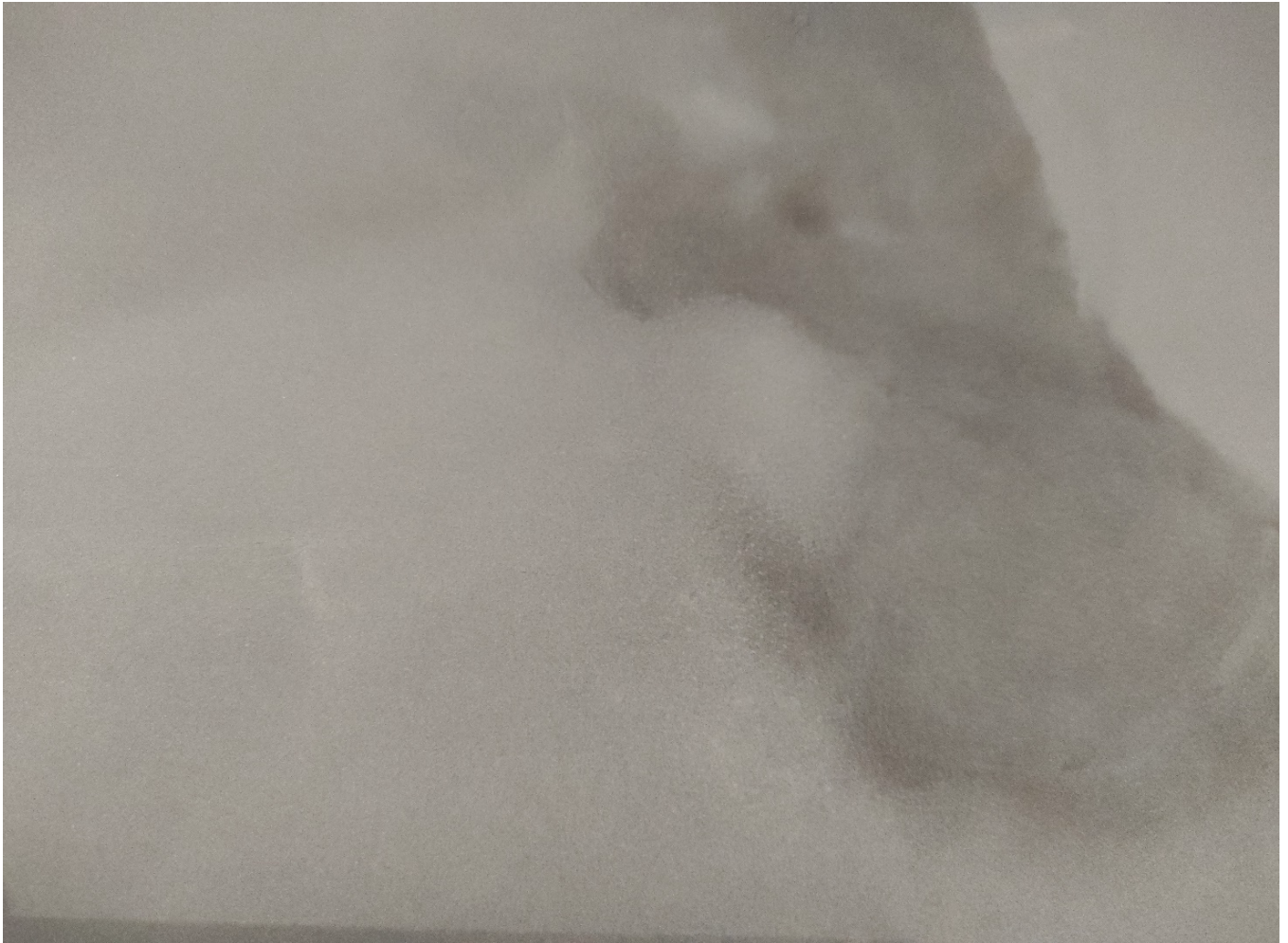


Figure 2: No title



Figure 3: No title



Figure 4: No title

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Music Narratives of Offenders: Horizons of Time, Space and Life Scope

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This study examines and reports on the meaning construction and its transformation in offenders' narratives when discussing music important to them. I will semiotically analyze the narratives of each offender with the view of integration and focus on timescapes, landscapes and lifescapes. I will also investigate how this facilitated the embodiment of their actual lives and lived experiences.

KEYWORDS: Music narrative, metonymy, lifescape, prison, traumatic events.

1. PROBLEM

It is sometimes impossible for young offenders to talk about their troubled pasts as they tend to distance themselves from their actions. The aspects associated with personally meaningful music can connect one's dissociative experiences more freely with wider perspectives. Therefore, Musical Narrative Approach; MNA—the method in which a group of clients listen and discuss the songs with their personal meanings and significance—can connect the clients' associations more, as it helps to link to the personal bonds and core values of the individual (Matsumoto 2005).

2. CASE STUDIES

2.1. Methods

I will discuss three cases of the group narrative approach through music with incarcerated offenders, with a criminal history of, fraud, robbery resulting in bodily injury and homicide. Most were diagnosed with psychiatric disorders. Drums were used in the first three sessions where participants got to know each other. After these sessions, we introduced the MNA, which included their narratives about relations to music and its associations with personal meaning.

2.2. Case: 1 "A" 17 years old, "Asu heno Tobira" (The Door to Tomorrow: Pop music)

One or two years after A's mother committed suicide, he attended his sister's graduation ceremony. He heard the graduates' song titled "Tabidachi no hi ni ..." (On the Day of Departure), ". At that moment, A cried bitterly with no explanation. Previously, his grandfather had told him that his mother had written part of the lyrics of the other song with the same melody the day before she committed suicide during his first grade of elementary school.

2.3. Case:2 "B" 25 years old, Sayoko (Woman's name: Vocaloid music)

In the group narrative, group member B described his image of this song, and projected himself as a female into the lyrics. Another member asked everyone what was missing from the song or the songs composer? Then, in the discussion, different themes emerged including "Real and non-Real", "Alive and non-Alive", "Self and non-Self", etc.

2.4. Case-3 "C" 17 years old, Karma (Buddhism concept: Pop music)

C spoke about music that was important to him, including long periods of silence. It was the music from a video game recommended by his best friend, the only person who stood by him when he was bullied at school. He also implied that

he could no longer see this friend because he was the victim of his case. During the discussion, the group accepted this and named the song 'Bonding. C wholeheartedly agreed and talked about the titular karma himself.

3. DISCUSSION

Life Scape on the un linear Time Scape

In the cases with a “verbal” narrative, they tend to follow a chronological order like an autobiography. However, the use of music enables different feelings and emotions simultaneously. In the cases of MNA, the melody evoked memories of significant childhood events; with case A, memories with his mother. This helps the offender to access sensory memories and bring about various layers of autobiographical memories.

Land Scape-Metonymical Expression

Important music is common among the participants in that it was heard during significant moments in their lives. This is considered by the author to be a metonymical substitution. Higuchi (2017) describes a metonymical expression as replacing the whole of a word with a part of a real 'thing' (or vice versa). Contrastingly, a synecdoche is the replacement of words with abstract 'things', i.e. the expansion and contraction of the meaning and concept of an event. Higuchi points out that the difference between these two types of substitution is connected to the Japanese distinction between 'mono(things)' and 'koto(event)'.

In Higuchi's view, 'things' are also sounds, or acoustics, in 'important music'. The music that played in the background of an important event is part of a scene that was experienced in reality in the past. The 'lived experience' of the reality of being 'there at that time' is reproduced using part of the scene of the 'important music'.

I will now examine what is meant by this experience that is represented and narrated by the 'thing' of sound. Elements such as the melody, voice, rhythm and lyrics of the replaced music evoke various sensations, such as a quickened heartbeat, sweat on the brow, a feeling similar to that of a mother's unremembered voice, scenes from the past, the smell and colour of blood, etc. When experienced on the spot, they potentially bring into consciousness memories of the past. I believe that the experience evokes a kind of synaesthetic memory, such as a memory of the latent past that rises into consciousness. These are sensations beyond consciousness, and 'important music' can be seen as a vivid expression of an inner world that cannot be put into words, leading to a 'lived experience', including pain, according to Varela & Shear (1999).

Therefore, using music when discussing a narrative causes various meanings to emerge without a feeling of conflict. This is because, in music there is a repetition of certain words in the melody and a variety of tones in the harmony at the same time.

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Radicalization and Transformation in Everyday Life. Educating the Radical Thinking

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Abstract - The pandemic has generated and increased many events of radicalization based on fake news, hate speech, new forms of populism. These phenomena have been discussed often only in the public arena and in the mass media channels as understandable points of view, in opposition to the scientific perspectives and data. For many communities or movements, the reaction has been to sustain and develop radicalized forms of thinking about the idea of freedom, the idea of democratic society and the role of the law. This paper aims to expand the idea of radicalization processes within the tradition of adult education theories.

KEYWORDS: Radicalization, critical thinking, education, prevention.

1. RADICALIZATION. GOOD AND BAD INTERPRETATIONS

As Coolsaet has recently underlined the term radicalization has become a ‘catch-all concept’ (2011, p. 261) and it has been used in the last decades as an exclusive concept of security affairs (Gallie, 1955). This notion of radicalization (and by extension violent radicalization) is today the subject of various debates both in the academia and the public sphere, with larger meaning and references. In this area of research some studies have questioned the precise meaning to be attributed to the word “radicalization”, others have criticized its scientific use (Richards, 2011) or its negative impact in the social public debate (Kundnani, 2012). The fact remains that the idea of radicalization has become a key debated notion in social sciences and now in adult learning research (Wilner, Dubouloz, 2015). Theories of adult learning and education allow us to see radicalization as a phenomenon that belongs to everyday life and they allow us to deal with the radical thoughts that we develop during our life journey as an adult. Finally, is there a good and bad radicalization? All we must do is say that if it is self-destructive, it is a desirable educational objective, or we have to go into the direction that the process must take. Radicalization stresses the direction that the adult learning process could follow. Becoming radical can be a transformational event, for individuals and society, but a dangerous journey also.

We well know the importance of the security approach and that collaboration is necessary, but goals can differ and likewise so can methods of prevention. In the book’s title we have used “everyday life” as a reminder that radicalization takes place in the initial stages of informal learning contexts. Peer groups, family, sport teams, workplaces and social media are spaces where people can radicalize their positions. In these spaces of everyday life, we can find companions, authorities, and beliefs ready to validate more radical ideas.

Each one of us can potentially develop personal, political, religious, or ethical perspectives that could be considered extreme, at least from others’ points of view.

Radical views only become problematic when they legitimize, encourage, or validate violence or forms of extremist behaviors, including terrorism and acts of hatred which are intended to promote a particular cause, ideology, or worldview. Individuals going through a process of radicalization can encourage, assist, or commit violence in the name of a specific system of beliefs because they are convinced that their assumptions are absolute and exclusive, and not framed within a personal or social history that can be re-read and re-negotiated.

The studies on radicalization are situated at the intersection of two traditions of research. On one side we have “radicalization and terrorism studies,” in which extensive and well-documented literature has developed aimed primarily at understanding terrorist phenomena, the link between this and public policies, dominant cultures, policy measures and economic systems (Antonelli, 2010). On the other hand, these studies intercept Adult Education debate, particularly referencing critical-emancipatory theories in which radicalization is interpreted as a particular form of the adoption of pre-critical thinking (Fabbri, Romano, 2021). For many years these two notions have begun to confront each other and engage in dialogue, to find spaces and ways to build a common language and multidisciplinary models in order to interpret radicalization.

Many studies ascribable to the first tradition have attempted to describe the factors that can generate and nurture radicalization phenomena but often stray by resorting to second-tier sources, producing knowledge derived, for the most part, from data already in the possession of decision makers or security officials. Even though these studies increase scientific knowledge and debate, they risk having a limited impact for those who work in the field and often use primary sources, prompting them to consider the scientific discourse on radicalization a product of knowledge that is already largely known. However, the advantage of this research is that it contributes to building descriptive knowledge (how big is the phenomenon of radicalization within a given community?) and acknowledgement, and studying the practices implemented in different social contexts (what prevention practices have developed?).

However, adult learning studies have also become increasingly involved in understanding radicalization phenomena. In recent years they have seen promising development, likely due to decreasing tension regarding specific issues of religiously-motivated terrorism and a broadening of the semantic scope of the term 'radicalization,' which was initially closely associated with the term 'terrorism'. Psycho-educational studies have made it possible to shift the focus from how to anticipate a terrorist act through intelligence strategies or the collection of preventive data considered to be predictable “signs” of violent behavior, to strategies that make the most vulnerable people resilient, help communities avoid polarizing public discourse, and train school and social service professionals in managing cultural diversity. It was a chain of thought that succeeded in developing models and deductions in the attempt to answer the question “how does a person become radicalized?”. It has offered a potential tool for reading into the process of the phenomenon that develops in stages, in levels of commitment or in the development of increasingly rigid thoughts and actions, exclusive and impermeable to diversity. Some argue that these steps have proven ineffective in predictive terms as there is no linear model that can be used to anticipate people's intentions, let alone be valid as an interpretation which disregards the kind of radicalization (religious, political, cultural, etc.) or the cultural context in which it takes shape. A new area of research and intervention shall be labeled 'micro-radicalization' (Fabbri, Melacarne, 2023).

Radicalization has, for many years, been synonymous with terrorism, with a particular focus on violent radicalization rather than radical meaning/thinking. Many other meanings in this sphere have been developed and used. For example, Schmid notes that even within scholarly and public debates not all forms of political violence are all-terrorist or all-extremist (Schmid, 2011).

Widespread uses and abuses of the term radicalization have appeared in the media and more broadly in the public sphere. This has created confusion regarding the various meanings of the term, and ultimately delegitimizing the role that some forms of radicalism have had, throughout history, in promoting democracy and social justice. It is therefore important to reaffirm the distinction between violent radicalization and nonviolent radicalization (Schmid, 2011).

We know that radicalization should not necessarily incorporate the idea that a subject performs a violent act, or that the radical position assumed may be connoted a priori as negative or dangerous. Radicalization is a situated phenomenon. Developing a radical point of view is a variable that can be understood and evaluated in connection with rights, community

practices, and the opportunities people have to discuss and contrast these ideas. People can adopt radical ideas, although they may be considered radical with respect to the social or collective norm, they are not necessarily extremist or contrary to democratic norms and values. Radicalization can also lead to different legitimate forms of democratic coexistence if the dialectic debate is allowed into a social context. What is considered radical in a social, cultural and specific historical time cannot be considered so in another. Some nonviolent radical people have played an extremely positive role in their communities, as well as in a wider political context. They have generated forms of political action based on participation, advocacy programs, awareness campaigns or groups of consciousness that grow through dialectics or critical reflection. Sometimes the progress in societies and civil rights has been the result of some form of radical thinking. But radicalization might also be better understood as an evolutionary process. Many people develop radicalized thinking through a specific life experience in a spectrum that can in no way reach violence or be closed to other points of view. People experience radicalization more or less consciously as the result of a process of sedimentation of meanings and perspectives that can become rigid and impermeable to debate, dialectics and confrontation over time. Violence can be an expression of this extreme state, where violence is interpreted as the only or right way to assert and to impose an idea.

2. CONCLUSION

Radicalization is not a propriety of the person (ontology) and it is not a characteristic of an environment (structuralism or culturalism). It is an emerging phenomenon from an education or learning process. Transformative learning theory can be mobilized as an interesting lens of analysis to understand radicalization phenomena. It incorporates the idea that radicalization can sometimes be interpreted as a form of distortion of thought, as an expression of rigid thinking, unable to transform. But it can also take the form of an emancipatory process of thought when it opens the doors to constructive criticism and coexistence. The transformative theory spoke indirectly of radicalization. Mezirow reported positive examples related to women's empowerment or professional development and described how transformation produced a hard reframing of the personal assumptions, following a process by which people lose a radical perspective on the relationship between women and professionals. He illustrated how the profound transformations of meaning are only partially self-destructed towards ends 'noble' as socially built.

The transformative theory also allows us to see radicalization as a phenomenon that belongs to everyday life. It allows us to deal with the radical thoughts that we develop during our life journey as an adult. The connection transformation/radicalization helps us as educators to work with people who by developing a radical thought risk turning it into violent actions.

The last point of potential development and interest is the challenge that the radicalization construct poses to the transformative theory in the ethical sense. What is a good and bad transformation? All we must do is say that if it is self-destructive, it is a desirable educational objective, or we have to go into the direction that the process must take. Radicalization stresses the direction that the learning process could follow. Being radical can be a transformational event, for individuals and society, but a dangerous journey also. Transformative learning could be explored more strictly in its relationship with values and rights as an expression of microradicalizational processes.

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Social Mediation: Engendering Community Learning Processes

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Abstract - This Swiss case study illustrates how community-based participatory research can foster constructive social change processes and citizen-centered policies. Different forms of mediation were showcased in a documentary film to increase awareness about conflict resolution practices. By reinforcing partnerships and including various communities of practice, a learning organization was configured. The co-construction of new legislation, that incorporates mediation, was enhanced through the overarching film-making process that culminated in a community event. This community learning space was designed to bring together scholar practitioners and politicians in a generative social learning process that can be understood as a form of social mediation. Through mutual accompaniment and mediatorship, the Valais Mediation Association cultivated a culture of mediation.

KEYWORDS: Social mediation, community-based participatory research, narrative inquiry

1. INTRODUCTION

Narrative inquiry was used in a social mediation process to elicit community learning that sought to engender citizen-centered policies. This social mediation process fostered community learning through narrative inquiry, “Narrative inquiry is a deeply ethical project. Narrative inquiry understood as ethical work means we cannot separate the ethical from the living of the inquiry” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 30). Narrative methods were employed by the Valais Mediation Association (AVDM) to produce a documentary film about mediation practices that was grounded in an ethical approach.

Community-based participatory research methods (CBPR) (Coughlin, Smith & Fernandez, 2017) were also used to reinforce the relational matrix. Furthermore, appreciative inquiry (AI) was incorporated (Cooperidder, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008) in qualitative interviews to enhance generative potentiality. Association members interviewed key cantonal partners and analyzed the major themes within the interviews. The documentary film was shown in a community setting, inviting scholar-practitioners to learn about the developments of new conflict resolution practices within the canton of Valais, Switzerland. This case study recounts how civil society co-constructed a community learning space, fostering partnerships with local authorities, and influencing future legislation during a period when the canton of Valais is writing a new constitution. The social mediation process that was elicited by the AVDM cultivated partnerships between communities of practice. Lifelong learning was a central component of the relational process.

The documentary film brings together narrative accounts of key stakeholders in an interwoven storyline. The association reinforced community partnerships by identifying key stakeholders that included a penal court judge, a family court judge, the head of youth services, a lawyer and elected official responsible for writing a new cantonal constitution, and the head of a local radio station that uses mediation to resolve internal conflicts. “Conveners have to identify locations in the landscape where new forms of engagement across boundaries are likely to be productive” (Wenger et al., 2015, p. 107). These important actors were partnered with mediation practitioners from within the mediation association and then invited to participate in interviews. Partnering served to strengthen engagement across boundaries. The association’s organizing committee co-constructed individualized semi-structured questionnaires that provided a thematic framework. The filmed interviews were subsequently coded by the committee.

The documentary film opened dialogical and reflexive space in a citizen-centered approach that addresses conflict resolution practices. The association’s 10th anniversary event was organized in May 2022 to present the documentary

film, followed by a round-table discussion. Civil society, governmental authorities, and academia were invited to learn together by exploring innovative mediation practices and reflect upon the various evolutions presented in the interviews. The film and event were designed to connect people and configure a “community of practice” (Wenger, 1998).

Engaged anthropology (Riva, 2022a, p. 118) underscores the importance of the relational aspects of research, recognizing the role of committed partnerships and even friendships. Multimodal forms of anthropological engagement rewire relations, co-constructing ways of knowing and learning together by using mediating technologies. “Invention, in this sense refers to a creative, immanent mode of engagement with the subjects and objects with whom we work, through which unforeseeable knowledges, events, and encounters may be produced” (Dattareyan & Marrero-Guillamon, 2019, p. 221).

Moreover, using the lens of research as accompaniment, scholar practitioners’ commitment is spotlighted, revealing how social change is engendered through long-term community engagement. Pathways through mutual accompaniment to solidarity lead to new forms of commoning that require education and apprenticeship for accompaniment. “Building solidarity with others to create beloved community is a slow, lifelong, and intergenerational process” (Watkins et al., 2019, p. 167). Commoning can be understood as a process that brings together stakeholders to co-construct community and cultivate belonging.

By inviting students to participate, the film was used as a teaching tool in the CAS/DAS in Mediation¹, offered at the University of Geneva’s Valais Campus. The film event informed students about current practices and demonstrated how CBPR can influence both policy and practice. Showcasing new mediation practices that have only recently been integrated into legal frameworks, allowed students to better comprehend the evolutions taking place in the field.

Mediatorship is both the position of the mediator and a vessel of exploration. “Mediatorship transports and is propelled forward by the generative potentiality encapsulated in narrative practices” (Riva, 2022b, p. 240). Accompanying communities of practice through mediatorship seeded a culture of mediation. The AVDM chose participatory methods that purposefully shape outcomes. This future forming research (Gergen, 2015) sought to create new legislation by configuring relational networks. The overarching process not only reinforced interconnectedness within the relational matrix but celebrated the association’s 10th anniversary.

2. INVENTIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

The social mediation process followed a research design that was inspired by a documentary film about hopeful, healthy aging that was developed within the Senior Living Lab (Riva & Verloo, 2017). The film used interviews with retired women who served as in-tandem researchers to explore important themes in aging. It was then shown at an Avant-Premiere with a round-table discussion about growing older, bringing together academia, cantonal authorities, as well as civil society to address societal challenges. It has also been used in adult education to teach health professionals about health prevention in relation to aging.

Civil society can initiate similar resolution processes when communities face societal challenges. Cultivating a culture of mediation requires methods that can act on communities of practice. The AVDM film event brought together participants and mediated regional perceptions of power relations “offering us a method for critical work within communities and institutions, revealing the fractures of power and restoring images of ‘what could be’” (Fine & Torres, 2020, p. 841). Eliciting hope while finding solutions to social challenges requires pedagogical methods that integrate the

¹ CAS/DAS in Mediation, University of Geneva, <https://www.unige.ch/formcont/cours/das-mediation?dl=pdf> Accessed December 14, 2022.

whole person within an ecological approach that conscientizes oppression that in turn, catalyzes transformative actions (Freire, 2014).

The association's organizing committee functioned as a focus group, using thematical coding to identify key words from each interview that were used as a visual transition, linking each interview segment. This process reinforced key concepts associated with the different mediation practices. It also served to scaffold a coherent narrative that connected the interviews. The themes that emerged from the analysis gave rise to a form of relational mind as participants engaged in the meaning-making process that reinforces citizen-centered approaches. Notable themes that emerged from the analytical process include the state as facilitator, reparation, family accompaniment, children's rights, complementarity, opening space for dialogue, fostering choices, and innovative solutions. These themes were used to underscore the key concepts that were communicated within the interviews by the professionals in the field.

Seeding a hopeful future not only requires imagining new practices but also policies, so that legislation reflects social progress. The film documentary and event were interwoven into a mandala of transformational practices that elevated public policy making to the level of cultural production and performance (Riva, 2022).

Critical theory calls for praxis instead of practice, "Praxis is future-focused and is reflexive in nature, requiring constant reflection on the theory-action relationship and constant revision in response to these reflections" (Hansen, 2020, p. 759). Critical theory in the context of conflict resolution provides insights that reveal social injustices. Mediation praxis can create spaces where restorative and transitional justice can be offered to citizens to increase social justice.

Narrative Mediation focuses on narrative processes. "A narrative approach takes at its starting point that people organize their experience, including their conflicts, in story form" (Winslade & Monk, 2020 p. 781). Social mediation processes can incorporate the narrative approach to mediation to amplify citizen's voices, co-constructing space for them to tell their stories.

A transformational process was generated through the 10th anniversary documentary film project that provided a community platform advocating for social change. Structure-processes provide platforms for constructive social change, "A transformational approach requires that we build an ongoing and adaptive base at the epicenter of conflict, a 'platform.'" (Lederach, 2003). The research design also sought to co-construct a dialogical space to develop moral imagination (Lederach, 2005), showcasing innovative mediation practices while visualizing a judicial system that incorporates mediation.

The AVDM film brought together citizens, civil society, practitioners, and legislators in a joint performance that has the potential of transforming conflict resolution practices and possibly new legislation in Valais' constitution that is a work in progress. This performative approach provided a social space where power relationships could be transformed through a cultural ritual, giving rise to community healing (Turner, 1977).

Adult learning was incorporated as part of a larger community action plan, cross-pollinating emancipatory processes that were scaffolded upon structure-processes. By engaging with civil society, researchers can seed the field, co-constructing hopeful practices and meaningful lives in the world to come. "Process" underscores the necessity of thinking creatively about the progression of conflict and the sustainability of its transformations by linking roles, functions, and activities in an integrated manner" (Lederach, 2020, p. 486). Civil society played an important role by initiating an event that opened a pathway towards mutual accompaniment and commoning.

3. SEEDING TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES

First as president of the Valais Mediation Association and then as mediator, instructor, and researcher, my role has transitioned from legitimate expert to advocate and accompanier. My different roles and my positionality have shape-

shifted in response to the different phases of my career and the situations that arose. My lifework has sought to cultivate a culture of mediation, adapting my methods in response to emerging conflicts and societal needs. When we walk in-tandem with the communities we are researching, we perform accompaniment. “The embodied practice of psychosocial accompaniment requires a reorientation of human subjectivity, of interpersonal practices, and of the critical understanding of the accompanier so that she or he can stand alongside others who desire listening, witnessing, advocacy, and space to develop critical inquiry and joint action to address desired and needed structural and other changes” (Watkins et al., 2019, p. 19). Together, the AVDM members positioned themselves as in-tandem researchers, advocating for a culture of mediation through accompaniment.

To illustrate the overarching transitional process, I will offer examples. My role as mediator moved towards advocacy when I spoke at the HES-SO conference in 2016 on children’s rights in divorce proceedings², presenting the Nebraska Parenting Act³ as an example of family mediation legislation. My European Master’s Degree in Mediation internship included meeting with the judge and mediator that had conceptualized divorce legislation in Nebraska that incorporated mediation in 1999. The Nebraska example was not transposed to fit the family courts in Valais, however a Belgian model, that was developed to better serve families much like the Nebraska model, eventually became the model of choice in Valais. These models dovetailed in presentations during the 2016 conference. When Marie-France Carlier, a judge from Belgium, presented her systemic approach that is used to accompany families that are facing separation and divorce, governmental authorities in Valais took notice (Carlier, 2017). The conference created a dialogical space for relational synergies to emerge.

Following the 2016 conference, the child protection and youth services organized a World Café (Brown & Issacs, 2005) with other governmental authorities, professionals, and civil society to imagine a more integrated and collaborative approach to divorce proceedings. Members of the AVDM participated in the World Café. This phase of the social mediation process gave rise to the implementation of a pilot project.

The COCHEM model has been recognized as an effective model in the family courts in Dinat, Belgium that elicits collaborative process (Marique & Sacrez, 2014). The Belgian COCHEM model was introduced in Valais after a successful trial period⁴. A pilot project in Valais inspired by the COCHEM model allowed judges, lawyers, and mediators to train and practice an integrated approach within the family courts. The pilot project began in the region of Monthey, Valais. The family court cases benefited from an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach that allowed families to find solutions and make agreements more rapidly, serving to protect children from long-term conflicts. After the success of the pilot project in Monthey, the COCHEM model was officially recognized by the judicial authorities. In 2022, it was decided that the parental consensus model would be offered throughout the different regions in Valais (Rey-Mermet & Wack, 2021).

Research as social change provides a template for engaging with communities in overarching research processes that elicit social transformation (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). Remembering the transformative phases reinforces our understanding of long-term accompaniment. The documentary film and event reinforced the social change process by creating a community space to witness the benefits of the parental consensus model and other mediation practices. New

² Les nouvelles formes de parentalité : Le temps du partage...et l’enfant ? Actes du colloque du 7^e Colloque printanier du Centre interfacultaire en droits de l’enfant, May 19-20, 2016.

https://www.unige.ch/cide/files/8715/0850/3435/Publications_pour_impression.pdf Accessed Decemeber 14, 2022.

³ Nebraska Parenting Act Brochure, https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/Parenting_Act_Brochure_10-17.pdf Accessed December 7, 2022.

⁴ Family platform <https://www.famille-vs.ch/fr/plateforme-cantonale-valaisanne-pour-la-famille/consensus-parental-lors-de-separation/projet-pilote-dans-le-bas-valais-551/> Accessed August 25, 2022.

landscapes of meaning were presented at the film event, allowing participants to envision future legislation. The AVDM film event created yet another dialogical space that brought together communities of practice to imagine innovative *flyways* or ‘lines of flight’ (Cobb, 2015).

CBPR engendered a culture of mediation, influencing both practice and policy within the canton of Valais. Narrative inquiry and narrative conflict resolution employ narrative methods that scaffold participatory process. This case study exemplifies how learning in landscapes of practice can engender new practice pathways (Wenger et al., 2015) When practitioners, civil society, judicial officials, and scholar practitioners participate in commoning, building partnerships that not only influence policy but generate new legislation, they engage in mutual accompaniment.

Individual and societal transformation dovetail when enlightened policy offers citizens the opportunity to resolve conflicts using participatory methods that develop “conflict wisdom,” understood as an “awareness of one’s own conflict frame or mindset” (Jordan, 2022, p. 380). Relational ethics call us to reflexively consider our social responsibilities regarding how we live in relation with others (Clandinin, 2013, p. 30). This line of thinking leads us to the importance of relational responsibility that behooves us to quest for more appropriate methods. “A theory is simply a language resource that permits particular forms of action and suppresses others. Perhaps, the central issue, then, is what kinds of social worlds do different theories make possible?” (McNamee & Gergen, 1999, p. 5). Conflict resolution can be oriented towards more democratic practices that are citizen-centered and thus more participatory in nature, buttressing judicial systems that support human flourishing.

Transformational pedagogies have been used to teach individuals about conflict resolution using *Transformagram Portfolios* that develop conflict narratives (Riva, 2021). This case study presents how transformational learning can be expanded to encompass communities of practice, providing a method for learning together. In this community context, narrative conflict resolution practices guided the social mediation process, homing *in* to flourishing lifeworlds and shared notions of the good life (Riva, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

Knowledgeability can be gained through experiential learning processes. Furthermore, community learning processes have generative potentiality, strengthening partnerships while developing shared vision. Social mediation processes can interweave narrative methods into a mandala of transformative practices that not only provide a guiding template, but orient future forming research. Storying these transformative processes offers yet another narrative strand to the thickening storyline of social transformation.

The AVDM documentary film and event effectively seeded a world to come, advocating for policy changes that incorporate mediation legislation. This case study underscores how communities of practice can learn together, imagining and designing generative practices and more just policies. Social change processes often require long-term accompaniment. In this context, civil society cultivated a culture of mediation by scaffolding community learning processes in evolving landscapes of practice. Mediatorship provided a vessel of exploration.

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Talent Development and Leisure at Work: The Way for Developing Adult Talents?

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Abstract - The submitted contribution deals with the issue of working with talents in the workplace. In the first part, attention is focused on the basic step in talent management, which is the identification of talents in the workplace. In this context, the setting of the talent acquisition process and their development is important. The second part of the text is a contribution to the process of working with talents at the workplace and a new perspective on talent management by dealing with the social environment of the workplace and its possibilities for individual talent development, especially at the level of self-reflection and the use of free time at work by specific interns, talent.

KEYWORDS: Talent development, talent management, leisure at work, leisure experience.

1. INTRODUCTION

Talent management (including talent development) was understood as one of the strategies to support creative and innovative thinking in the light of the transformation of society and the knowledge economy. In today's economy, the management and development of talents is still an attractive concept, as the identification of knowledge, acquisition, development and maintenance of talented employees in the organization is gaining importance, as a result of the constant surrounding social-cultural-economic conditions that transform the requirements of individuals, e.g. in terms of own educational and development needs, or career requirements (Carpenter et al, 2015). At the same time, with regard to the rapid development of technology, the attention began to turn more towards workers who are able to bring new things to the organization and adapt to the changing environment, which resulted in the selection of groups of talented people. Therefore, the value of a talent management strategy is still justified by the fact that human capital is the most valuable thing that an organization has, and it is necessary to distinguish the best workers, which leads to the fact that the most funds are invested in this group of people (Korn Ferry, 2018). In the last two to three decades, the talent development process is often used by organizations to increase the attractiveness of recruitment for a potential employee. It is also used for maintaining or increasing performance, productivity and competitiveness, continuous development and learning, both for organizations and individuals (Hedayati Mehdiabadi & Li, 2016).

Those workers who are supposed to be drivers of profit for the organization and the economy can be labelled as talented. Investment in human capital began to be understood as a long-term strategy of organizations for increasing productivity and competitiveness in terms of today's requirements, which requires rapid adaptation to technological changes through investment in development and education (Sparrow, 2019; Loon & Nachmias, 2020). In short, talented people are strategically important for the organization - they have a high level of work skills, achieve high performance, have potential and often occupy key positions. An employee who is able to handle the requirements of a key job position in a specific organization can also be considered talented (Gallardo-Gallardo, Nijs, Dries and Gallo, 2015). However, the idea of labelling all employees as talented may also arise (Swales and Blackburn, 2015; Swales, Downs, and Orr, 2019).

Currently, however, organizations are discovering that the traditional approach to talent management does not bring the solutions that were expected, e.g. a constant supply of talented individuals, and therefore a more humanitarian-based stream is also emerging, which brings the so-called disrupt approach, in which talent is management understood as a way to change thinking to enable organizational transformation through innovation and shaping social change in society (Korn Ferry, 2018; Carpenter et al., 2015). Talented people are understood as innovators, yet their development strategy should reflect both the company and its goals, and give people the necessary degree of freedom to develop their talent (Korn Ferry, 2018, p. 19 - 20).

However, this individual responsibility for being labelled as talent can have the opposite effect. As Liessmann (2017) states, although a person nowadays could spend more time freed from the necessity of immediate gainful activity based on his productivity supported by technologies, on the contrary, he/she gives the impression of a hunted animal who must be constantly in motion, must not stop, is part of the acceleration development that he/she does not even control. The imperative of today is the constant optimization of our competences and the increase of our potential, which is used as a resource, which means that we must structure the time we have at our disposal according to this imperative, which determines our professional life and a competitive society. If talent is to be developed, and if a person is to acquire knowledge, then he needs free time, because it is free time that can contribute to thinking, development and education. Organizations that consider a selected group of workers to be talented can approach talent rather by measuring their performance, but on the other hand, employees labelled as talented are understood as those who should bring knowledge and innovation to the organization, should be creative and thus fulfil goals and visions organization faster than those not in the talent program. However, there is a conflict here - employees may not be allowed to fully engage in thinking and be fully developed in this direction. This can have the exact opposite effect to what the talent development process is intended to have.

2. LEISURE AT WORK AS ONE OF THE APPROACHES TO DEVELOP ADULT TALENTS IN ORGANIZATIONS

There are different approaches to talent development. One of them is a development program including continuing education courses. Another possibility is to create space for gaining leisure experiences within working hours. We can discover this approach especially among highly qualified employees whose work is focused on achieving the objective key results.

As indicated by the results of qualitative research *Leisure at work and its forms in the context of the Czech labour market*, employees of a small software company have a lot of experience with this phenomenon¹. This is due to the nature of their work and the approach of their management, which realizes that individual and professional growth of employees is closely related to the economic profit of the company. What is more, it also realizes that employees need to have leisure at work in order to come up with new ideas, complete the assigned work on time and with the required quality. For that reason, the management allows them to gain leisure experiences in the workplace (e.g. in offices, a kitchen and a playroom).

These employees are mainly keen on having informal conversations with “other people” working in different work teams in the kitchen within “coffee rituals”. It is an example of casual leisure that provides immediate sense of pleasure and makes more interesting certain tasks (Stebbins 2017). Furthermore, they are also fond of spending time in the

¹ For the research purposes, leisure at work was defined in accordance with Robert A. Stebbins' theory of leisure time as „...uncoerced, contextually framed activities (...), which they want to do and do, using their abilities and resources, actually enact in either a satisfying or a fulfilling way (sometimes both)” (Stebbins, 2017, p. 11).

playroom where there are bean bags, darts, table football, and hockey. And last but not least, there are offices where they have an opportunity to use their mobile phone or office network for personal reasons. Some of them watch their favorite podcasts whereas others listen to music or play computer games.

These are some of the examples representing sources of leisure experiences, to name a few. Each of them gives an opportunity to adult talents to develop their potential. Having leisure at work means much more than just enjoying an unwind and eliminating signs of fatigue. This is the time to come up with new ideas, either letting your thoughts flow freely or engaging in an interesting conversation with your colleagues.

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How Adult Educators Overcome Crises. Insights from a Qualitative Investigation at German Adult Education Centers.

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Abstract - The article presents empirical findings on the experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis at German adult education centers. Analyzing how VHS-directors reacted to the pandemic, evidences processes of change as well as continuing habits and supporting structures securing a new normality. Four aspects of crisis experience are identified on the basis of the comparative analysis of 18 narrative interviews with VHS-directors in Schleswig-Holstein: 1) the social function of VHS as an institution, 2) the organizational structure, 3) the educational mission and 4) issues related to digitalization.

KEYWORDS: Covid 19 crisis, adult education centers (VHS), dimensions of crisis management, social space, biographical research.

1. INTRODUCTION: ADULT EDUCATION AND CRISES

References of adult education and crisis are manifold. Individual transformative learning is enabled through crises, while adult education in general supports coping with social crises. Nevertheless, this 'crisis competence' is rarely reflected and the multiple references between adult education and crisis experiences are little discussed. This paper presents findings on the effects of the pandemic crisis on German Adult Education Centers (Volkshochschule - VHS). With around 900 institutions, VHS are largest provider of general adult education in Germany. Their central educational mission is to provide lifelong education for all, to ensure participation in society, culture and work. In over 100 years of history, VHS were repeatedly confronted with crises. Recently they contribute to the integration of refugees as a central provider of German language classes (cf. Sgobba 2021, p. 42). Being aware of the institutional history of coping with critical challenges we asked, whether and how the crisis of the pandemic affected the work and educational mission of VHS.

Analyzing how VHS-directors reacted to the pandemic, evidences processes of change as well as continuing habits and supporting structures securing a new normality. To this end, first the specific feature of the pandemic crisis is pointed out. Public attention mostly focused on the visible effects of the lockdowns, problematizing the blocking of access to lifelong education. The pandemic worked as a focal lens on precarious institutional structures and employment conditions of staff in adult and continuing education (Probst 2020). At the same time, online learning opened up new spaces for agency. Concerns about the social implications, however, were rarely mentioned. One exception is the statement by the board of the German Society of Educational Science (DGfE) Adult Education Section (Sektionsvorstand Erwachsenenbildung 2020). Coping with crises as well as dealing with the consequences of crises in pedagogical terms only becomes possible retrospectively. A reconstructive perspective on the effects of the pandemic shifts the focus on working conditions, teaching approaches and the importance of adult education in times of crisis. Thus, we understand the pandemic, precisely the measures to combat it, as a collective experience of crisis that suspended (some of the) basic social patterns of orientation and irritated common notions of social interaction. In contrast to existential experiences of danger during war or natural disasters, the danger caused by the virus as well as the virus itself remained invisible and intangible. The danger

needed ‘translation’; the preventive measures needed mediation. The virus ‘can only be adumbrated through technological means such as microscopes as well as statistical modelling and testing’ (Bengtsson & Van Poeck 2021, p. 284). What was experienced as a crisis was thus not only the danger of an illness itself, but also the preventive measures such as the closure of public (educational) institutions, quarantine regulations, travel bans, masks and social distancing or obligatory vaccination. Crisis experiences generated an existential threat disrupting everyday routines. As disaster research has shown, in extreme situations the subjective feeling of safety is kept up by holding on to habitualized acting and a quick building of new routines. Koloma-Beck (2020), who has observed societies in situations of war, explains:

Everyday life has a socially and societally stabilizing effect because it enables the continuation of (survival) necessary activities, not only in private households, but also in companies, authorities and other organizations. Furthermore, the adaptation of everyday life stabilizes subject structures. Habitual action generates experiences of competence and self-efficacy, of continuity and identity. In the face of disruptive events, moments of everydayness counteract the feeling of being at the mercy of others and provide experiences of control over one's own life. (ibid., p. 456; translation BNJ & FB)

2. THE RESEARCH PROJECT ‘VHS AFTER THE PANDEMIC’

The first lockdown in March 2020, which suspended all activities of VHS, was a collective experience of crisis. While the public debate in Germany almost exclusively concentrated on schools, lockdowns, distance and hygiene regulations directly impacted on the VHS (Echarti et al. 2022). Building on a collective memory of coping experiences, persons responsible for a VHS often recalled the narrative of a crisis as an opportunity (Ehse et al. 2021). Therefore, VHS appears to be a ‘resilient’ institution. What was exactly experienced as critical, how were the VHS in Schleswig-Holstein affected by the Corona pandemic? Towards this aim, we conducted 18 narrative interviews with directors of VHS in Schleswig-Holstein. The theoretical approach built on the idea of the Corona crisis as a process that, unlike a momentary event, changes social practices over a longer period. We assume that apart from visible effects, tacit changes could be identified. Since social, societal or institutional transformation processes are situated within the tension field of structure and agency, they can thus be reconstructed as a relation of (individual, subjective) transitional experiences. Focusing on less visible crisis effects and hidden dimensions of crisis management complements and extends previous national and international findings (e.g. Schrader & Brandt 2021; Preston & Firth 2020; Sgobba 2021; Käßlinger & Lichte 2020).

The analysis of the narrative combines the approach of biographical research with the methodological principles of grounded theory (Müller & Skeide 2018). The interviews took place in spring 2022 when education institutions in Germany successively reopened. The introductory narrative stimulus, however, referred to the time of the first lockdown. The interviews were anonymized and analyzed according to Strauss and Corbin (1994), highlighting how the pandemic, in particular the lockdown, was clearly experienced as a crisis. Both the uncertainties that emanated from this crisis experience and the subjective coping strategies open up a differentiated view on four aspects of crisis management, which will be elaborated in the following.

3. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: ASPECTS OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Being asked about their memory of the first lockdown VHS-directors talked about ‘horror’ and surprise: ‘it caught me so unexpectedly’ (VHS 10 – Eva; 48-51)¹. With one exception, all the interviewees were not prepared for the closing of their institution, which put their everyday routines on suspense. That caused a fundamental uncertainty and basic

¹ All quotes from the interviews were translated by the authors.

questions of meaning: ‘this idea that you close an educational institution [...] I [had] simply not thought that such a possibility really existed, that one could cut such a lifeline’ (ibid.; 49-53).

However, not all interviewees perceived these disruptions as critical. While some of them were worried by the uncertainties of the situation, others remembered it as an inspiring challenge. Beyond subjective coping strategies, the transcripts highlight the significance of VHS as public institution of adult education. The narratives address *a)* the social function of the institution VHS, *b)* the organizational structure, *c)* the educational mission and *d)* issues related to digitalization.

a) The image of VHS as a social space appears as a leitmotif in almost all interviews and is repeatedly illustrated with examples illustrating the importance of personal encounters: ‘our building lives from the many people, we live in presence. When you walk down the corridor, it's like a bazaar’ (VHS 12 - Heike; 66-68). The variety of activities and people meeting at this space of education is described as ‘typically VHS’ (ibid.; 69). However, this does not exclude online learning. Linda, director of a small municipal VHS, launched a survey on the acceptance of ‘online learning’ among lecturers and participants. The majority of respondents opted against it and although Linda herself wanted to expand and improve the digital teaching techniques, she saw the answers confirming the strength and core competence of the VHS, ‘namely meeting in presence. That is important to them, that is why they come to us, they appreciate that.’ (VHS 4 - Linda; 194-195). The quotes of Heike and Linda are exemplary. They point to the social significance of the VHS activities, illustrating the importance of a public space of education and a point of reference for diverse (educational) demands and interests beyond teaching and learning. Therefore, meeting in person is vital and cannot be shifted to the digital space (cf. Denninger & Käßlinger 2021. p. 174).

b) The lockdowns and hygiene regulations became a focal lens for structural issues, since courses, if at all, were to continue only with reduced numbers of participants. Since the financing of VHS crucially depends on participation, the pandemic crisis quickly turned into a financial crisis. This caused concern especially for the directors, being responsible for running the institution and the job security of lecturers and administrative staff. Municipally owned organizations were affected in different ways than independent economic non-profit associations. Municipalities would guarantee jobs but eventually delegated staff members to the health department or re-use class rooms as testing or vaccination centers. Dörte, leading a small, rural VHS, explains: ‘The forum next door is the vaccination centre, and there I gave some courses, so they cannot take place anymore’ (VHS 6 - Dörte; 42-44).

Financial security also depended on the size of an institution and the portfolio of classes at offer. Federally financed integration classes for migrants served as economic safety factor, together with further and continuing training for vocational certificates.

Financial insecurity especially hit lecturers who are usually contracted as freelancers. This insecurity was not only stressful for individuals, but also for those who are responsible for the whole institution. Eva expresses ‘worries about the company and about my team’ (VHS 1 - Eva; 35). The core question for her is how to secure the existence of her VHS and the employment of her staff. Loss of income due to course cancellations and repayments of course fees were economically dangerous. In contrast, Linda who is responsible for a municipal VHS illustrates: ‘The mayor never pulled the short-time work card, he really gave us his full support’ (VHS 4 - Linda; 567-569).

c) Another aspect of crisis management relates to the self-understanding of the institution as a social space for education in the local community, which transcends the planning and teaching of courses. For example, participants of a sewing course organized the production of face-masks to supplied social institutions in the community before medical masks became obligatory. Likewise, strong bonds with the community were maintained by an intense communication of course cancellations, reimbursement of participation fees and appeals for.

The cancellation of classes often provided a time-space for reflecting conceptual issues. Basic questions about the planning of program, classes and accessibility and reach out for wider target groups called in question two of the fundamental pillars of VHS work: the printed program booklet and the semester structure of teaching times: ‘Do we still need a program booklet? How do we reach our participants?’ (VHS 1 - Eva; 804-805). Online programs or newsletters were tested as alternatives, aiming at more flexibility in the structure of offers. Svantje, another director of a medium sized municipal VHS draws from this period for the future organization: ‘[To work] more agile. Working situationally, without fixed structures, no eternal regulations, just keeping eyes and ears open for future trends.’ (VHS 12 - Svantje; 460-461). She also intends to refrain from the semester rhythm and ‘take up great offers once they are presented to us’ instead (ibid.; 842-843). This flexibilization of institutional habits and program structures are persistent results of the Corona crisis.

d) Obviously, questions of digitality also play an important role for the managing of the crisis (cf. Bellinger & Niemeyer 2023 – in press). When talking about ‘digitalization’ the interview partners first of all addressed the quality of technical equipment, both of the institution itself and of the participants. While technical issues usually were easily solved, teaching online presented the biggest challenge for everybody involved – directors, teachers and participants. If online classes were accepted as useful depended on the individual teacher as well as on the subject taught. While in health or cultural education ‘distance learning’ seemed to make little sense, degree-oriented classes in continuing vocational education or in the DaF/DaZ² sector were usually converted quickly and with a lot of creative ideas.

Lars, leader of another municipal VHS, describes himself as technically skilled, his VHS is ‘digitally far ahead’ (VHS 3 - Lars; 1076-1077). Like many of his colleagues, Lars quickly transferred DaF/DaZ into an online format, soon after the pandemic began, because the participants strongly demanded to continue with language learning, even though classrooms were to be kept closed. Since some of the participants were lacking appropriate devices lecturers had to develop workaround strategies, e. g. sending out text messages or recording self-learning videos. Other VHS directors also reported that participants rather accepted online classes in relation with a formal certificate. Lars confirms: ‘So the online business is really only (...) for all those participants who absolutely need this course.’ (ibid., 179-181). Anna, deputy director of a medium-sized, municipal institution, reports the same. She observed a high demand for online or hybrid classes in the area of vocational qualifications: ‘It was different with vocational qualifications, though. It was very, very important for the people that there is no standstill or delay, but that we actually continued partly in hybrid form, partly in a very flexible change between presence and online formats’ (VHS 8 - Anna; 87-90). While further vocational education was essential for the participants, too, in other sectors learners rather waited for the VHS to re-open, as they prefer meeting in presence.

Both, DaZ/DaF and vocational education, are funded by the federal government and thus considerably contributed to financial security during the pandemic. Hence, the quick transformation of these classes into online teaching formats was of little surprise (compare Widany et al. 2022, p. 406 ff.).

4. CONCLUSION

Retrospectively, the interview narratives showed that the initial period of the pandemic was experienced as a crisis, although the resulting uncertainties were perceived in differing ways. The disruption of everyday routines presented an existential challenge, followed by a phase of activity to regain agency and establish new routines. At the same time, the

² The acronym DaF/DaZ stands for German as a Foreign or Second Language. The sector includes courses that support migrants in learning German.

interruption of everyday routines was used as a space-time for reflection, habitualized procedures were put in question, giving way to the testing of innovative ideas. This corresponds to the general pattern of crisis management known from disaster research (Koloma-Beck 2020). Likewise, the crisis worked as a focal lens revealing weaknesses (Käpplinger 2021). Precarious employment conditions of lecturers as well as precarious financing of VHS institutes become particularly clear during lockdown and limited participation numbers. Concerns and uncertainty characterizing the perception of crisis refer to staff responsibility and to the social responsibility to provide a public education space for all. Still, crisis experiences are ambivalent. Disrupting the social function of the VHS as public space for meeting and learning is critical, but allows for rethinking and redesigning of this space at the same time. Thus, lessons from the pandemic point to the ongoing negotiation of the understanding of lifelong public education, emphasizing the importance of VHS not only as a place of learning but as a social space to experience belonging, participation and social engagement.

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3R-Play's Educational Practices for Adult Education: The Case of Football Coaches' Training 'I° Edition'

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Abstract - The contribution intends to present the meaning, characteristics and evaluation plan of 3R-Play educational practices. These practices – focused on the three actions of Reflecting, Researching, Replying (3R) – aim to strengthen the skills of questioning, reflection, evaluation and decision, necessary for adult-educators and teachers in order to act in an operational, meaningful and effective way within complex educational contexts. The 3R-Play educational practices will be clarified and deepened within the contribution also through the presentation of SOCCER - Football School: Roles and educational tasks, a research project by a team of the University of Turin.

KEYWORDS: Sports, football school, coaches, educational practices.

1. NEW SENSIBILITY AND PRACTICES FOR POSTMODERN COMPLEXITY

The complexity of the ongoing changes stages controversial and non-linear situations in front of which the adults must demonstrate an unprecedented skill for problematization in order to answer and act in the most appropriate way (i.e. in the most effective and meaningful way). Complexity is general and human skills are engaged simultaneously on several fronts: personal and professional, relational and social, ethical, economic and political, ... This is not necessarily a bad condition. On the contrary, the general nature of complexity (Morin, 2007) and the exposure of human action on several fronts (Hager & Beckett, 2019) can be an important opportunity to rethink the objectives and aims of human development.

Faced with this opportunity, adult life must learn to take into account the ambiguities, instabilities and versatility of the experiences in which it must act. The experiences gained and the knowledge accumulated do not guarantee adequate solutions for every situation. The dynamics of liquidity (Bauman & Donskis, 2013) and acceleration (Rosa, 2013) prevent the application of standardized formulas: each situation presents new and different details, new and different relationships; so that it must be understood in its particularity. What adult life needs is a new sensitivity (Llano, 2017), a perceptive and active sensitivity, able to capture these details and transform them into resources for the change, an ever further and more human change. Due to this project trait, the new sensitivity has to include – at the same time – attention and care, personality and responsibility, participation and courage.

Consequently, research on adult education has been called to review educational practices to respond to this new need. Of the possible revision approaches, the reflective one is the most effective and meaningful (Schön, 1983). It is fundamental to engage one in a reflection-in-action as only in 'the action-present' time window is it possible to make a difference, understanding and replying effectively and meaningfully (Schön, 1995).

However, despite in the recent European and international scientific panorama, reflective educational practices are seen as the most effective way to promote an adult educational-oriented action (Barnard & Ryan, 2017; Ewing, Waugh & Smith, 2021), the effectiveness of the reflective methodology has important margins for improvement. The educational scope of this methodology can in fact be consolidated by research that focuses on intervention strategies and formal structures.

Recognizing this possibility, the version of reflective educational practices staged by the *3R-Play* – proposal of a research team of the University of Turin – aims to improve the training of reflective capacity (Nosari & Guarcello, 2019a,

2019b, 2022). These practices point to strengthening the skills of questioning, evaluation and decision, exercising the three actions necessary for an operational, meaningful and effective educational action (Reflecting, Researching, Replying) in complex contexts (job, school, sports, ...).

In particular, the revision of $\text{}_3\text{R-Play}$ copes with two challenges. The first of them is methodological: which is the most effective device for the training of the reflective capacities, necessary to cope with the postmodern complexity? The first of them faces the problematic crux of the evaluation: is it possible to evaluate the reflective capacities and their hypothetical improvement? In answering to these challenges, the model of $\text{}_3\text{R-Play}$ presents two principal novelties: the methodological device of pretext and the evaluation system of questions.

2. THE METHODOLOGICAL DEVICE OF 3R-PLAY

Aiming to exercise the skills necessary for an adult action capable of dealing with the postmodern complexity in an operational, meaningful and effective way, the model of $\text{}_3\text{R-Play}$ educational practices involves the participants in a 'situation-pretext' (for example, see Figure 1), that is a situation staged through a text (e.g. the dialogue of a novel, a song, a newspaper article), images (a billboard, a photograph, a cartoon), but also a video (taken from films or social networks) that create a 'dialectical agon' (Xie, 2014).



Figure 1: An example of 'situation-pretext'

Recalling the principles and techniques of Life histories and Life-based methods (West, Alheit, Anderson & Merrill, 2007; Formenti & West, 2016), the 'situation-pretext' presents a suspended situation: it stages many problems (is it right to steal? Is the work a right? Is it permissible to protest in every way? ...), but it doesn't anticipate any solution. In the 'traditional' reflective practices (Jasper, 2003; Burnard & Hennessy, 2006; Ghaye, 2010; Ewing, Waugh & Smith, 2021), the situations of pretext are used for exercising participants to imagine what they would think or do in that particular situation. Therefore, the suspension promotes the expression of the personal positions: in the absence of anticipations or suggestions, everyone can feel free to propose their own interpretation. At the same time, the suspension improves the dialogue between the different points of view and the possible meanings of the issue aimed/highlighted/brought by the pretext. The space of the pretext is lived as a 'mediated' experience that allows everyone to identify his/herself with a particular situation and to exercise the human capacities of understanding and reacting.

In the $\text{}_3\text{R-Play}$, the 'situation-pretext' is present with an 'innovative' function. The methodological device is used not to exercise the capacity to assume solutions, but to train the habit to make questions. The space of pretext remains an open space; but – before being open to the different solutions – it is ground for questions. The combination of situation and

suspension trains the participants, first of all, in a questioning activity where there are no predefined questions or early answers. Through the pretext, everyone is called to questioning. In fact, staged to suspend the action, the space of the pretext allows to invest time in training aimed to form a questioning approach. In a time-space not focused on the search for the solution, every question is valid because the imperative of 3R-Play practices is that every question has value.

This 'regulation' of the device – from researching solutions to making questions – answers to the necessity to improve the reading and understanding capacities with regard to the different situations. An approach oriented to immediately give a solution to the topic opened by the pretext (to steal is a crime, to protest is an act of freedom, ...), in the complex society that postmodernism is, runs the risk of giving 'generic' solutions, that are valid for a lot of different situations and therefore unable to seize the opportunities (that are often implicit) of the particular situation and to nurture an authentic dialogue. Indeed, the regulation of 3RPlay practices doesn't call into question the content of the solution (to steal remains a crime, to protest is an act that implies freedom, ...), but leads to the centre of the reflective practices the necessity of a process that raises awareness and belief, for a full responsibility.

With this aim, the device of pretext involves participants in three specific actions, acting as a stumbling block, as a trap, or a pothole.

Acting as a stumbling block, the pretext introduces a situation and forces participants to notice something: postmodern complexity requires attention to detail. It is not a question of observation. The need for attention means interest, care, concern. And the stumbling block of the pretext – against all indifference – trains the sensitivity to details and to the possible relationships between them. Indeed, the 'measure of detail' is indispensable to adequately (that is, effectively and significantly) cope with the often controversial and non-linear situations of complexity.

Acting as a trap, the pretext causes participants to dwell on something. This is the action that exercises the attention and care to the detail in an in-depth action: 'trapped', the participants cannot escape before they have searched for further details and connections. Complexity requires patience and comparison with others. The problematizing approach must not be in a hurry. For this reason, the formation of this approach must encourage and foster a habit of persisting and of not being satisfied with the first impression.

Acting as a pothole, the pretext prompts participants to reply and get out of the pretext situation. In other words, this device allows participants to exercise the human capability of problematizing the situation to resolve it in the most aware and responsible way possible. This third action is indispensable to forming the aptitude to take charge of situations. Often in fact, faced with the complexity of the situation, the easiest attitude is to delegate or replicate already tested solutions.

Therefore, the device of the pretext – according to the version of 3RPlay – forces a confrontation of the situation, habitualizes seeing opportunities in the situation, forms the posture to look at situations as opportunities to implement human development.

The generative character of this device is surprising (Nosari & Guarcello, 2021): the participants quickly become able to ask countless questions and discover other questions in comparison with other participants. In the frame of reflective educational practices, the methodological function of the pretext is particularly effective. However, precisely because of its generative capacity, the device of the pretext has a value that goes beyond the methodological aspect: it forms an existential approach (Nosari & Guarcello, 2019b, 2022).

3. THE EVALUATION SYSTEM OF 3R-PLAY

The model of the 3R-Play aims to act as formal education. Indeed, the informal character of reflective practices prevents the possibility of recognizing real results, of correcting, of improving. For this reason, the efficacy of these reflective practices needs to be measured. So, the 3R-Play model has taken up this challenge by inserting – in its methodological

program – a qualitative evaluation plan, articulated into three different fields: the formative results evaluation, the evaluation of the realized formative process and the impact evaluation (that is, of the long-term formative results).

Among them, the result evaluation is, without any doubt, the field of priority interest, both for the methodological structure of the formative process (based on the pretext device and on the process of questioning that it fosters) and for the problematizing competence that the training promotes. Within this field, the evaluation is led through the collection and classification of all the questions arising from the pretexts, dividing them into four different typologies (Nosari & Guarcello, 2021):

- the realistic questions: explore the descriptive aspects of the situation presented in the pretext (what happens, who is involved, when and where, which are the qualitative-quantitative observable characteristics ...),
- the operative questions: explore the functioning modality of the situation, the possible actions to be implemented (what to do, how to manage),
- the causal questions: explore both the efficient cause (the reasons why) that could have generated the situation and the final cause (the reason for) in view of which would be important to orient the educational intervention,
- the hypothetical questions: explore the possible different hypothesis of the situation development (and if also ...?, and if instead ...? ...) and the different further scenarios that can be imagined and promoted.

The four typologies are not posed in an order of priority or of importance. Indeed, they are all considered essential for an ecological and integral reconstruction of any educational situations and for the recognition both of the educational problems complexity that the situation itself presents and the significance of the possible operative paths for their management.

The conceptual frame within which this particular classification in typologies has taken shape finds its theoretical base in the Aristotelian lesson, with particular regard to the categories of predicates that define the essence of 'what the thing is', its principles and its efficient and final causes (Aristotle, 1974, 1989, 2002, 2007). A base brought up to date in the light of recent studies and research on the 'human' and pedagogical meaning and on the typologies of questions in the field of the humanistic sciences, typologies that are re-read in the light of today's social and educative challenges (Calliero & Galvagno, 2010; Monti, 2019; Nigris, 2009; Schein, 2014; Schein & Schein, 2021).

The reconstructed conceptual frame has been proved and perfected by the analysis, realized through a qualitative approach of data coding (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Bichi, 2007), of about 1.100 questions collected during the previous training in the sports field, led through the ₃R-Play model (for example, see Table 1).

| TYPES | GUIDE QUESTIONS | EXAMPLES |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Realistic Q. | Who/What? Which? When? Where? How much? | How old are the children/boys? To which category does the team belong? |
| Operative Q. | How? Thanks to which system? | How can I balance the society's "hunger to win" and the coach's educational role? How do I explain to the children their mistakes without further demoralizing them ? |
| Causal Q. | Why? For what? | Why did Marco push Giovanni? Is the victory an objective that we always have to reach? Which should be the meaning of the play in childhood? |
| Hypothetical Q. | And if also ...?, And if instead ...? | We assume that Guido (the coach) had started the final football match with Simona, keeping Marco available for the second and third period. Would he still have sent a different message, with an educational aim ? |

Table 1: The typologies of questions. Some textual examples (referred to the soccer field)

The analysis of the emerged questions is articulated on two different levels: the macro level in which all the questions are divided for each different typology and the micro-personal level in which the same questions are divided for each participant.

The macro level allows researchers and participants to understand the typologies of questions more used by the participants for exploring the educational situations, the typologies that are difficult to use or that the participants have never considered before, even if they could be important for the management of the problem presented by the situation (Nosari & Guarcello, 2021). This level of evaluation permits an interesting professional improvement of the team participating in the formative path (e.g. sports team, teachers' team, team of socio-educational and health operators and so). Indeed, it permits an awareness of the modality that the groups/teams use for approaching the educational problems, of the fields on which they usually question themselves (also in an unconscious way) and on which they don't consider even if they could positively affect a good result of the professional work.

The micro personal level allows researchers and participants to recognize – through the use of assessment rubrics constructed *ad hoc* (Castoldi, 2021; Robasto, 2020) – the problematizing style that is specific of each participant, the changes that have occurred in his/her way of questioning as well as desirable changes for the future.

With regards to the personal problematizing style, the researchers identify the different personal styles through the classification of the questions, such as the style mainly oriented in a realistic, operative, causal or hypothetical sense. These particular styles are discussed with participants within the final formative meeting, in which the individual profile is given to participants in order to enable them to do a self-evaluation of their problematizing competence, of the potentialities, improvements achieved thanks to the formative path, and the aspects that have still to be perfected.

With regards to the personal changes, through the analysis of the variation in use of the different typologies of questions the researchers identify possible transformations in the problematizing competence. The transformations are identified on three levels:

- the level of the cross-perspectiveness: a question initially centred on a single typology (e.g. operational) after changes and focuses each time on a different typology,
- the level of the inter-perspectiveness and systemicity: a questioning, before mainly centred on one typology, comes to consider all the different typologies in relation to a common pretext,
- the level of the intentionality: a questioning initially centred totally on the realistic or operative typology later consolidates in a style strongly oriented in a causal or hypothetical sense.

4. THE APPLICATION OF 3R-PLAY PRACTICES IN THE 'I° EDITION SOCCER' PROJECT

The model of the 3R-Play has been applied and evaluated within the SOCCER research project Football School: Roles and educational tasks-I° Edition, realized at the University of Turin during the a.y. 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. In line with the 3R-Play model, the SOCCER project has aimed to promote the skills of questioning, reflecting, evaluating and deciding, necessary for the conscious understanding and competent management of controversial and non-linear situations that the different relationships (coach/children, children/children, coach/coach, coach/manager, coach/parent) and the social dynamics can produce in the complex context of Football School.

Within this frame, the 3RPlay research team planned in May 2021 a first training path (SOCCER I° Edition) of five phases, each one focused on one critical topic that the Football School context can stage.

Every phase was structured in two parts. In the first-one, managed in asynchronous mode, the forty coaches (precisely 38 actually present at most of the meetings) were confronted with a situation-pretext regarding the football experience (management of rules or errors, relationship with parents, group dynamics, winning and losing, ...) (for example, see Figure 2).

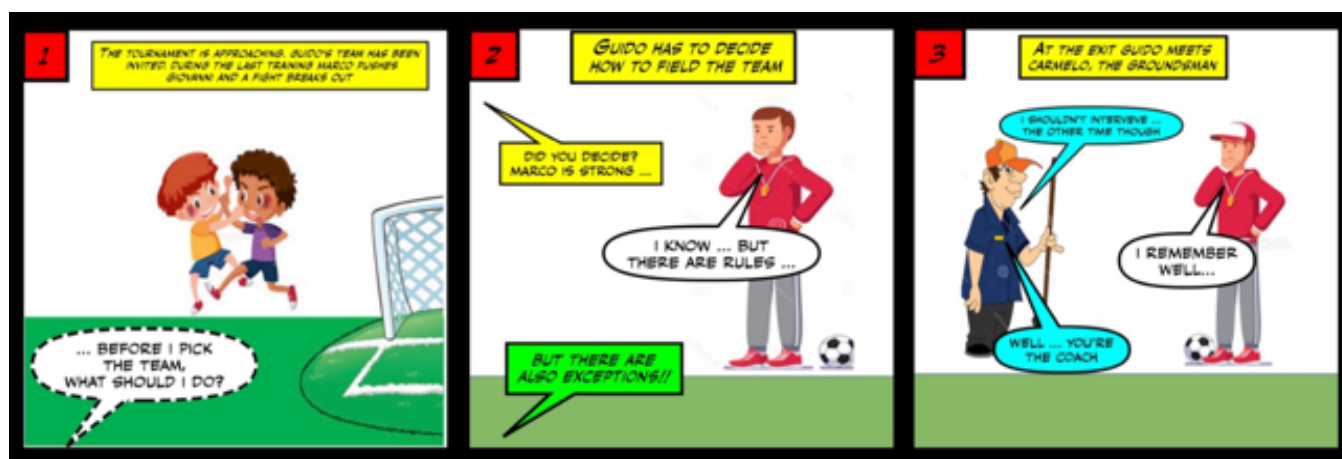


Figure 2: An example of sports pretext. The 'Question of Rules'

In this asynchronous phase, the participants were asked to write in an online module all the questions they thought to be necessary in order to reconstruct the complexity of the situation in the best way.

The second part was managed in synchronous mode and started from the speech of two discussants (pedagogical experts and sportive operators) that pointed out some problematic aspects on the pretext topic and the situation presented in the

cartoon. Following this, the coaches worked in four teams (of ten coaches each) led by a trainer (the captain), in order to:

- reconstruct together the complexity of the situation, starting from the questions written by the team coaches in the asynchronous phase,
- propose common lines of action that could be effective to manage the educational problems recognized within the presented situation.

In the final part of the meeting, these common lines of actions were briefly presented and discussed with the initial discussants.

The evaluation plan allowed the researchers to classify the types of questions (see Table 2) and to recognize:

- the strengths of each coach and the transformation into questioning competence (see Figures 3, 4, 5),
- the personal questioning style (see Figure 6),
- the lines of personal development (see Figure 7).

| Typologies | Questions N° | Ranking |
|-----------------|--------------|---------|
| Operational Q. | 346 | 1° |
| Causal Q. | 153 | 2° |
| Realistic Q. | 64 | 3° |
| Hypothetical Q. | 21 | 4° |
| TOTAL | 584 | --- |

Table 2: The typologies of questions

**Questioning Competence Transformation
(Researchers' Evaluation)**

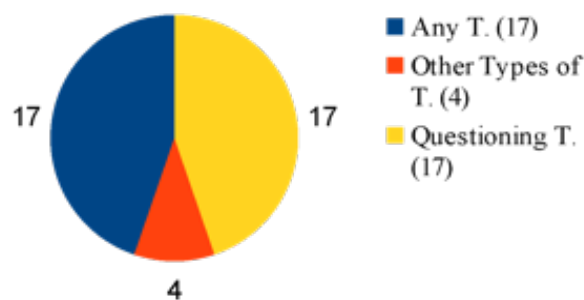


Figure 3: The transformation in questioning competence

Typologies of Transformation in Questioning Competence

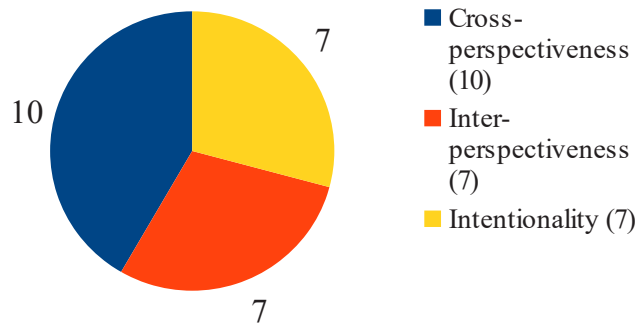


Figure 4: The transformation in questioning competence and its typologies



Figure 5: The transformation in questioning competence and the coaches' self-perception



Figure 6: The personal styles in questioning

Personal Development (in) (Coaches' Self-Evaluation)

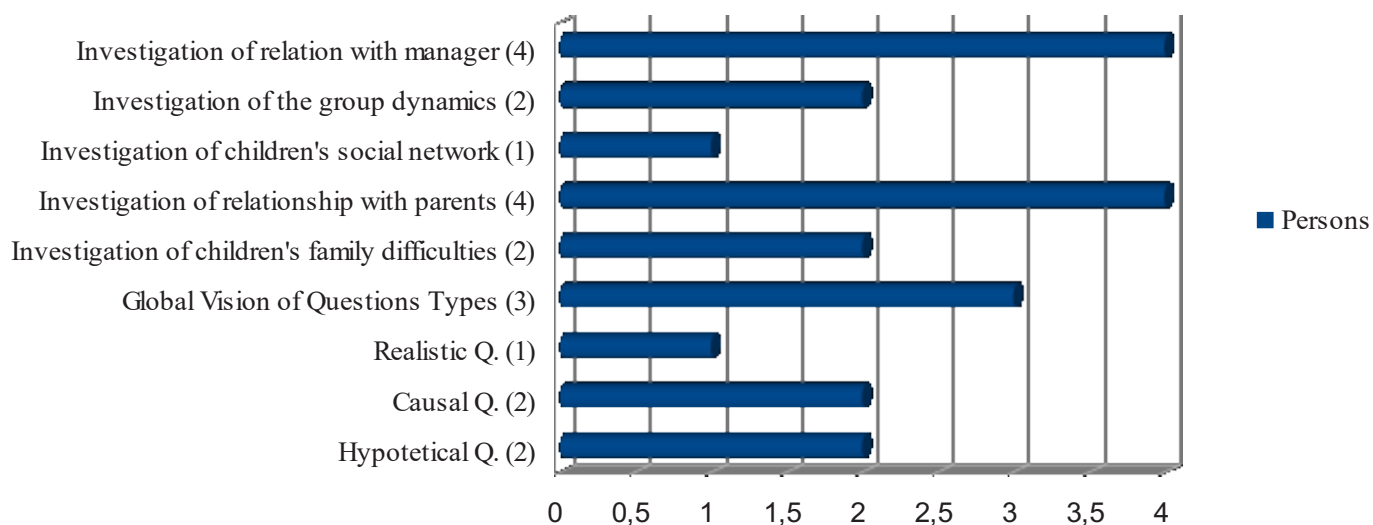


Figure 7: Lines of personal development (started in the formative path and felt as important to improve)

The final coaches' self-evaluation and the impact assessment, realized seven months after the end of the training path, proved the raising of awareness and concrete improvement in questioning competence within the daily training in the Soccer School. Indeed, in the self-evaluation 83% of the coaches felt an improvement in their questioning competence (see Figure 7), and in the impact evaluation 88% of the coaches (that answered the questionnaires) recognized long-term results in the educational competence (see Figure 8) and, more specifically, in the questioning competence (see Figure 9).

Educational Competence: Long-Term Improvements (Coaches' Self-Evaluation)

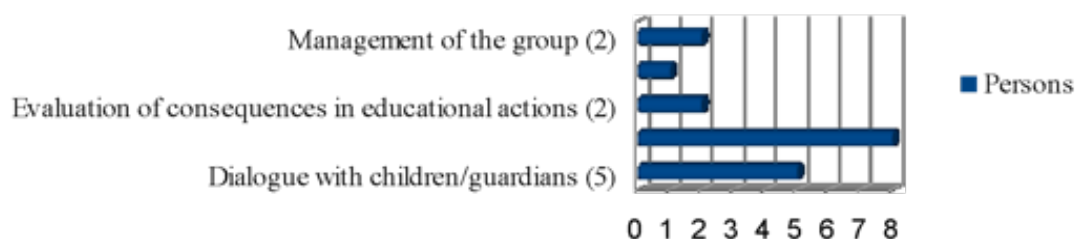


Figure 8: Long-term results. Educational Competence

Questioning Competence: Long Term Improvements (in) Coaches' Self-Evaluation

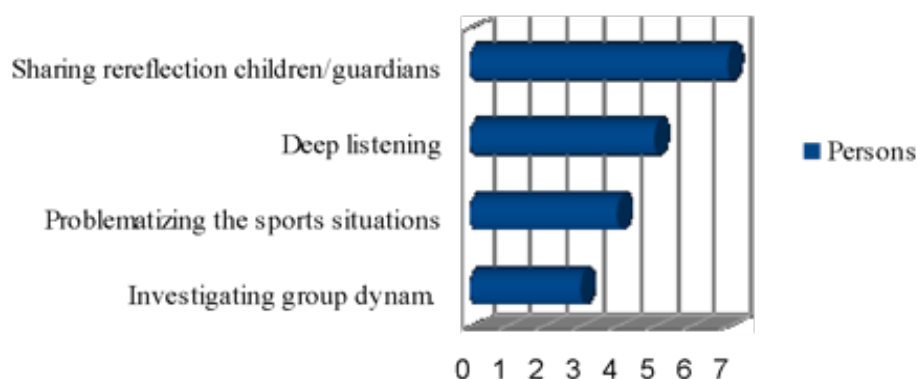


Figure 9: Long-term results. Questioning Competence

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the SOCCER project give us a first proof of the effectiveness both of the pretext as methodological device, and of the formative impact of the evaluation plan within reflexive non-formal educational practices. On the basis of these results, the research team has continued the experimentation of the 3R-Play practices, realizing a second edition of the SOCCER project and planning a further formative path in the scholastic field. Also, with respect to the theoretical aspect, the research is going on. On the methodological plan, the researchers are working at perfecting the device of pretext through the strategy of cartoon. On the evaluative plan, they are studying the effectiveness and limits of the assessment tools and are improving the definition of the different typologies of questions, in order to elaborate 'problematizing profiles' that allow researchers and participants to realize a more detailed and specific evaluation of the style each one uses to read the complexity and to deal with it.

Author contribution statement

Sara Nosari and Emanuela Guarcello conceived of the presented idea. Sara Nosari developed paragraphs 1 and 2. Emanuela Guarcello developed paragraphs 3 and 4. All authors wrote the conclusions.

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Reflective Learning Opportunities for School Leaders in Sustainable School Improvement Projects

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Abstract - We have developed a simple tool used by school leaders to collect, reflect on, and learn from experiences in school improvement projects. Using this tool, Reflection Papers, leaders reflect on the changes that have been implemented and on what they have learned from these changes. Introducing Reflection Papers requires time, as learning to reflect involves practice and patience; external incentives, as external incentives impel leaders to reflect; and consistency, as using a consistent terminology focused on learning from experiences and posing broad questions foster reflection. The tool facilitates learning opportunities, thereby contributing to the ongoing professional development of school leaders and enhancing the institutional capacity for change.

KEYWORDS: Reflection, school improvement, school leaders, competency development.

1. INTRODUCTION

In school improvement projects, leaders and staff plan and perform new activities, adapting their everyday work in ways they expect will improve the quality of the school's educational programs. The experiences gained through these activities represent opportunities for continuous reflection and learning.

As part of a seven-year school improvement program within the field of vocational education and training, our research team works with school leaders and project management teams, at ten schools to ensure the sustainability of their various projects. Drawing on school improvement literature, sustainability refers to 1) the long-term implementation of project activities, and 2) development of the schools' change capacity (Askill-Williams & Koh, 2020, p. 33; Fullan, 2002; 2020, p. 4; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 17).

The program, launched in 2019 by the Velux Foundations, aims to improve the quality of vocational education and training in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. Ten schools were invited to participate, each receiving 0.5–1.5 million Euros in funding. With the support of the research team, each school plans and implements projects focused on quality improvement. The content of these projects differs, but they share a common approach to the change process and collaboration.

In this paper, we present the tool 'Reflection Papers', which we have developed to support the change processes. We describe how it facilitates reflection and learning opportunities for leaders in school improvement projects. Our results show that Reflection Papers contribute positively to the development of the reflective skills necessary for leading change. The use of Reflection Papers is a method that provides strong learning opportunities for leaders despite the papers being a relatively small and distant intervention in comparison to formal courses or other types of professional development. In this paper, we discuss how the ability to reflect may affect schools' change capacity.

2. REFLECTION PAPERS FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

2.1. School leaders as drivers of sustainable school improvement

In school improvement projects, school leaders play a vital role when implementing changes. Several studies have addressed the role of leadership in school improvement, pointing out that change management is not an innate ability of

school leaders (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Fullan, 2016; Hargreaves et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2002). Instead, leaders must constantly learn from their experiences to develop their ability to lead change processes.

School improvement initiatives require leaders who are willing and able to reflect on changes and act on these reflections. Leaders must be able to reflect on what they learn from their experiences. In a case study on school improvement, Karagiorgi et al. (2018) show how systematic self-reflection can potentially transform schools into learning organizations. Similarly, some researchers refer to schools' capacity for improvement (Thoonen et al., 2012), in which reflection is part of a more far-reaching process of change. Other researchers refer to the concept of schools' capacity for change as 'the different kinds of school resources to enable the school to respond to new demands arising from change' (Lai, 2015). Others again incorporate the notion of organizational learning in the concept of school capacity, covering both the culture and structure of schools, with reflection playing a role in continuous learning and capacity building in a project by Mulford (2007, pp. 23-35). All these studies refer to aspects of organizational learning and deal with schools' capacity for change understood as the ability to engage in future change processes.

Learning through reflection plays a key role in building change capacity. According to McIntosh, the 'fundamental skills of learning how to reflect are generally overlooked (...)' when designing research and development projects (2010, p. 32). In such projects, an ability to reflect is key to the successful leadership of change processes. Hence, our interventions focus particularly on developing the reflective skills of school leaders who are leading school improvement projects. As Fullan states, this type of 'learning in context is related to sustainability because it improves the system in a way that establishes conditions conducive to continuous development' (2002, p. 11). In our project, the Reflection Papers impel school and project leaders to reflect on and learn from their experiences. This not only enables the development of their reflective skills, but also develops the capacity for further improvement in future change processes.

2.2. Data collection

We have collected various forms of data that offer an insight into how the leaders and their projects have developed and into the impact of our interventions on this development:

- Reflection Papers collected every second month throughout the project period, starting in 2019.
- Semi-structured interviews with leaders: 2-3 per leader. These interviews focused on the leaders' use of Reflection Papers and how they learned from their experiences with the projects.
- Observations from evaluative midterm meetings where school leaders and the researchers reflected on the effects of the Reflection Papers.
- A survey exploring the leaders' perceptions of the impact of our collaboration in terms of reflection and learning.

2.3. How do leaders learn from their experiences in school improvement projects?

'Reflection Papers' are a tool that can help leaders learn from their experiences during activities conducted as part of school improvement projects by developing their reflective skills. In the following, we will present this tool and show how the participating school leaders found them to be an important source of learning. In addition, we will highlight three conditions that we have found necessary for the successful introduction and implementation of Reflection Papers.

2.3.1 Using Reflection Papers as a tool for learning

We developed Reflection Papers as a tool for ongoing data collection and reflection. Each Reflection Paper consists of three or four questions for leaders to reflect upon. The aim is to get the leaders to reflect on their experiences during the

implementation of their school improvement projects, learn from these experiences and maintain a developmental perspective.

Therefore, the questions focus on the following broad topics:

- o What has been done in the project?
- o What have they learned from their activities?
- o How do they know the activities were successful?

We send Reflection Paper templates to the school leaders every second month for them to fill in and return. Some school leaders fill in the papers by themselves, but the majority meet with key personnel involved in the projects.

For instance, one leader described how the project team at school had to discuss their reflections in order to answer the questions: ‘the questions are very complicated, and it is not easy for us to answer them. We really have to work together as a team to be able to answer them’.

Hence, Reflection Papers result in learning opportunities for both teams and individuals as they are impelled to reflect on their experiences during project activities.

2.3.2 Using Reflection Papers taught the leaders to reflect

To begin with, school leaders were more likely to answer the questions by describing activities rather than reflecting on what they have learned from these activities. As stated previously, reflection is a skill that needs to be learned.

One school leader explained their lack of experience with reflection: ‘Prior to this, we did not work with reflection. You made us use reflection as a method to correct the progress of our project.’

With regard to Reflection Papers, another manager suggested that the most important contribution of the collaboration with our research team was that the ‘Aarhus University team has given us an evaluation method’. This suggests that the leaders had not previously worked with systematic written reflections.

In general, the leaders linked evaluations with effect measurements and key performance indicators at the beginning of our collaboration, rather than with reflection and self-assessment. Therefore, systematic reflection on experiences during the process of school improvement was something new to be learned.

In the early responses to Reflection Papers, descriptions of activities took up more space than reflection on what the participants had learned. Meanwhile, later responses showed progress in terms of the ability to reflect. Generally, the answers began to indicate a deeper level of reflection in the fourth or fifth round of Reflection Papers. This tells us that leaders gradually learned the skill of systematic reflection.

Overall, our empirical data suggests that the school leaders are satisfied with the tool. In one interview, a leader described the effects of using Reflection Papers: ‘I become more reflective and more inspired in terms of my work and life in general.’

Other leaders expressed how Reflection Papers helped them see their projects from another perspective. For instance, one leader stated: ‘I know now that it is important to reflect on the process and not only on the outcome of this process.’ This is also reflected in a response from another leader: ‘What you have helped me understand is that the process is more important than the target. It was difficult to understand, but now I do.’

In our survey data, leaders reported that collaborating with the research team has influenced their projects and competencies. Rating the impact of the collaboration on their ‘ability to reflect on what [they] have learned’ resulted in an average score of 4.3 out of 5, while the average score for the impact on their ‘ability to evaluate the progress of [their]

projects' was 3.9. This indicates that our approach and the tool of Reflection Papers were effective in producing the intended learning outcomes.

In conclusion, Reflection Papers contributed positively to the professional development of leaders and to their use of reflection during the implementation of school improvement projects. The tool provided strong learning opportunities for leaders.

2.4. Three conditions for introducing and implementing Reflection Papers

As shown, the intervention using Reflection Papers has been successful. However, asking leaders to answer three questions every second month is not enough. If external partners (like us) want to implement the Reflection Paper tool, the following three conditions must be met:

2.4.1 Time

One important aspect of Reflection Papers concerns time. It takes time and practice to learn how to reflect. The continuity in answering the same questions every second month gave the school leaders the opportunity to practice reflection. Instead of learning how to reflect before starting to use the Reflection Papers, they learnt how to reflect along the way, linked to their actual experiences with project activities.

In an early interview, one leader explained how 'the questions are very complicated, and it is not easy for us to answer them'. In other words, reflection is not an easy task. It is a skill that leaders must practice in the course of their everyday work. Learning how to reflect is a process that requires time and effort.

Another leader explained the process: 'In the beginning, it was a burden. We didn't know what you wanted. Most probably, the first [Reflection Paper] was sent far too late to you, past the deadline. We have lots of other things to do. We didn't feel that it was that important. (...). And ever since, we have handled this completely differently. We do it on time so there is time to translate it. Now we know each step.'

Another leader explained how learning to use Reflection Papers is a lengthy process that eventually pays off: 'Now we feel this is the way, even though it is not easy. We start to understand why it makes sense'.

In conclusion, introducing Reflection Papers requires time and patience as the process unfolds.

2.4.2 External incentives

Another important aspect concerns external incentives. In other words, completing Reflection Papers impel participants to reflect.

The Reflection Papers are not only being filled in because the leaders consider it a useful exercise, but also because they need to be sent to the research team. Firstly, doing so is collaboration contractual obligation. Secondly, an extensive process of building trust between the research team and school leaders has created interdependency.

One leader described how the use of Reflection Papers makes them spend time on reflection: 'the cooperation with Aarhus University made us think about and do things we might not have done without it. For instance, we are forced to find time to sit down and talk things through, which we usually would have postponed'.

Another school leader described the outcome of our collaboration: 'The new thing is that you force us to keep activities going [in the project]. You ask questions and we must find answers to them.'

When we asked one leader how she came to see 'reflection' as the best approach, she simply answered: 'to be honest, you forced us.'

Hence, the Reflection Papers functioned as bimonthly interventions by impelling the leaders to reflect. In general, they said that they would not otherwise have used systematic reflection.

In broader terms, to implement the use of Reflection Papers, one must build in external incentives to motivate leaders to reflect.

2.4.3 Consistency

Finally, learning how to use the Reflection Papers requires a consistent terminology.

One important quality of the Reflection Papers as a tool is the relatively simple form, comprising three to four questions that are formulated in broad terms to facilitate reflection. Broad questions such as what have you learned encourage reflection, whereas more detailed questions – for instance: ‘which pedagogical consequences will the new activities have for the teaching/training in classrooms and workshops?’ – are too context-specific and hinder reflection. This may be because participants are more likely to try to ‘find the right answer’ than to reflect on their experiences. Both types of questions have been tested during our project with our experience indicating that the broader the questions, the more they encourage reflection.

Throughout our collaboration with the leaders, and especially when introducing the Reflection Papers as a tool, we have asked the same question over and over again: what have you learned? It has been important to maintain the perspective of learning from experiences when communicating with school leaders. One school leader stated: ‘It was actually from your Reflection Papers that we came to understand what you were originally asking and why these reports and reflections are important.’

When developing leaders’ ability to reflect systematically, it is important to employ a consistent terminology – both when introducing the Reflection Papers and in the types of questions they pose.

Summing up, introducing Reflection Papers requires **time**, as learning to reflect is a process that takes practice and patience; **external incentives**, as external incentives impel leaders to reflect; and **consistency**, as using a consistent terminology focused on learning from experiences and posing broad questions foster reflection.

3. CONCLUSION

Our results show that school leaders are not necessarily familiar with employing reflection as part of their everyday work. We have shown how Reflection Papers are a tool that supports the professional development of leaders and their use of reflection during school improvement projects. By using Reflection Papers, leaders learn how to reflect on their experiences. Hence, the tool provides strong learning opportunities for leaders. We want to stress, however, that asking questions is not enough in itself. Our results show how time, external incentives and consistency are important conditions for the successful implementation of Reflection Papers.

As described, school improvement literature points to the importance of reflection as a tool for learning and increasing the capacity for future change initiatives at schools. Reciting McIntosh, the ‘fundamental skills of learning how to reflect are generally overlooked (...)’ when designing research and development projects (2010, p. 32). We have developed Reflection Papers as a tool for strengthening such skills among the school leaders participating in our research collaboration. Doing so provides a bedrock for future initiatives to implement sustainable improvements at the participating schools. As leaders reflect on the experiences gained through school improvement activities, they learn to understand the processes of change – an understanding that is vital when leading educational change (Fullan, 2016, p. 37). In other words, reflection offers opportunities to learn how to lead change. We understand reflective skills as among

the necessary resources if the schools are to respond to new demands; hence, learning how to reflect contributes to an enhancement of the schools' change capacity.

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Citizens... or Citizens in the Making? A Study of School-Community Collaborations to Enhance Civic Engagement among Adult Students

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Abstract - This contribution aims to explore school-community collaborations aimed at improving adult students' capacity for civic engagement from the results of a multi-case research that was also carried out in a basic education center in Italy. We examine what prompt these collaborations, what ideas of civic engagement emerge from teachers and how these affect educational activities.

KEYWORDS: Civic engagement, school-community collaboration, adult basic education.

1. BACKGROUND

Despite the ever-growing literature on civic engagement, the concept is semantically framed in different ways according for example to the disciplinary perspective of the researcher (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010). Developmental psychology indeed considers civic engagement as the outcome of positive youth development, thus emphasizing the individual dimension; by contrast, political and social sciences underline the relationship that civic engagement has with social capital and socialization processes (Putnam, 2000; Jennings, 2007), referring to citizen participation and the political life of the system in which they are involved (e.g. voting) and to the social life of the community of which they are an integral part (e.g. volunteering). So, there is no shared, unambiguous definition of civic engagement (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Amnå, 2012). For instance, while for Hobbs and colleagues civic engagement corresponds “to the intention to participate in individual acts of agency in relation to public sphere” (Hobbs & al., 2013: 239), for Adler and Goggin the concept “describes how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future” (2005: 241). Drawing on Banyan (2016), civic engagement entails a plurality of engaging practices and attitudes in civic, political and social life that contribute to the health of a democratic society.

Despite the diversity of definitions and disciplinary perspectives, some basic features of civic engagement can be identified.

First, civic engagement implies that a person is outward looking, beyond the sphere of one’s own needs or those of his/her beloved ones (Amnå 2012). Second, civic engagement is expressed through an action exercised in a space of deliberation and autonomy by citizens capable of making conscious choices (Ibid.). This means that it is not enough to have a sensitive and caring attitude or to feel empathy toward others, but civic and social engagement requires to be expressed into recognizable action. Third, civic engagement has to do with actions aimed at promoting social change (Adler & Goggin, 2005) to enhance equity that allows individuals to cultivate their own human potentials and communities to empower themselves (Amnå 2012). So, whether understood as a place of territorial or residential proximity, a cultural or social space of belonging, or the broader supranational or global sphere, community represents the relational context in which civic engagement takes shape.

For this reason, we have intended to explore the role of school-community collaboration in enhancing students' civic engagement.

In the last decades school-community collaboration has become an increasingly diffused practice to improve the educational, cultural, and economic development of students, local communities, and society at large.

Research on school-community collaboration has long been dominated by an approach that has been limited to the school-family relationship aimed at increasing students' academic success (Epstein & al., 2002), whose value was taken for granted without problematizing it further (Auerbach, 2010). Even when the focus has turned from the family to the community, a one-way utilitarian approach has prevailed, whereby the main purpose was to understand how such collaboration could support the school in achieving its goals, namely the academic success of its students, but also their individual development through the improvement of self-esteem, civic and social skills, problem-solving skills, etc. (Myende 2019; Sherrod, & al., 2010; Anderson-Butcher, Stetler, and Middle, 2006).

To overcome this utilitarian view of school-community collaboration, some authors insist on the value embedded in "authentic" collaborations by borrowing the concept from Anderson's (1998) concept of "authentic participation". Authentic collaborations are "respectful alliances among educators, families, and community groups that value relationship building, dialogue, and power sharing as components of socially just and democratic schools" (Auerbach 2010: 729). Even more explicitly, O'Connor and Daniello (2019) propose a definition of school-community collaboration that to be authentic needs to be explicitly social justice-oriented, as it takes into account the mutual relationships, the power dynamics, beliefs, and values that underlie the collaborations.

This approach, which aims on the empowerment of the different stakeholders, produces not only benefits for schools but, either directly or indirectly, also for communities.

Given the dominance of studies on the effects of collaborations on individual development, especially academic, it is particularly worthwhile to explore whether and how such collaborations can also support civic engagement and democracy.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to explore the school-community collaboration, a qualitative multi-case research was carried out during 2020-2022, in seven educational institutions from primary education to adult basic education (Stake, 2006). This contribution will focus on Adult basic education case.

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, it was not possible to observe the activities carried out in collaboration between school and community as previously planned because mostly of them were suspended. For these reasons the research focus shifted on the meanings of civic engagement and the living experiences of the collaborations.

In Adult basic education case researchers collected 5 interviews with school personnel, 8 interviews with community stakeholders and 5 interviews with groups of students (25 participants).

The analysis of the first interviews enabled the development of a Codebook used throughout the whole research. Each interview then was analyzed using NVivo by two researchers separately who then compared their thematic and conceptual categories that have been analyzed both within the single case and across different cases.

In the following paragraphs some of the main results will be presented.

3. RESULTS

In the case under study the school-community collaboration has an important role in the life and organization of the school.

From the interviews with the school personnel emerges that the main reason school develops collaborations with the community is the necessity to respond to needs that it alone cannot address that concern internal resources (e.g., space) and the characteristics ascribed to the students and their families, represented mainly through the category of fragility and lack. Such fragility is attributed, by teachers, to the lack of knowledge of the Italian language, the social and economic disadvantage of families, the lack of knowledge of the territory and its institutions and the absence of a social network except that of co-nationals. It should be noted that in Italian basic adult education involves mainly students of foreign origin.

Thus, the school's main concern is to give support to students' academic success, to offer them substitute family models when needed, and to support their professional development in order to enter in the labor market.

The school personnel emphasize a "deprivative diagnosis" of students followed by a "compensative" attempt to provide knowledge, experience, and skills that they are supposed to lack almost entirely.

Community stakeholders, on the other hand, believe that school-community collaboration can be useful in expanding interpersonal relationships that allow students to improve their communication and interpersonal skills and to know the territory and its rules.

Although a utilitarian view of collaborations persists, the emphasis here is on the importance of building social relationships, even if the contribution the student might make to community and society is not even considered.

Students' representations about themselves and their contribution to society differ to some extent. While almost all of them tell of experiences that can be referred to civic engagement, it is also true that these – as volunteering, supporting people in need, improving the environment – took place mainly in their countries of origin, while here they often find themselves in the role of recipients of such initiatives. Among the behaviors associated by students with civic engagement, there are many examples related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which created or exacerbated situations of distress, fragility and need to which some interviewees responded by intensifying support toward those who were most in need, either through donations of basic necessities or by creating greater social ties with people who, due to precautionary isolation, were in danger of being left alone.

In the perspective of teachers, to be civically engaged certain prerequisites are needed, namely autonomy, for which they consider a priority supporting their students in learning the language; in knowing the community, its institutions and its rules; and finally developing professional skills useful for achieving economic independence. Students agree on the importance of knowledge of language and rules as requirements but consider as an essential requirement in order to be civically engaged the chance to be seen and publicly recognized as individuals able to be active agents of change.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Teaching as a form of civic engagement

There is a widespread perception among school personnel in adult basic education that this sector is considered a second-class school both from the school system and the society at large.

Certainly, working in adult education presents some considerable challenges to teachers who have to deal with inadequate resources and spaces, high students turn over, classes with students of very different ages and so on.

For these reasons, teachers who choose to work in adult basic education are often militant, active or as called in this research "devoted teacher". Their awareness of students' fragility and social marginality combined with a deep sense of social justice shapes their action in a civically engaged way by fighting, often beyond school time, to offer students the opportunities from which they have hitherto been precluded due often to a situation of "cumulative" disadvantage (Flanagan & Levine, 2010).

And this is not surprising given that, as argued by some authors, the birth and development of adult education is rooted in the very practice of democracy, both contributing to its development and to the empowerment of people in more fragile conditions (Imel, 2012). In this process the contribution of the individual teacher, moved by a personal ethic that shapes the way he or she understands his or her professional commitment as civic and social engagement, assumes decisive importance.

One risk, however, must be pointed out, that the attitude of helping and supporting others in their needs almost completely obscures their identity and desires.

4.2 Being a citizen or becoming a citizen?

The emphasis on the students' fragilities, while activating those who work with them to provide those opportunities that otherwise would be precluded, can lead to a sort of "deprivation" diagnosis, which, as discussed above, while reflecting a situation of objective existential difficulties of many of the students, completely neglects what students know, what are able to do, which prior knowledge and experience they went through. In addition, this representation shifts to an indeterminate future the possibility that these individuals can make a contribution to the society in which they live, in some cases for many years. The adults in this case are assimilated to pupils but without the hopeful refrain that describes them as the citizens of tomorrow.

This harkens back to the distinction between two different perspectives: "being a citizen" and "becoming a citizen" (Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010). While the first one views individuals as actors capable of contributing to the well-being of society even with the limitations associated with personal characteristics such as age, legal status, etc. the second one presupposes being involved in a preparatory process, usually associated with pupils, a kind of citizenship gymnasium. There are certainly some "subjective" barriers to active participation in the community, and certainly the absence of good communication and language skills is one of them. But there are also "structural" barriers that do not favour this process: for example, full citizenship is precluded for many of the students, that have not the right to vote or access to many public competitions, which would allow entry into institutions.

Putting the emphasis on barriers, implies working, as seen in the previous paragraph, in a compensatory perspective, to intervene first of all on the individual prerequisites considered necessary to act civic engagement, thus autonomy, language and prosocial skills, knowledge of the host country's culture.

This model that requires adaptation to a certain profile of citizen also reinforces an assimilationist attitude that also precludes the so-called host society from benefiting from intercultural exchange and dialogue.

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The 'Commons' as a New Value in Adult Learning

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Abstract - This article studies the learning collectives that spontaneously emerged in response to the Covid health crisis. The first findings highlighted the affirmation of the value of collectively produced resources (i.e. knowledge) as 'commons' in Ostrom's definition. Based on Engeström's activity theory, this paper traces the process of forming a new concept ('commons') and provides another way of looking at the evaluation of training. Indeed, this new way of considering the value of knowledge seems to reflect a form of awareness on the part of adult learners who seek to make meaning of their professional activities consistent with their concerns about societal issues.

KEYWORDS: Collaboration, open cooperation, learning community, common, adult learner.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is well recognized that moments of crisis are sources of learning and transformation of practices (Weick, 1988; Boumrar, 2010; Sannino & Engeström, 2018). Understood in the general sense as 'a difficult period experienced by an individual, a group or a society as a whole', crisis generates the kind of dislocation that 'leads to a mobilization of the elements of Transformation of the failed system. This mobilization involves the creation or enhancement of knowledge' (Morin, quoted by Boumrar, 2010, p. 21). In both "incidental" crises, confined to a limited space-time (such as the forest fire studied by Weick, 1988) and crises on a large time and/or geographical scale (e.g. the recent pandemic), the learning mechanisms that lead people to deal with them remain similar: they are revealing what is 'already there' (Sannino & Engeström, 2018).

Groups operating in a collaborative/cooperative way are more successful in problem-solving and, more generally, in learning. This principle, already pointed out by Weick, is widely argued in the work on 'resilient communities' (Beker and Ross, 2012) or 'collaborative resilience' (Yusuf, 2017). The construction of knowledge, which at first consists in restoring coherence to the present (i.e. solving the problem in question), takes place through the (re)construction of meaning. This reconstruction tends towards alignment of the 'past-present-future' axis (see as an example the upholding of social identity in the concentration camp, Pollak cited by Blorville, 2017).

The object of this research is situated in questioning the learning mechanism. Anchored in the context of Covid 19 health crisis, it points to the emergence of learning groups that place a particular value on the dynamics of learning and collectively produced resources (knowledge). The questions to be answered concern the meaning given by learners to the notion of commons: what forms do the commons take in the learners' expressions? What are the conditions that promote learnings which produce these commons? Does this value given to learning modify professional practices afterwards or not? The fundamental question raised in this paper is the following: how rewarding productions resulting from learning in common (knowledge) give new leads to think about adult training today?

The following paragraph explains the purpose of this paper and the link between the notion of the commons and the production of knowledge in spontaneous learning groups (such as a community of practice). The theoretical framework of analysis is then presented, followed by the survey method deployed. The paper ends with the presentation of the results and their temporary discussion.

2. THE 'COMMONS' IN ADULT EDUCATION

Since the work of Ostrom (1990), a new perspective has been introduced into the scientific and societal debate on this third-party form of value, 'the commons'. In its broadest sense, the notion of the commons is defined by three interrelated characteristics:

(1) a shared-access resource; (2) a system of rights and obligations (a bundle of rights) that specifies the terms of access and the sharing of associated benefits among rights holders; and finally (3) the existence of a governance structure that ensures that rights are respected and that the long-term reproduction of the resource is guaranteed.' (Coriat, 2017, p. 267).

According to Cornu *et al.* (2017), three movements are associated with the revival of this notion. The first, 'ecological', is the result of the recognition of Ostrom's work by the award of the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009. His idea is based on viable and sustainable organizations to manage socio-ecological systems and tangible resources (forests, fisheries, water, etc.). These organizations, linked to a form of 'non-property' ownership and shared governance, would be relevant alternatives in facing the ecological crisis that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. These works found political declension in the ecology movements, inspired by them to argue for a specific vision of human development, characterized by rooting in the local territory, in resonance with the environment, and enhancing the capacity of humans to produce and manage the commons as a key to preserve a 'genuinely human' society (Bollier, 2014).

The second movement appears with the critics to the knowledge economy and privatization and fragmentation of knowledge due to the extension of copyright law (Boyle, 2003). Having become dominant since the 1980s, commercial logic has led to the alteration of the academic environment, historically built on the idea of free circulation of knowledge between peers. The notion of the commons is leading the debate at global level on how to recreate shared access to knowledge and to the resources that are necessary for innovation. In France, the initiatives to create open archives or to enforce Article 30 of the 'law for a digital republic' (2016), which extends publication rights beyond exclusivity to journals, are influenced by these ideas.

The third 'digital' movement is linked to the advent of technologies and the rise of collaborative production in networks (Benkler, 2006) with the appearance of multiple forms of community functioning (communities of practice, learning communities, virtual communities). The term Informational Commons (Aigrain 2005) tends to embrace Knowledge Commons, in that it refers to resources (collections of information and knowledge) but also to products developed from this information. New practices are emerging such as the development of open-source software and microprocessors, 3D printers, modular cars, or collaborative consumption.

Even if 'non-rivalrous', the Informational Commons conflict with the notion of ownership. In their digital form, informational content can be reproduced ad infinitum without the creator being deprived of it. A new form of license, the 'Creative Commons', extending the rights of use beyond the creators alone, appeared in 2001 as a marker of this form of third-party value. It becomes a legal support for a new mode of production based on the sharing of knowledge, clearly placing it in the field of the general interest.

Applied to education, the notion of the commons imposes a new perspective on both the nature and the value of the knowledge produced by learning groups. This value encompasses the dynamics that members strive to maintain to enrich the production of knowledge. In so doing, this questioning is part of reflections aimed at rethinking educational

processes and that of adult education in particular about contemporary realities, which have been disrupted by the acceleration of transformations (legislative, technological, social, etc.).

3. FROM THE CONCEPT TO A SYSTEM OF ACTIVITY: FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

Following the theories of work-based learning (Leplat, 2001; Pastré, 1999), we can consider that learning is a modification of one's patterns of action and, consequently, it can be detected through the observation of activities and the identification of its transformations. In proximity to these approaches, the activity theory developed by Engeström (1987) seems particularly interesting. In this perspective, the focus is on communities of learners, on the transformation and creation of culture, on horizontal movement and hybridization, and on the formation of theoretical concepts (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). In this paper, the interest is not so much in the analysis of the structuring elements of a system of activity but rather in a particular moment of re-composition of the activity which corresponds to the emergence of a new 'operative concept', i.e. the concept which allows the reconfiguration of the new system of activity.

In Engeström's cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), the dynamic principle of activity is based on the internal contradictions of an activity system. This means that 'new forms of activity appear as solutions to the contradictions of the previous form. This happens in the form of 'invisible breakthroughs', innovations from below' (CRADLE, 2001). Although contradictions are a necessary driving force in expansive learning, they are not sufficient to transform a system of activity. They only really become so when they are processed in such a way that a new emerging object is identified and transformed into a pattern. Expansive learning must lead to the formation of a new, expanded object and object-oriented activity pattern. This involves the formation of a theoretical concept of the new activity, based on the capture and modelling of the initial simple relationship. The latter is called by Engeström the 'germ cell', as it gives rise to new activity. The formation of an extended object and a new model of activity requires collective and distributed agency. In other words, three elements are constitutive of expanded learning: (1) the expanded pattern of activity; (2) the corresponding theoretical concept; (3) and a new type of agency (Engeström, 2010).

About the 'corresponding theoretical concept' Engeström and colleagues refer to the dynamic process in that concepts develop, evolve, and are maintained (or not) according to a community's estimation of their usefulness for carrying out its activities (Engeström, et al. 2006). When it comes to the formation of complex concepts, this construction takes place in parallel on both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Referring to the work of Vygotsky, the vertical dimension is explained as a 'creative encounter' - an interaction between every day (bottom-up) and scientific (top-down) concepts. In other words, it is a process of ascending from the abstract to the concrete. The horizontal dimension can be seen as the creation of a path on the field, a 'cognitive path'. This involves moving through cycles of stabilization and destabilization. It leads both to the internalization of culturally given concepts, and to the externalization and generation of culturally new concepts (which must also be internalized when used). This two-dimensional dynamic of complex concepts has an expansive potential that can be understood in terms of the social and material distribution of the concept, its temporal scope, and its ability to encompass multiple points of view.

4. SPACE FOR SHARED LEARNING: FIELD AND METHODOLOGY

This contribution is based on a monographic survey of a learning system called 'Riposte Créative Territoriale' (RCT, Territorial Creative Response) which appeared in the context of the health crisis in March 2019. It was co-constructed by the actors of the innovation laboratory of a training center for local authority agents (the CNFPT) and its network of partners. RCT is based on an open community, equipped with a Wiki writing platform (Yeswiki). The digital support

environment was set up by two external experts requested by the manager of the CNFPT innovation unit. During the 18 months of activity that this study considers, three phases followed one another: (1) a reaction to the shock of the first confinement; (2) a time of consolidation (development of new areas of training such as ‘the new role of the public manager’ or ‘implementing collaborative work’); (3) a time of re-establishment with the implementation of ‘learning circles’ training methods.

The TCR dynamic is based on actors from the CNFPT and local authorities, most of whom are members of the pre-existing network of territorial public innovation. Several people were involved, including 42% of local authority actors (training, HR or innovation functions), 32% of CNFPT employees (innovation department and local offices), and 26% of external people (digital and cooperation associations, government services, consultants, academics, etc.).

With a view to understanding, the study presented here is based on a qualitative approach and draws on two sources of data:

- thirteen (13) comprehensive interviews (Kaufmann, 2011); the selection of interviewees applied the criterion of involvement in RCT (the most active). They are 7 women and 6 men, mostly civil servants (85%), actors of the territorial public innovation network, with minimal experience of 2 to 3 years (77%);
- textual data from the productions of groups involved in the TCR dynamics (about 10 web pages with emblematic productions).

Data treatment brought to thematic analysis of contents, carried out on the fully transcribed interviews (150 pages of raw text). The coding was carried out in three stages: (1) free coding; (2) coding by categories (e.g. professional practices before and after the RCT experience); (3) targeted coding (e.g. forms of appropriation of the concept of the commons...). The extracts used are anonymised, indicating the data source (‘E’ for an interview and ‘P’ for production on the RCT platform), followed by a number that indicates the order of recording.

5. RESULTS: FROM EXOGENOUS CONCEPT TO OPERATING CONCEPT

This paper traces the process of forming a concept of ‘commons’ from the RCT experience. Following Engeström (2010) we argue that the existence of a concept is a *sine qua non* condition for the construction of a new system of activity. In his various works, the author insists on the dynamic aspect of a concept that is formed and transformed in a two-dimensional movement. This paper explores how a new concept takes shape in its horizontal movement from an analysis of a concept of ‘commons’. The resulting understanding further clarifies the dynamics of transformation of both individual and collective practices. In this sense, Figure 1 categorizes the significant moments in the formalization of the concept of the ‘commons’ based on the description of the professional activities carried out by the respondents before, during or after the TCR experience. Each category is accompanied by examples of action verbs, which illuminate more explicitly the meaning of each category.

| INTERNAL PROCESS | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| Being exposed to... without particular intention | Acting consciously but without naming the concept | Awareness of a concept | | Assign the words (for oneself) | Fertilize the soil |
| | | <i>in slow sedimentation</i> | <i>by interpellation, astonishment</i> | | |
| <i>be there and feel good (E6); He gave me a book... but I haven't read...(E10)</i> | <i>we can do without knowing (E8 ; E2) .</i> | <i>.....which make you think (E4) A close friend told me...(E8); experiment (E2)</i> | <i>to experience situations that question (E3) something hits (E4) to be astonished, to be challenged (E1) , (E4) 'wow' effect (E12)</i> | <i>Formalize for yourself (E5) ; take other people's words (E12)</i> | <i>cultivate passion (E8 ; E7) keep the questioning going; go foragin^g, observer (E4) ; let it settler, (E2) dig the furrow (E11) ;</i> |



| EXTERNAL PROCESS | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| To want to change (= to make visible) | Tipping point effect | Construction of a new functioning system. | Legitimise in one's working environment | Connect with societal challenges |
| change its representation (E10) to be intimately convinced (E8) ; have a concept available (E10); want to support your own change(E5 ; E8)because his vision has changed (E5) ; | <i>quite ou double (E8)</i> <i>point of no return (E5; E8)</i> <i>I know better what is in the heart (E5)</i> <i>I know how to talk about it (E7; E12)</i> <i>alignment effect (E11; E12)</i> <i>need to take action (E11)</i> <i>ford effect (E8)</i> | <i>to authorise oneself to do (E10; E5)</i> <i>to do in small steps (E5)</i> <i>s'investir (E8) ;</i> <i>to connect to the concrete(E5) ;</i> <i>to formalise (E10) ;</i> <i>to structure the process (E12)</i> <i>faire converger le "déjà-là";</i> <i>to make the meaning explicit (E12)</i> | <i>legitimize the action,(E10)</i> <i>model the system (E7)</i> <i>connect research (E7)</i> <i>explain the process to others (E7)</i> <i>connect to other similar (E11)</i> | <i>embedding in societal challeges (E7)</i> <i>embedding in the local territory (E12)</i> |

Fig 1: Process of forming a concept of ‘commons’

In this categorization of the process of concept formation, two distinct phases emerge. Firstly, *the internalization of the concept*. This corresponds to the appropriation of a new concept and the progressive construction of meaning and value attribution. Once ingested into a person's system of reference and values, this concept constitutes a sufficiently trustworthy resource for a change in previous practices. In this phase, we distinguish five stages.

The first, *being exposed to*, is equivalent to participation in a movement without clear personal intention. One finds oneself, more or less by chance, ‘embarked by the events’ and stays there for a while because it feels good. Just like interviewee E6 who declared: *‘I was not an actor, I stayed in the background as a participant [...] I liked all this mobilization, different people, this community enthusiasm [...] to share, [...] to do things collectively and not individually’* (E6).

In our interpretation, this is a very early form of encounter with a concept new to the subject: an experience felt to be positive but without visible implications for the person's activities. This may correspond to an incentive to discover: *‘[...] you should read this, you should like it’*, as reported by E13 when he relates how he discovered a new concept.

Acting consciously but without naming the concept would be the second stage of concept formation. It is like this bottom-up process took place without meeting a scientific concept. *‘At the time [...] my awareness was very clear of what I had just done [...] but I did not express it in this way’* (E2).

Several stages of awareness then follow, made visible by slow sedimentation of the concept or by interpellation or astonishment: *‘For me [...] It's not so much ‘Riposte’, it's the way I saw [Animateur1] do [...] there's something very, very aligned about him. And that impressed me, [...] more than Latour in fact. [...]’* (E1). This ‘wow effect’ (E12) appears when some event occurs that imposes a questioning, a reflexive break, and an investigation of habitual functioning. We can see the potential of astonishment to activate the learning process studied by Thievenaz (2016); like this author, we can see in it *‘the living source of all intellectual progress’* (p. 27).

At this point in the process, a person's attention is awakened, and the formation of a concept becomes more intentional: *‘There was a period where I had to look at what happened and so through the ‘Riposte’ I had access to some [resources] and that made me formalize things...’* (E5). It is also a time of ‘fertilization’ that begins, more or less assiduously; more or less long, described by explicit expressions: *‘cultivate the passion’, ‘go foraging,’* (E4), *‘dig the furrow’* (E11), *‘let it settle’* (E2). They suggest that this stage precisely conditions a possible transformation of a person's practices. As one of the interviewees remarked to justify the strong dynamics of ‘Riposte’: *‘because we are not dealing with things that are generated without anything [...] these are areas that are extremely well ploughed’* (E12).

Following this stage, we refer to an external phase of concept formation. Under certain conditions, which we call a ‘tipping point’, the concept becomes a support for the reorganization of an activity system. In the case of RCT, the health crisis and the breakdown of both professional and personal references made it possible for the group to operate based on sharing, not driven by a perspective of personal gain, but by a sincere desire to pool knowledge so that it could be useful to others. At that time, a model of functioning was being tested within a large organization, based on two

interconnected concepts: ‘commons’ and ‘open cooperation’: ‘*Riposte*’ gave me ... arguments [...] it was [Host I] who gave me this idea of the commons [...] this idea of setting up a larger community, that things don't belong [...] to the person but if they share, they belong to everyone.’ (E4)

As the RCT experience was long (18 months), it crystallized the idea of a needed change: desired at the level of the institution, inevitable at the individual level (at least for some): expressions on the effective change of professional practices can be found in five of the twelve interviews conducted. Depending on the maturity of the transformations undertaken, it is possible to discern three stages in this external phase of the formation of a concept:

- the first stage, starting the transformation, corresponds to *the construction of a new functioning system*. It is described in terms that indicate different personal strategies: ‘to authorize oneself to do’ (E10, E8; E5); ‘to do in small steps’ (E5); ‘to connect to the concrete’ (E5), ‘to formalize’, ‘to structure the process’ (E10; E12); ‘to make the meaning explicit’ (E5; E12).
- the second stage, showing a more settled form of transformation, *legitimized in one's working environment*, is reflected in the use of action verbs such as: ‘legitimized action’ (E10; E12), ‘connect to other similar’ (E11), ‘model, connect research’ (E7). In this stage, the constitution of alliances is necessary to establish a favorable balance of power and to guarantee the sustainability of a nascent activity system.
- the third stage of implementation of the identified transformation would be *societal embedding*, when the organizing concept of a new activity connects with societal challenges. In this form, it shows a great deal of maturity on the part of the actor involved in the appropriation of a concept. In the data collected, only one interviewee seems to be concerned by this form of practice: [...] ‘I think we had 250 people in person, there had been more than 1,600 in the [remote] plenary sessions. [...] and this is the moment when there is a sort of shift in saying that it must be a resource for the territories, for territorial projects.’ (E12)

The linearity of this description only has the advantage of giving an account of the gradual and inevitably long maturation of a concept. It is easy to understand that the progression of this process depends on many external or internal factors (the hazards of daily life, the more or less favorable conditions of the professional context, or the dispositions of people to perceive and integrate what is offered to them as a useful resource). In reality, the formation of a concept at its most advanced stage, i.e. at the point when it is consciously chosen by a person to organize his or her new activity in a sustainable way, may never come to fruition and stagnate at an intermediate stage, or even stop and then return to an earlier stage of the process.

6. DISCUSSION: THE VALUE CREATION PROCESS IN PERSPECTIVE

To question the adult learning process from the perspective of the commons leads us to identify several significant moments in the long construction of an operative concept. The latter guides the reorganization of a system of activity given a transformation of professional practices. The most mature form of this transformation would be the link established between one's responsibility to act as a professional and the challenges of society. Two factors seem to strongly influence this process:

- the nature of the experience: we may think that, under certain conditions, an exceptional experience occurs: ‘irreversible’ (E3); ‘emblematic’ (E8), ‘modelling’ (E1). These conditions are based on a space-temporal convergence: i.e. they cross two dynamic axes, the ‘temporal’, linked to the construction of meaning by the individual aligning past-present-future, and the ‘spatial’, bringing together favorable conditions by the

individuals who authorize the change, the organization that lets it happen, and the social environment which is ready to welcome it.

- the place of others in the emergence and construction of the concept of the commons, and namely the ‘passeurs’; this French term identifies a leader with certain qualities, embodying values, a visionary, an exemplary model with a capacity for reliance and accessibility, to whom credit is given. In the process of forming a concept, self-assessment is made in relation to the leader, as expressed by one of the participants: ‘there was [Facilitator 2] ... I found myself in [...] what he was saying, and what he was saying [...] resonated with me.’ (E4).

By modelling the construction of a concept, this work provides a better understanding of individualization of training and its effects. Depending on the nature of what is ‘already there’ (in terms of experience and conceptualization), individual progress is assessed differently. This form of assessment can be useful when training is understood as a way to support people in their capacity to act. Once changes have been made visible, it is easier to attribute a value to them. This is probably the most direct implication of this work since it offers the learner tools for self-positioning concerning his or her acts of transformation, whatever their nature.

The question of the value of the ‘commons’ associated with knowledge and its transformative potential in the field of adult learning remains open. If we think the Covid crisis as just a foretaste of more crises (climatic, economic, social) that will profoundly challenge the functioning of human societies (Fassin, 2022), answering these questions opens the way to think about transformation - of working, of learning, and more broadly of creating society.

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Watching New Seeds Sprout. A Review of Artificial Intelligence in Adult Education

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Abstract - The research on Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasing, the subdiscipline concerned with AI in Education is called AIED. As research is mainly focused on K-12 and Higher Education, the current state of research of AI in Adult Education is explored in the paper at hand by conducting a review of leading journals. Astonishingly, AI is not (yet) a research topic in Adult Education. However, AIED is concerned with the Adult Learner but without reflecting Adult Education Theory in development processes. This discrepancy is mainly caused by little engagement of educational researchers in AIED. Thus, further research engagement and dialogue between educational and STEM researchers is needed.

KEYWORDS: Adult education, Artificial Intelligence in education, educational technology.

1. INTRODUCTION

While AI is a technology that has been researched on for almost 70 years (Russell & Norvig, 2012), over the last decades the research on AI has increased tremendously. This is shown by the implementation of governmental AI strategies, the increase in funding and in the increasing involvement of companies in AI research (e.g. IBM, Bosch, Google). Nowadays, AI is perceived as ‘one of the most strategic technologies of the 21st century’ (European Commission, 2018, p. 1).

AI has become a large field of study with numerous definitions and understandings of what AI is. A broad understanding of Artificial Intelligence is shown in the definition of Baker and Smith (2019, p.10): ‘Computers which perform cognitive tasks, usually associated with human minds, particularly learning and problem-solving’. While most of the research on AI is carried out in STEM fields (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019), there is a research community which is concerned with the application of AI in educational settings - called Artificial Intelligence in Education (AIED). ‘The aim is to develop adaptive, integrative, flexible, personal and effective learning environments that complement classical/traditional education and training formats.’ (Renz et al., 2020, p. 17) The International Artificial Intelligence in Education Society was founded in 1997 and is looking back on 25 years of interdisciplinary research. Several researchers have repeatedly emphasized that AI has great potential to improve educational processes (Renz et al., 2020; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Zhang & Aslan, 2021). The main potentials of AI so far are seen in providing personalized learning materials and environments, facilitating interaction in distance learning, reducing the time for assessment, and supporting administrative processes (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Zhang & Aslan, 2021). There seems to be a consensus that the impact of AI on Education will increase or as Luckin & Cukurova (2019, p. 2825) put it: ‘AI is here to stay and that it will have an increasing impact on the design of technology for use in education and training.’ Furthermore, looking at the number of scientific publications from 1999 to 2019 AIED ‘is a rapidly emerging field of research’ (Chen, Xie, & Hwang, 2020, p. 3).

In 2019, Zawacki-Richter et al. conducted a systematic review exploring the current state of research of AI and its applications in Higher Education. Then in 2021, Zhang and Aslan published a systematic review of the empirical studies conducted about AI in Education which were published between 1993 and 2020. The systematic review refers to studies in the educational settings of Higher Education and K-12 education. Missing so far, however, is a comparable synthesis of research regarding the state of research in Adult Education.

The following synthesis tackles this desideratum by addressing the following questions: Is Adult Education involved in educational AI research? Which specific AI technology applications are discussed in relation to adult learners? The rationale behind posing these questions is a general conviction among AI researchers that its potential in education is vast and the mapping of its territory still very much in the beginning.

2. METHODOLOGY

To do this, I provide in the following a narrative review of the following peer-reviewed, topic specific journals: International Journal of Learning Analytics and Artificial Intelligence for Education; Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence and International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education. Furthermore, the search included two journals especially focused on adult learning to evaluate in which specific manner Adult Education is approaching AI. The two journals are: European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults and Journal for Research on Adult Education.

All volumes since 2010 were included in the search. The year 2010 was chosen because the number of publications concerning AIED rapidly grew after 2012 (Chen, Xie, and Hwang 2020, p. 3). By including the two years leading up to 2012, it was ensured that relevant publications concerning AI in Adult Education would be found. As a matter of fact, the low number of journals included in the sample denotes the limit of my research. Furthermore, two of the three AIED related journals were released just lately (2019 and 2020). However, I consider the results of this exploratory research noteworthy, and deserving to be communicated.

3. RESULTS

3.1. How Adult Education approaches AI

To start with one of the most astonishing results in my survey: the two journals dedicated to Adult Education do not yield any results. Not a single article is dealing with AI in Adult Education since 2010, even though there was a special issue of the European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults published in 2017 with the title ‘Digital the New Normal - Multiple Challenges for the Education and Learning of Adults’, AI was not mentioned in it. But despite ‘Digital [as] the New Normal’, AI as integrative element of ‘digital’ was not, or perhaps better, not yet, in view. These findings lead to the interpretation that AI is not yet researched on within the scientific Adult Education journals mentioned above.

However, the conclusion that Adult Education is not engaged in AI research cannot be explained by the missing of general interest on the topic of AI applications in Education regarding the fact that AIED is a vibrant research field. Furthermore, this discrepancy becomes even more obvious since there is research on Digitalization in Adult Education. Two current examples for research projects are DigitALAD (2019-2021), which was funded by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and DigiEB (2019-2022), which was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

3.2. How AIED approaches the Adult Learner

The ignorance of AI in Adult Education is, however, not reciprocated within the AIED community, as they provide studies which are concerned with the learning of adults. The educational context which receives the most research interest is Higher Education. A few studies could be found concerning the application of AI in Professional Development and Lifelong Learning.

3.2.1. AI in Higher Education

Within the studies conducted in Higher Education, AI primarily serves as an instrument to facilitate either administrative or academic functions of Higher Education institutions. Examples for the application of AI on the administrative level are conducted by Nouri et al. (2019) and Niyogisubizo et al. (2022), who used AI to predict dropout of students. Furthermore, AI can be used to predict academic performance (Rodríguez-Hernández et al., 2021) and support curriculum design and career counseling (Vo et al., 2022).

If AI is implemented in Higher Education to facilitate Learning and Teaching, it becomes part of the didactic process and has the potential to become one of the means through which learning is conducted. Polito and Temperini (2021), for example, present a system for computer programming learning that enhances the learning process by using automated assessment. The advantage of AI enabled automated assessment is surely that it goes beyond computer assisted multiple choice testing. AI can test computer programs (Polito & Temperini, 2021), as well as essays from various disciplines (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Consequently, students receive just in time feedback and teachers are relieved from time consuming grading tasks.

Moreover, I found studies that used AI applications to train academic skills such as academic writing (Knight et al., 2018; Rapp & Kauf, 2018). As academic writing is a core skill for students to graduate, it is necessary to be taught on a broad scale. Rapp and Kauf (2018), for example, developed Thesis Writer (TW). ‘TW supports students with: (1) orientation, planning, and focusing; (2) proposal writing; (3) text production; and (4) collaboration and coordination between student and institution (tutors, instructors, and study program directors).’ (Rapp & Kauf, 2018, p. 596) Thus, it again relieves instructors during the process of thesis writing.

Another study conducted by Ramachandran et al. (2017) focused on the improvement of quality in academic reviews. They developed a tool for ‘review quality assessment’ (Ramachandran et al, 2017, p. 575) that helps students as well as researchers to enhance their reviews by giving them feedback on the quality of their review.

The research shows that students in Higher Education (especially in STEM fields) are often part of the sample to test AI applications even though these applications have no connection to an academic context. For example, Yu et al. (2021) recruited students to test a system that teaches pour-over coffee brewing. Because AIED research is mainly conducted in Higher Education Institutions, students are an easily accessible sample group. However, the specific characteristics of the learning of adults are not discussed in the studies found.

Even though AI serves as a facilitator for administration and learning in Higher Education institutions, it can also serve as the content and thus, be the subject to learning. The concept of ‘AI literacy’ is discussed in a review by Ng et al. (2021). In it, they emphasize the importance of knowing basic AI principles and understanding the technology behind. Thus, being able to evaluate the ethical implications for society. Following this train of thought, Kong et al. (2021) designed and evaluated an artificial intelligence literacy course for university students. The added value of their course is the specific target group which is students from different disciplines without any previous knowledge.

3.2.2. AI in Professional Development/Training

Regarding the application of AI in Professional Development and Training contexts, three studies could be found. Gayed et al. (2022) focused on the aspect of Adult Language Learning and developed an AI-based writing tool for adult English language learners. Damacharla et al. (2019) designed a voice-based synthetic assistant for the training of emergency care providers. In these two studies, the Adult Learners again are approached as a sample group for testing a system but andragogical theory is not considered in the development process.

In contrast, the study by Chaipidech et al. (2022) which focusses on Teachers Professional Development explicitly refers to andragogical principles as essential part of the development process and points out specifically, that these principles need to be considered in learning software design. This study is an example of the successful combination of AI technology and educational theory.

3.2.3. AI in Lifelong Learning

The following studies show that AI can contribute to Lifelong Learning by managing individual competence development and facilitating individual learning paths. Rosa et al. (2015) present the MultCComp System that considers the user's past and present mobility data for competence management within companies.

On a more global level, AI can be used for the identification of skill demand changes on the labor market as presented by Yazdanian et al. (2022). This method is 'able to provide insightful information about the evolution of the skills landscape to training providers and decision makers, be they in institutions providing formal education (e.g., universities), lifelong learning platforms (e.g., MOOC websites), or in the training departments of corporations.' (Yazdanian et al., 2022, p. 9) This information can facilitate quick curricula changes and lead to a better matching between candidates and labor markets.

To describe his vision of future AIED research, Srinivasan (2022) describes an 'AI-Enabled framework for learning' (Srinivasan 2022, p. 15) which 'applies universally to all learners including lifelong learners' (Srinivasan, 2022, p. 16). Distinguishing two perspectives – the learners' and the institutional - AI is used to identify skill gaps and offer personalized learning. The strength of the framework is 'the integration of scientific findings on knowledge formation and learning, and the appropriate integration of humans to overcome various previously observed challenges' (Srinivasan, 2022, p. 16).

3.3. Discrepancy of approaches mirrors another discrepancy within the AIED Community

Looking at the previous results, there is a discrepancy in the way Adult Education approaches AI and in the way that the AIED community approaches Adult Education. Adult learners are implicitly a target group for many AIED applications – especially those developed within Higher Education contexts – but andragogical research findings are not reflected upon during the development process. On the other hand, the scientific community of Adult Education does not seem to be engaged on a broad scale in the research on AIED.

Although the multi-disciplinary character of the AIED community is stressed in various publications (e.g., Hwang et al. 2020, Feng and Law 2021), the research field is primarily driven by computational science stakeholders. As Chen, Xie, Di Zou, and Hwang (2020) point out in their study about frequently cited AIED articles, of the seven journals, '6 of them are in the WoS Category of Computer Science. Just one in Education' (Chen, Xie, Di Zou, & Hwang, 2020, p. 12). Moreover, Zhang and Aslan (2021) emphasize the 'demand [for] interdisciplinary approaches, while most AI research is carried out only in STEM fields' (Zhang & Aslan, 2021, p. 1). Chen, Xie, and Hwang (2020) even attest the absence of educational theory. So, the discrepancy of the approaches found in this study mirrors another discrepancy within the AIED community: the discrepancy in research engagement from STEM fields and Educational Science.

4. DISCUSSION

The promising transformative character of AI technologies is not yet acknowledged within the scientific community of Adult Education as Adult Education is not yet engaged in AIED research. In contrast, the AIED community is concerned with the learning of adults but without a reflection of andragogical theory. The discrepancy in research engagement is

obvious considering that AIEd research is mainly conducted by computational science researchers. Luckin and Cukurova (2019) point out the problematic aspect of this: ‘However, most commercial AI developers know little about learning sciences research, indeed they often know little about learning or teaching.’ (Luckin & Cukurova, 2019, p. 2824)

As the lack of educational and learning theory is acknowledged within AIEd research (Zhang & Aslan, 2021, p. 1), there have been attempts to intentionally address this challenge. One example is the EDUCATE program by Luckin and Cukurova (2019) which aims to ‘develop inter-stakeholder partnerships between AI developers, educators and researchers’ (Luckin, Cukurova, 2019, p. 1). Another example is the nonprofit organization Digital Promise. It aims to enhance the implementation of educational technology for K-12 as well as the Adult Learners. With publications like ‘Designing Technology for Adult Learners: Applying Adult Learning Theory’ (Digital Promise, 2016a) and the ‘Adult Learner Model’ (Digital Promise, 2022) they are trying to educate educational technology developers about andragogy.

These initiatives surely help to decrease the discrepancy but more research engagement is necessary to unleash the full potential of AI in Adult Education. Adult Education must engage in AIEd research to ensure the quality of learning and teaching. Adult Education research must be integrated in the development process of new AI based technologies for Adult Learners. As the commercial interest in the Adult Learner is growing and the market for Adult Learner technology is explored (DeSchryver & Dlugoleski, 2015), it will be crucial to ensure quality of those new developments by implementing Adult Learning research. Only if this is done, the promising technology of AI can show its full potential to enhance learning and teaching.

One of those potentials of AI in Adult Education can be seen in the development of personalized learning technologies. Those will be able to offer better support to learners with learning challenges by adjusting learning content, presentation mode and learning pace to each learner individually. Even learners with negative learning experiences could be reached by personalized learning technology combined with gamification elements. Surely, AI holds the potential to enhance the accessibility to lifelong learning and contribute to create educational equity.

Furthermore, the research of AI in educational contexts urgently needs more educational scientists to avoid a huge drawback of AI technology: the reproduction of a ‘one-dimensional image of man’ (Damberger, 2019, p. 159). Drawing on the German concept of ‘Bildung’, Damberger (2019) raises ‘the question of whether what is beyond the comprehensible in people and, according to classical pedagogical theory, can only become real through the pedagogue as a human counterpart, can also be brought to fruition through the mere, albeit convincing, simulation of the pedagogue’ through AI. To answer those kinds of questions, we need the ongoing dialogue between educational and computational scientists to develop ‘human-centered AI (HAI), which refers to approaching AI from a human perspective by considering human conditions and contexts’ (Yang et al., 2021, p. 1).

Further research about AI in Adult Education is very much needed. Especially regarding the intersection between AI software developers, educational researchers, and practitioners. Yang et al. (2021, p. 1) ‘advocate for an in-depth dialog between technology- and humanity-based researchers to improve understanding of HAI [human-centered AI] from various perspectives.’ To start this in-depth dialogue, further research can contribute by asking questions like: What are essential factors in finding a common language between different scientific cultures as Pelánek (2022) emphasizes the ‘terminological maze behind educational technology’? How can the collaboration be supported by financial, governmental, and societal structures and strategies?

5. CONCLUSION

Summarizing the current state of research of AI in Adult Education, AI is not yet discussed in leading scientific journals in Adult Education. On the other hand, there are AI applications developed for Adult Learners – mainly concerning the

context of Higher Education, Professional Development and Lifelong Learning. However, in these studies, Adult Learners mainly function as the sample group to test new technologies. Adult Learning theory is mostly not included in the development process. This discrepancy seems to mirror the discrepancy of AIED research involvement of STEM and educational researchers which leads to a lack of educational theory in educational AI applications. Consequently, ‘there has been a critical gap between what AIED technologies could do and how they are actually implemented in authentic educational settings.’ (Zhang & Aslan, 2021, p. 1).

The engagement of Adult Education within the AIED research is highly needed to reflect the AI applications from a theoretical standpoint, and thus, develop high quality applications for the Adult Learners. The potential is surely to implement AI applications with the aim to promote individual learning paths and create new learning opportunities for learners with challenges (Digital Promise, 2016b). Thus, reducing educational inequity in society.

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Gender, Adult Education and Career Reward: The Paula Principle in Today's Europe

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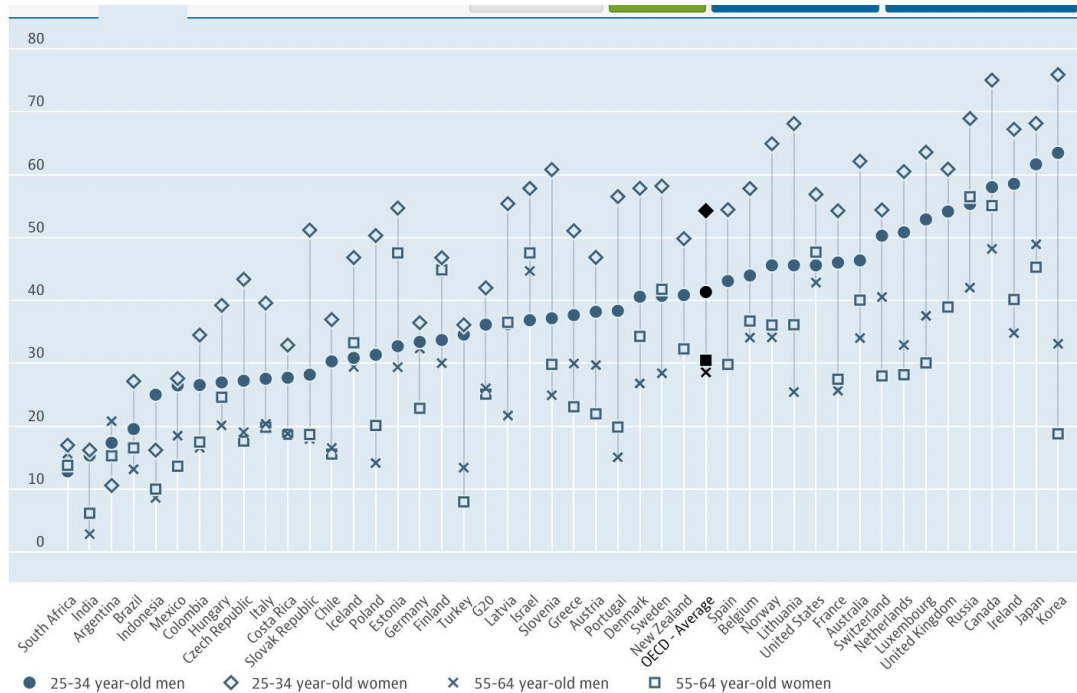
Abstract - On the one hand, the female/male competence gap (competence = qualifications, skills, learning) is large, and increasing. On the other hand, the male-female rewards gap (rewards = pay and career progression) is closing only gradually if at all. The debate on gender equality too often ignores this kind of dynamic, aiming instead at an eventual symmetry. It is the juxtaposition of these two trends that led me to formulate the Paula Principle - 'most women work below their level of competence'¹. Women's competences are under-recognised and under-rewarded, and although there has been positive progress, the continuous changes in education and in work mean that such progress may not be enough to catch up with reality. The paper sets out contemporary data relating to the Paula Principle; presents five explanatory factors; and discusses the impact of the pandemic and demographic change. I conclude by briefly presenting the image of a triple helix as a new model for analysing the dynamics of life course development.

1. COMPETENCE GAPS COMPARED

In almost every OECD country women outperform men in initial education, in almost every subject and often up to PhD level (OECD 2021). This is often casually recognised, but not sufficiently analysed. The phenomenon has been with us for a while. The crossover points – the moment when women overtook men, at different educational levels – have occurred at various times, but in many countries took place already several decades ago.

Figure 1, from OECD, demonstrates the universal shift between two generations in achieving tertiary level qualifications. For the younger age groups, those born around 1985-90, women are now well ahead (the diamonds above the spots), sometimes by as much as 20%. The most striking example is Korea, where in the course of three decades women have gone from the bottom to the top of the OECD league, but European countries show a similar transformation over the last two decades. Overall, women currently make up roughly two out of three higher education graduates in OECD countries; this is a very large difference, with social and economic implications. The distribution across subject area is not even, but there is only a handful of subjects – typically physics, maths, engineering – where more men than women graduate.

¹ Schuller 2017. The name is derived by contrast with the well-known Peter Principle: "every employee rises to *his* level of competence" (Peter 1969). This book enjoyed huge success in demonstrating, half playfully but also with enough grip on reality to strike chords with many readers, that people were promoted until they reached a level where they were no longer competent – and that's where they stuck. It contained only a single female example, of a primary school teacher who was promoted to train teachers – and continued to speak to them as if they were schoolchildren.



However the competences referred to in the Paula Principle are not only those acquired in initial formal education. In many countries, especially in Northern Europe, women participate more in adult education, and in vocational training, though the pattern is less universal in this latter mode. Across the EU the overall rate for participation in adult education in the last 4 weeks was 10% for women against 8.3% for men.

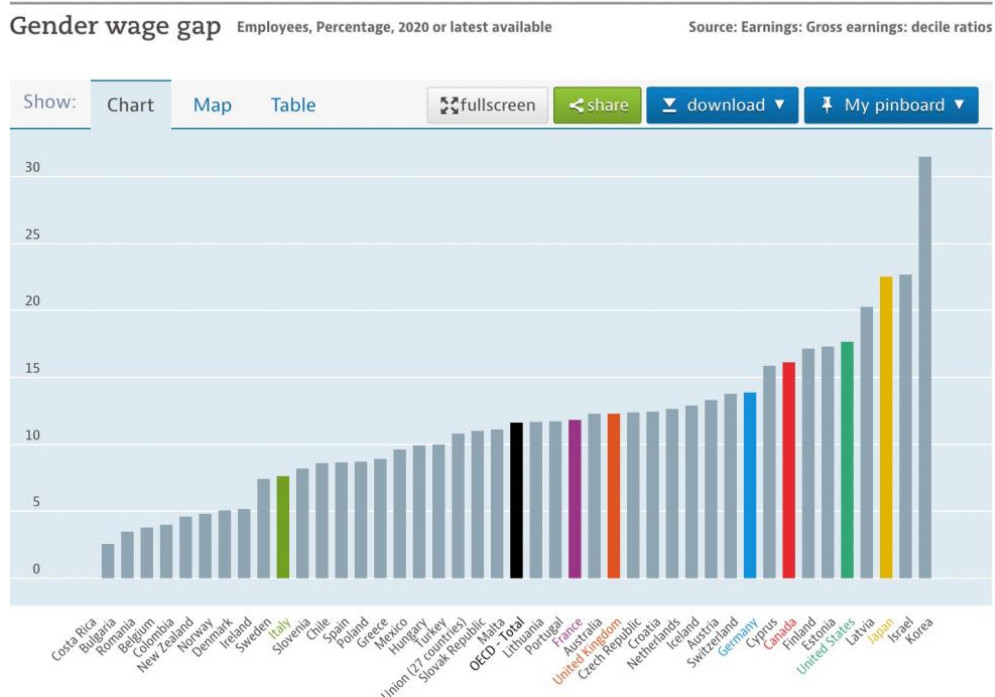
“In 2020, women recorded higher participation rates [in adult education and training] than men in all EU Member States except for Czechia, Germany, Greece and Cyprus (where rates for men were higher), while Romania reported the same rate for both sexes.”²

The largest gender difference, in percentage points, was in Sweden, where the participation rate for women was 13.6 percentage points higher than for men.

So as adults women go on adding to their competences and qualifications – their human capital, as some would term it – at a higher rate than men, and from a higher base. Hence the female/male competence gap continues to grow. (Such is the basic statistical picture; we need a better understanding of the actual dynamics of adult participation, especially in workplace learning. I would hypothesise that on the one hand women are readier to acknowledge that they need to learn in order to carry out their jobs well, and therefore have a greater propensity to engage in training; on the other hand they are more likely to be constrained from participating, notably by working part-time, since part-timers have less access to training opportunities, and by caring responsibilities. Much will depend on national and workplace cultures, including career guidance and support. Quantitative and qualitative research on these issues would be very welcome.)

² Source Eurostat
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Adult_learning_statistics

The female/male competence gap is one side of the simple juxtaposition. Yet the male/female disparity in rewards – financial returns and in career progression – has shrunk, but not to anything like the same extent (and may even have stalled), so that the gender gap between competence and outcome has widened, as I indicated at the outset. I reiterate that earnings are not the only outcome we should be concerned with – other kinds of material and non-material returns to education are just as important – but they are a natural starting point. Figure 2 gives a cross-sectional representation of the earnings gap.



The gaps are striking (it is notable how little Korean women’s educational progress has translated into earnings). However this picture needs some refining. In the first place it deals only with gross earnings, and does not distinguish between different types of employment. In particular there is a huge difference between full-time and part-time earnings; in the UK, for example, the gender pay gap jumps from around 8% for those working full-time to 17% when part-timers are included.

Secondly, a cross-sectional view excludes the dynamics of the relationship between the two trends over time, which is crucial – in other words, how the pace of change in one relates to the pace of change in the other. This is more difficult to estimate internationally. Globally the World Economic Forum estimates that the Economic Opportunity and Participation gap, on current rates, will take 151 years to close³, but this is a very broad-brush projection. It is certainly the case generally that the closing of the gender pay gap has not kept pace with the opening of the female-male competence gap. In other words, there has been no smoothly meritocratic shift, where qualifications are recognised and rewarded independently of who it is that has acquired them.

A lifelong perspective is crucial here. Pay gaps have closed very considerably for younger age groups, up to around age 35. This is only to be expected, as younger women are the ones who have embodied the competence

³ https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf

crossover. Partly as a result the largest pay gaps are to be found in the older age groups (which then transmits into huge gender disparities in pension levels). However this is not simply a reflection of the fact that younger women have gained higher qualifications in much greater numbers. It also, crucially, reflects that nature of career structures. Despite the rhetoric surrounding new forms of work, our models of career progression and reward are still heavily dominated by linear, continuous pathways – the traditional male model. The effects of this linear dominance show up most strongly in the challenges posed to women in the second half of their professional lives. This is one of the reasons why we need to develop non-linear models of career patterns across the full span of working lives (see below).



- I have ambition – is that abnormal? -
(Schuller 2017)

2. THE PAULA PRINCIPLE FACTORS

What are the principal factors behind the defeat of the meritocratic ideal which the Paula Principle points to? I am not a gender specialist, and others have written in far greater depth and with much deeper understanding about the causes of gender inequality in the workplace (eg Magnuson 2010, Bukodi 2012, Wolf 2015, and especially Goldin 2021). In the book I discuss five factors, from my limited literature reading and from the interviews I carried out.

The first two of these are extremely well-known: discrimination, and caring responsibilities. I have nothing original to say about them. It's worth simply underlining that the standards or criteria for discrimination change over time as people become more sensitised to its different forms; and that eldercare responsibilities are now increasing, and fall more on women than men, often at exactly the point where their careers might be moving into a new phase.

The third PP factor is (self-)confidence. Lack of confidence more often deters women from applying for a job or a promotion (see eg Kay & Shipman 2014). I formulated, quite arbitrarily, the '60/20 rule': if a man thinks he can do 60% of a job he'll consider himself qualified, whereas if a woman thinks she can't do 20% of it she'll rule herself out. These are, of course, very crude generalisations, but my interviewees validated the rule to a surprising degree. I have bracketed the self to indicate that confidence has several dimensions. In particular it can be hard to draw the line between justifiable, healthy self-confidence and unwarranted belief in one's own abilities and entitlements. Greater assertiveness may be helpful, as the Lean In approach suggests (Sandberg 2015), but not if it translates into excessive insistence on one's own competence and achievement.

Fourth is access to vertical networks. In career terms it helps to know and interact with people in more senior positions, at whatever level you may be working (I should stress that the Paula Principle applies at all levels, not only to senior positions). This advantage need not involve nepotism or favouritism. It simply signals that by associating with those in higher jobs, people learn the practices, vocabulary, culture of those positions and so are better placed to apply for them (inside an organisation or more generally) than those who have had no such contact. Since the further up you go in the hierarchy the higher tends to be the proportion of men, and – another generalisation – people tend to form networks with their own sex (Seabright 2013), the result is that this form of bridging social capital (Woolcock 2000) is more available to men than women. As one of my interviewees observed:

“So many senior people in television are men, and they tend to be more comfortable hanging around with younger men....So unless you have someone who is a bit of a mentor it can be quite difficult.” Olivia, TV/marketing

These four factors are ones which would generally be acknowledged as negative. In other words, most of us would seek to reduce them, by punishing discrimination, improving care support, reinforcing levels of healthy self-confidence and ensuring equal access to vertical networks. The fifth factor is more controversial: positive choice. Women may actively choose not to go for a promotion or higher level position. Choice is a philosophically contested concept, and hard to pin down objectively (Hakim 2000). I do not mean the ‘choice’ made because when taking a new job would make family life too difficult, or a partner would be too upset by the idea of moving home for the wife’s career or other similar constraints. I am thinking of cases where a woman justifiably thinks she could do the higher level job but decides either that the current job is sufficiently satisfying and challenging for now, or that the higher role may pay more and give more status but is intrinsically less satisfying. Such decisions seem to me eminently sensible – and many examples of the Peter Principle might have been and could still be avoided if more men made them. But they are by their nature often hard to identify and record.

Which of these five factors are most important? I offer the set as a toolkit which can be helpful in exploring how the Paula Principle plays out in very varied contexts: in different countries; in different sectors within countries; and in different organisations within those sectors. I’ve found that asking people to weight the different factors as they experience their own circumstances often stimulates a very fruitful conversation. Sometimes respondents identify a single factor as totally dominant; mostly people split their responses across two or three or even all of the factors, with different weightings. Comparing individuals’ responses in a group discussion leads to interesting exchanges.

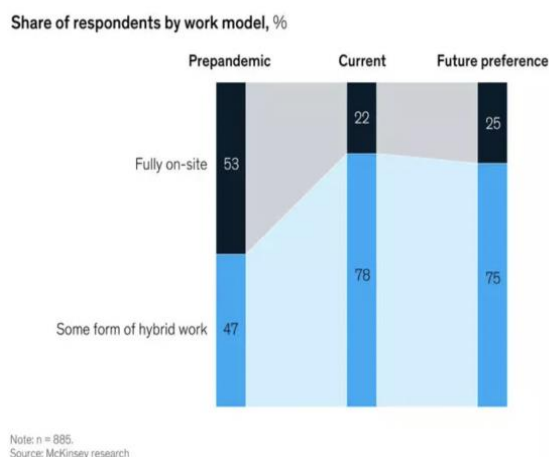
3. PANDEMIC AND DEMOGRAPHY

In recent years two factors have impinged significantly on this picture, one with immediate impact, the other with longer-term implications.

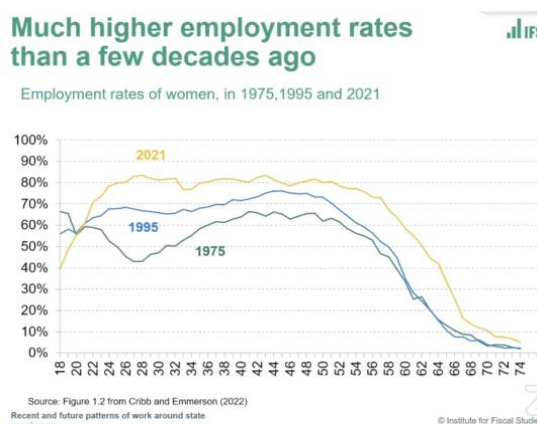
The first is Covid. There is little doubt that the immediate impact of the pandemic on women’s employment has been negative. In the UK, and probably elsewhere, more women than men have lost their jobs or left the labour market. The effect has been particularly marked on mothers and members of ethnic minorities. This is partly

because different employment sectors have been differently affected, partly because of internal household decisions. A decline in self-employment is also relevant. However there may be a more optimistic side to this in the medium term. For the disruption caused by Covid to working patterns, and the growth of flexible working and working from home, may provide real impetus behind the drive to depart from the conventional model of full-time, on-site working which has such an effect on gendered careers, to women's cost (Coote et al 2020). A recent McKinsey survey shows the shift in preferences.

There has been a massive shift during the pandemic toward hybrid work, and employees prefer it.



Secondly, there is increasing awareness that growing numbers of people over 65 continue to participate in the labour market, with women strongly represented. Data on the UK, from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, shows this clearly:



Source: Cribb & Emmerson 2022

The European picture here is quite mixed, and there is no common trend. Most notably, in France there is a strong and highly politically sensitive debate around retaining pension ages at 60; whether this will result in all people over that age leaving employment remains to be seen.

I incline to a mildly optimistic view: that although the events of the last two years have been damaging to progress towards greater equality, in the longer run their effect in undermining traditional work and career patterns will be positive.

4. THE TRIPLE HELIX: A NEW MODEL FOR LIFE COURSE ANALYSIS

Awareness of these trends can only strengthen the argument that we need to look at careers in a full life course context.⁴ 50 years may be the emergent modal length of a working life; but it is crucial to stress that this is only the overall duration – it does not mean that all 50 years involve continuous employment. So there are real possibilities for gaps and breaks in employment – for whatever purpose – to become normal, and for there to be much greater variation in any individual’s working patterns over time. In particular, the damaging binary division between full- and part-time employment may disappear, and the lengthening of the working life allow later-life careers to blossom. How far that potential is realised depends in part, of course, on access to learning opportunities.

Such a fresh approach to working lives and ‘careers’ demands in turn that we look again at the models we use for mapping and analysing the life course. Simple linear models are inadequate for the purpose. One response to increased longevity has been to slice the life course differently, inserting new stages at different points. Fair enough; but we need models which *better enable us to incorporate the dynamic, and often contradictory, changes which occur as people and populations age*. I propose – as just one option – the image of a triple helix, with three strands winding round each other. The strands represent biological, psychological and socio-cultural development. It is the changing relationships between these strands which shape the transitions we make - or fail to make – from one stage to another. They may point in different directions – for example earlier puberty (biological) vs later entry into the labour market (socio-cultural); or better physical health at 70 (biological) vs age discrimination leading to worse employment prospects for older people (socio-cultural). Exactly such a triple helix has already long been in use in medical circles as the ‘biopsychosocial model’ (Engel 1977), but to my knowledge is not applied to understand adult development more broadly.

5. AN INVITATION IN CONCLUSION

My main aim in developing the Paula Principle was to remind people that achieving gender parity is more complex than arriving at some 50/50 parity or symmetry. We need a sense of the dynamics involved in the relationship between changing levels of competence on the one hand and changing gender differentials on the other; and so I offer a tool for individuals, groups and organisations to apply to their own contexts, weighing up the different strengths of the five PP factors. I would be particularly interested in hearing from anyone who has engaged in this; and also from anyone who finds the triple helix model worth exploring further (tomschuller48@gmail.com).

⁴ See Symposium at this conference on *Midlife in a changing and post-pandemic world; implications for career education and older adult learning using on-line and in person solutions*.

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Like a Spider in a Network of Relations. The Role of Universities of Applied Sciences for Cultural Adult Education in Rural Landscapes. Theoretical Basics for Innovative Research and Development

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Abstract - The aim of this theoretical contribution is to develop a research project on the relational network analysis of cultural adult education in rural areas, with the aim of understanding modern education not only as the transfer of knowledge, but also as search process between teachers and learners for adequate solutions to actual challenges. Various places of learning play a role as organizational learning settings, as do the relationships between the learners themselves. With a relational understanding of education, according to the thesis, education can offer reflection that a modern society needs. A regional university can serve as a coordination unit, which makes the various locations and their connections visible in a network analysis and thus supports mutual understanding.

KEYWORDS: University of applied sciences, adult education, self-organization, transformation, didactic model.

1. INTRODUCTION TO UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES

The 210 State Universities of applied sciences play an important role in Germany. More than one third of all students study here and over 47% of all bachelor graduates come from Universities of Applied Sciences. These universities are focused on teaching for professional fields. In addition to the classic university disciplines, universities of applied sciences provide research funds for social work science, early childhood education and many other areas and thus make an important contribution to solve current challenges in these professions (Schulze 2019, 2019a). UAS are characterized by strong ties to local companies and regional actors and as an important factor for socio-cultural commitment through student life, especially in more rural peripheral regional areas. In addition, as tertiary educational organizations, UAS are particularly open to vocational training and facilitate educational advancement, since many students are the first academics in their families. In the context of the modern transformation society (Schäffter 2000), universities of applied sciences are faced with major tasks: On the one hand, the innovation gap between business, technology and society is to be closed with application-oriented research and teaching and solutions for climate protection, digitization, migration have to be found and future developments anticipated. UAS are therefore particularly characterized by their "being in between": between professional and academic learning, between applied research and theoretical reflection (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration), between state funding and contract research. This in-between position makes the importance of regional universities of applied sciences as the intersection is understandable, because it is not a matter of making a decision, but of making the different spheres visible and connecting them communicatively and relationally through relationships. Therefor Universities of Applied Sciences play an important role as an academic platform and hub not only for individual fields of application, but also as a space for reflection.

2. CULTURAL ADULT EDUCATION IN PROFESSIONAL AND SELF-ORGANIZED CONTEXTS

One of these issues is the orientation of cultural education processes. Cultural education is education for cultural participation, means participation in the artistic and cultural events of a society and is a constitutive part of general

education (Emert 2009). In addition to a receptive part (enjoyment and understanding, access to art and culture), cultural education always includes a participatory creative part and is not just a visit to a theatre or museum, but also dealing with what you have seen, heard and felt, that active contribution and participation. Without these two sides, without mutual exchange, no cultural education takes place. It is all the more important to consider the proportions of reception and participation in cultural education offers as proportions of self-organization and external organization. At the moment there are only a few trained educational structures for cultural adult education in extracurricular educational contexts. Most offers of cultural education in Germany are linked to cultural institutions such as theatres, libraries, museums and galleries or take place in adult education centres. In addition, there are many possibilities for cultural education in self-organized associations such as orchestras, choirs, but also open spaces for playing, dancing, painting, etc. However, these various educational spaces do not have a pedagogical organized background that allows professional planning and offers in order to open up new addressee or to reach the intended addressees. They are also mostly dependent on external structures and resources when it comes to implementing their offers. This is certainly also a reason why a large part of the cultural education offers is aimed at children and young people in school structures. Certainly, children and young people are a central target group of cultural education, but adults have to solve the actual problems and to transform the society. The social, political and economic systems, have to change from a growth society that consumes finite resources to a sustainable society and adult education plays an important role therefor.

In contrast to the institutional form of the school, which as part of the educational system has a reproductive function for society, the organization of further education today derives its guiding principles from a reflective function of lifelong learning. The planning of further education in a transformation society is not just about coping with "manageable changes" through supported learning, but increasingly about supporting people and organizations/companies in transitory change processes, the starting points and goals of which can no longer be clearly determined (transitory here means: "the past is obsolete and the future is not yet tangible"). Unlike schools, adult education organizations do not have formally administered mechanisms for recruiting participants; there is no regulated "participant recruitment", i.e., there are no fixed state-specified curricula and no state-regulated compulsory participation. The "creation of education" or "the condition of its possibility" depends on a successful didactic analysis and planning. The social significance of educational organizations is determined by the following question: "How do desired target groups become actual participants?". For these reasons, the institutionalization of adult education through the training of appropriate pedagogical organizations is indispensable for the fulfilment of its central social function.

3. GOAL-GENERATING TRANSFORMATION AS A DIDACTIC SEARCH MOVEMENT MODEL

In the theoretical work Ortfried Schäffter (2002, p. 52f) distinguishes between four different offer constructions, including didactic models and methodological concepts of adult education. These also determine the respective understanding of the organization's mission. First, he distinguishes linear and goal-oriented transformation with the didactic goal of a qualified and enlightened graduate as a well-known goal of the educational process. This well-known goal is achieved by means of structured curricula and the presentation of standardized models. Many concepts of cultural adult education pursue this curricular-controlled idea of a goal-specific transformation, which mostly aims at cultural mediation. The focus is on the reception of cultural aesthetics. In addition, Schäffter (2002, p. 52f) presents the goal-generating transformation and the reflexive transformation as possible concepts of adult education. The goal of these transformations is unknown and is processed didactically through a joint search movement or reflective self-assurance. These biographical learning processes or social negotiation processes by means of aesthetic experience and practice are accompanied by pedagogues or teachers to promote mutual development. Because, depending on which transformation

model and which understanding of the offer is primarily pursued, the pedagogically active (e.g., artists or social worker) have different tasks. The first two forms require the development and implementation of curricula and the presentation of models. The last two require an "endurance" of indeterminacy, which as a search process is the subject of self-organized learning. »There is a danger in this context that educators will interpret the vagueness as a lack of knowledge on the part of the recipients of the education and, out of their professional expert role, define the target state on behalf of the participants. [...] The pedagogical pointer practically prevents the learners from ever being able to achieve their as yet unsettled goals" (Schäffter 2002, p. 54). In this open-ended understanding, modern education, especially for cultural and aesthetic educational offers, is not just the imparting of knowledge, but also a joint search process between teachers and learners for adequate individual, social and societal solutions to current challenges. The relationship between the learners and teachers, but also between the learners, plays an important role. Many places of cultural education in associations such as amateur choirs, theatre groups or private museums, for example, only become educational offers that enrich the regional cultural landscape in this understanding.

Since adult learning in a fundamentally changing world is a search for new ways of living together with one another and with the environment, the goals cannot be known in advance. Particularly performative, aesthetic and playful learning opportunities are opposed to a changed understanding of the tasks of adult education, which 'can no longer take direct responsibility for individual learning goals and content-related interests of the participants. [It's] more about initiating - building - shaping and supporting development processes on the levels: Individual - Group/Family - Organization and regional living spaces. Here, self-organized design elements are increasingly required within a didactic organization for which learning contexts are responsible within the framework of program planning action' (Schäffter 2002, p. 60). This means, for example, social space-oriented approaches to social work can not only think of their mission to promote democracy and community development as an institution-related offer as an ultimately instructive offer, but rather have to do their work as part of a regional network of different actors, places and relationships for exchange and design and play are interwoven and make them visible (cf. Schulze 2022). Corresponding regional analyses of cultural education, democracy education or education for sustainable development as 'concepts of a development-accompanying pedagogy' (Schäffter 2002, p. 61) are still pending. Ortfried Schäffter's work offers excellent theoretical foundations (2014).

4. RESEARCH PROJECT: RELATIONAL NETWORK ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL ADULT EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS

The research question is how cultural adult education can be developed and supported in rural areas. Seeing providers and recipients in an interplay as cultural practitioners in a relationally determined network of organizations and committed people offers a new understanding of the term for this question. By understanding cultural education as a creative relationship between people, e.g., in a theater group or between people and cultural institutions such as a museum, very different learning spaces - especially self-organized ones - can be brought into focus. A network analysis can be used to make these spaces visible as places of education. To this end, the University of Applied Sciences uses its helmsman function as a research and teaching organization in this network. On the one hand, such a research project can show and collect the learning spaces, promote their networking and thus show them as part of the municipal educational landscape (music and art schools, libraries, adult education centres, museums, theatres, galleries, art associations, etc.). It is also within the framework of such a network analysis that the individual learning spaces become aware of their pedagogical function within the framework of cultural education. And the groups or organizations thus reflect on their contribution to the development of general biographical design skills, to cope with everyday life through to social inclusion processes and the design of technical and social change processes (Fuchs 2016, p. 8) in the sense of a transformative understanding

of education (Koller 2018).

With such an analysis assignment, universities of applied sciences become perceptible as actors in a regional field of relationships. And this is a prerequisite for their contribution to active innovative regional development. Universities of applied sciences can take on an ordering, activating and even controlling function for a network of lifelong learning. Like a spider in a web that keeps track. Changes in the organization and in the environment influence each other - like touches in a spider's web that are transmitted. For the municipal level, the network analysis offers the opportunity to ascertain the cultural diversity and offers, to observe them and to ensure their targeted networking for individual learning paths as transitions. For the organizations of cultural adult education, such an analysis offers the possibility of reflection, to look beyond the horizon of their own offers and to make them visible in their regional connection possibilities, without already limiting them to certain target groups through framing.

Making transitions and connections visible requires intermediate navigation structures. Here, universities of applied sciences can use their intermediate position profitably. Through empirical visualization of cultural learning potentials through qualitative network analysis without directly administering or directing educational processes in a linear direction.

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Student Resilience and Motivation during the Pandemic. Lessons from a Study into Adult ESOL

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Abstract - This paper reports on research conducted with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners and teachers during the academic year 2020/21. The study aimed to discover the reasons adults enrol on ESOL courses at the (pre)intermediate level in England and how their motivation was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Data were collected through an online student survey (n72) and individual teacher interviews (n17), using self-determination theory as a basis for analysis. The results suggest that motivation was impacted by the students' response to the changes in learning spaces and the support they received from teachers and peers.

KEYWORDS: Migration, English, motivation, education.

1. INTRODUCTION

ESOL courses in England are government funded English language classes for anyone over the age of 16 who is settled/settling in the country and speaks a different first language. These learners come from all over the world and are living in England for a range of reasons such as claiming asylum, seeking employment or re-joining family members (Higton et al., 2019). Once they reach the intermediate level, they are no longer learning for survival and their reasons for enrolling can be wide ranging. Adults, in general, are far less likely than younger or older people to enrol on educational courses, with only around 10% engaging in lifelong learning (Patterson, 2018). In the United Kingdom, a recent government report highlighted the range of factors that adults assess before enrolling on a course (Learning and Work Institute, 2021), focussing on how useful the course will be for their lives rather than subject enjoyment. Although adult ESOL courses are not compulsory, the students may not have chosen to settle in England because they enjoy learning English and so their reasons for enrolling may have commonalities with those of local people of the same age group, enrolling on different courses. Their reasons for learning English at the higher levels will be explored in this study, alongside any factors that might affect their motivation during an academic year.

2. LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION

Motivation to learn a language is distinct from motivation to do other tasks as it has a connection to a culture or group of people different to one's own. As Gardner (1972) explained, language learning motivation is

[...] the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language' (cited in Noels, 2001, p. 43)

This indicates that to be a successful language learner, one needs to have a reason to learn the language and feel a connection to the people or places where it is used. External factors such as career benefits, qualifications or the respect of others often motivate people to enrol on a language course. However, one may also be motivated intrinsically through a love of learning or enjoyment of a particular subject. The more internalised the reason or goal, the more likely the student will be highly motivated and be successful in their learning. Self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2008)

examines the interactions between these motivations and the external factors that may have an impact, which is particularly relevant to the experiences of adult learners who, as previously mentioned, are more likely to enrol for extrinsic rather than intrinsic reasons.

Most research into language learning motivation has concentrated on the experiences of children and young adults learning English in their home countries (Boo et al., 2015) who often have the choice of which foreign language they wish to study and how to use that language (or not) in the future. This type of 'elite' multilingualism, in its dominance of the literature, often presumes the use of English to please parents, for international travel or pass high-stakes exams. Research into 'grassroots' multilingualism in connection to motivation is an emerging field, with further investigation being called for (Ortega, 2019; Ushioda, 2020). Often in this context, the choice of which language to learn is not made by the students but by their new community. For beginners, the local language is needed for survival, particularly for those arriving in a country alone. For those at the higher levels, their reasons for studying may be more wide-ranging (Sidaway, 2018) and their responsibilities as adults may take priority, such as caring responsibilities or employment; as Javier, a participant in Block's (2006) research into Spanish-speaking Latinos in London, explained 'you either study or you work' (p. 147).

For those who have enrolled on a course, how teachers support them to achieve their goals will have an impact on retention and achievement. Self-determination theory (SDT) suggests for an extrinsic goal to be integrated into a person's being, three basic psychological needs should be met, namely autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomy in this context is being able to take ownership over one's learning, choosing how, why and when to study. Competence may be fulfilled through constructive feedback from teachers, classroom tasks that stretch and challenge the learner and activities that provide the space for students to practise the language and raise their self-confidence. Relatedness is feeling a connection to others, perhaps classmates or others who use the language, which for adult ESOL learners could also be people living locally. If adult learners have these needs met, according to SDT, there is a higher chance of internalising their extrinsic motivation and fostering intrinsic motivation, which should result in faster progression and a high level of course satisfaction.

2.1 The Covid-19 Pandemic

Ushioda (2011) argues, promoting autonomy is particularly important when students are faced with difficulties, so they can regulate their own learning behaviour, something which may be imperative when learning in an environment they would not have chosen for themselves. Pre-pandemic, the majority of adult ESOL courses were delivered in traditional classroom settings in colleges of further education or community settings (Higton et al, 2019). Five years prior to the pandemic, a study by Matulionienė & Pundziuvienė (2017) explored the potential benefits of blended ESOL courses finding that students in general were positive about the opportunities this approach could provide. However, there was a concern that not all students' levels of ICT were equal and offering such courses could lead to the exclusion of older students or those unable to invest in the technology and internet access required. ESOL students may be seeking asylum and therefore unable to work, meaning they cannot afford to pay for broadband at home or easily access devices such as smartphones or laptops, and therefore more likely to enrol on a classroom-based course. The impact of the move online on adult learners' motivation and their autonomy, particularly during a pandemic, had not been investigated prior to 2020 and it was therefore unclear how the students would respond to this change to their learning.

The research questions to be investigated were:

1. What motivates adults to enrol on (pre)intermediate ESOL courses?
2. What factors have an impact on their motivation during an academic year?

3. What impact did the Covid-19 pandemic have on adult ESOL motivation?

3. METHODOLOGY

Data were collected through a mixed method design, which comprised a student survey and teacher interviews. The survey was based on an instrument designed by the Scottish government (Rice et al, 2008) which had investigated the link between the choice of ESOL course hours and intensity of motivation. In England in 2020, all courses were part-time (eight hours or less), so the choice of course was no longer relevant but the demographic information and questions on initial motivation could be adapted for a similar context. The survey was piloted in January and March 2020 with adult ESOL students in the northeast of England, and amendments made following focus group discussions. The survey was initially distributed in-person by visiting classrooms but by mid-September, this was deemed to be too dangerous because of rising Covid-19 infections.

ESOL teachers around England were approached for interviews in October 2020, to gain insights into their perception of student motivation and how they were navigating the new teaching and learning spaces during the pandemic. Teachers responded to advertisements through the ESOLResearch jiscmail, social media and the researcher's own contacts, having been an ESOL teacher for just over a decade. Individual interviews were conducted online and followed a semi-structured format, asking the teachers for their responses to the RQs. Each teacher was asked to share the student survey with their learners to aid the response rate. In total, 17 teachers were interviewed, and 72 students responded to the survey.

Analysis was conducted in four stages. First, the survey data was analysed for descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS. Second, the teacher interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically using the guidelines from Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015) in NVivo. Each teacher was emailed their own transcript to check for accuracy and provided the opportunity to add or withdraw any information.

Third, the main themes emerging from the teacher interview data were shared with five students who participated in a longitudinal interview study, which formed the final stage of data collection and is not included in this paper. The student participants shared their reflections on the teacher themes, relating them to their own experiences and those of their classmates. Finally, self-determination theory was used as an additional level of analysis, exploring the types of initial motivation the students may have and how their basic psychological needs were being met. The teacher participants chose their own pseudonyms, which will be displayed here alongside the results of the student survey. Informed consent was collected prior to any data collection, with the opportunity to withdraw available at any point before analysis.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The survey respondents (n. 72) came from 31 different countries and spoke 31 different first languages, with Arabic being the most widely spoken (n. 13). 76.1% of the respondents were female and 21.1.% male, the majority aged between 31 and 40. They had been in the United Kingdom, on average, for 5.6 years and taken an average of 2.87 years to enrol on an ESOL class (n. 60), ranging from those who enrolled immediately to 19 years.

4.1 Initial motivation

According to the student survey (see Table 1), the most popular reasons for enrolling on an ESOL course at the (pre)intermediate level was to improve their confidence when talking to local people (58.2%) and to help them to apply for a job (56.7%). All except one had chosen to enrol on the course for their own reasons, indicating a degree of autonomy

linked to the long- and short-term goals they had already set. Of the 38 who chose ‘To apply for a job or better job’, 30 were unemployed, highlighting that even at the higher levels, they were unable to find employment in England.

| Initial_Motivation ^a | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
|---------------------------------|------------|---------------|------------------|
| | N | Percent | |
| Confidence_With_Locals | 39 | 15.2% | 58.2% |
| Apply_For_Job | 38 | 14.8% | 56.7% |
| Independence | 29 | 11.3% | 43.3% |
| British_Uni_Future | 27 | 10.5% | 40.3% |
| Enjoy_Languages | 22 | 8.6% | 32.8% |
| Understand_Letters | 22 | 8.6% | 32.8% |
| Children_Homework | 18 | 7.0% | 26.9% |
| College_Future | 18 | 7.0% | 26.9% |
| British_Culture | 15 | 5.8% | 22.4% |
| British_Media | 10 | 3.9% | 14.9% |
| Make_Friends | 8 | 3.1% | 11.9% |
| Exam | 6 | 2.3% | 9.0% |
| Help_With_Job | 4 | 1.6% | 6.0% |
| Job_Centre_Sent | 1 | 0.4% | 1.5% |
| Total | 257 | 100.0% | 383.6% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Table 1: Survey initial motivation.

The respondents’ reasons for moving to the UK did not influence their motivation to join a class, with the only difference appearing in the responses of asylum seekers who chose ‘Learn about British Culture’ as joint top with ‘To be more confident when speaking to local people’, and for those who moved to the UK to study, ‘I enjoy learning languages’ was joint top with ‘To be more confident when speaking to local people’ and ‘To apply for a job or better job’. Unfortunately, as the response numbers were so low in these categories, the results cannot be relied upon for generalisability, but it does seem to imply that those seeking asylum may have high levels of extrinsic motivation to integrate and those moving for education may be more likely to be intrinsically motivated.

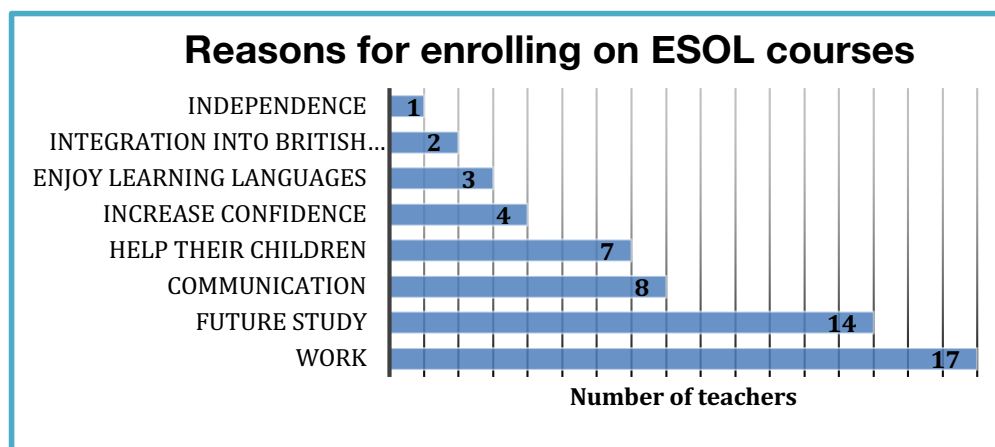


Figure 1: Teachers’ perceptions of student motivation

The reasons teachers suggested for students enrolling on their courses can be seen in Figure 1. Work and future study were the most popular responses, with teachers explaining the majority of their students plan to improve their economic status and social identity in the country. At the lower end of the response scale, ‘independence’ was only mentioned by one teacher, but this could be linked to increasing confidence, mentioned by four others. This was related to improving spoken English to communicate with local people and organisations more successfully, as Nida explained when talking about students accessing advice and guidance support in the college:

I think they can articulate themselves, very few students can't articulate so communication is not the first motive there, definitely improve communication is. So they think that yes, I can speak in English, but I want to speak better English. I want to be able to speak, for instance, to an English man or woman and be understood so if I speak better English, or if I'm able to write, like, kind of in a better way, I have a better chance of getting to uni. 90% of Entry Three [pre-intermediate] students are looking for jobs or they want to go on some kind of course. It's very rare there's a student who comes up to Entry Three and says, "Oh, I just want to learn the language". (Nida Interview)

Improving spoken English, either for independence or social reasons was mentioned by eight teachers who acknowledged the importance of providing opportunities to practise speaking in class. Increasing confidence, however, was only mentioned by four of the teachers, indicating that they did not think this was of huge concern to students at this level. For the students, independence was another popular response with 43.3% choosing this initial motivation, in contrast to only one teacher. Future employment and higher education were important for the students but confidence and independence, as Nida explained and as indicated through the student survey results, were required before their career goals could be achieved.

4.2 Factors affecting motivation during a course

Resilience or perseverance, whichever term is chosen, is the ability to continue in difficult circumstances. ESOL students, due to their lack of cultural capital and ability to self-advocate, are often living in difficult circumstances and face adversity in their daily lives, such as racial abuse, xenophobia, low confidence when speaking English and restricted access to employment. The ESOL classroom, therefore, should provide sanctuary. It should be a welcoming place where students are treated with respect and given the opportunity to practise English and improve their confidence with friends. From the interviews in this study, the traditional classroom setting, even when socially distancing, was exactly as described. Students forged friendships and offered peer support. Teachers encouraged the students to express their views in class and provided a range of opportunities to speak.

The resilience required to navigate a course during a pandemic, came through clearly from the teachers' interviews. Adversity appeared at the meso level, where the students' socio-economic status was acting as a barrier to learning, particularly for those living in poverty and attending online lessons, as Kieron described:

They're sat in busy households, crying children, children playing... And it could be as well that there's just like, there's just not that space. So I've got students that have their lesson on the stairs. Students have their lessons in their car, you know sort of sit outside. (Kieron Interview)

As can be seen here, students did not have the appropriate learning environments at home. Those who persisted with their language learning online were required to be resilient alongside their teachers who were trying to provide lessons that everyone could complete. As Carrie explained ‘...they are quite good, English wise, but not very many people have

that confidence using technology' so ESOL teachers were being relied upon to teach computer skills, often outside of class time. Enrolments declined at this time (National Statistics, 2022) supporting concerns about online course exclusion (Matulionienė & Pundziuvienė, 2017).

Students, nonetheless, at the micro level, discovered ways of using English via mobile apps, providing peer support, as Lucie described:

[In the] WhatsApp group for a class, they're sending recipes to each other. And you know, this shop is open and that one is selling toilet paper and some are just communicating. Which is good, well it's brilliant... I've had someone call me and say, "I'm sitting with another student at the moment and we have a question." So they are obviously working together. (Lucie Interview)

Friendships with classmates were promoting autonomy and increasing opportunities for authentic language use. Joanna also noticed her students' positive response to her encouragement of autonomous learning:

I said to them when we started, you know, "You're going to have to do a lot more work on your own" and they seem to really like the idea. So now they're sharing resources, they're finding videos online about gerunds and infinitives and sharing questions and answering each other's questions. (Joanna interview)

By respecting her students as adults who were able to take control of their learning and rely on past experiences of studying, motivation increased, despite the change in study space, supporting the work of Ushioda (2011). Their feeling of relatedness increased through peer support, and confidence in their language competence grew through teacher support.

5. CONCLUSION

Overall, there was a wide range of motivations for adult learners to enrol on ESOL courses at this level. Their desire for independence and increased confidence when speaking to local people showed a clear link to their need for competence, autonomy and relatedness (Deci and Ryan, 2008). Although future work and study were important, if the students do not feel able to take control of their learning, feel confident in their language abilities and feel part of a supportive, language community, their career goals will not be achieved.

The pandemic added an extra challenge for adults learning during this time. For those who persisted with their learning, they were required to learn new skills and access courses in difficult circumstances. Perhaps because of the resilience developed when making a new life in a new country, combined with the support received from teachers and peers, learners were able to continue learning.

Looking to the future, much can be learned from the experiences shared. Support from teachers and peers should not be discounted in relation to adult learners' motivation, even in 'normal' times. For language learners, access to local people should not be presumed and so opportunities to practise English with classmates, building friendships and support systems, should be encouraged. Adult learners are inherently autonomous and need to be treated as such; teachers need to understand the students' reasons for attending class and provide them with the space and support to achieve their goals as this will not only result in high levels of retention and achievement, but also student satisfaction.

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Crisis as a Window of Opportunity for Affirmative Action. Comparative Study from High, Middle and Low-Income Countries

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During the COVID crisis, the relevance of innovation, access (especially digital), and inclusion in education got highlighted specifically. Despite facing similar challenges and competing in an integrated global knowledge economy, different countries reacted differently because of the resources they had including finance, infrastructure, expertise and the like. Further, factors like political will influenced the implementation of such responses. This paper analyzes the global patterns of investment in education, comparing the education policies and financing of education in the high, middle and low-income countries by asking the questions: How has the investment in education varied after the COVID crisis in high, middle and low-income countries and why? The paper uses Schuetze's (2009) framework, policy analysis and comparative approach to analyze the policies and data regarding the investments in education. Statistics from key international organizations, especially the OECD, the World Bank, the UNESCO and the IMF are used.

KEYWORDS: Policy change, sustainability, high, middle, and low-income countries, affirmative action, window of opportunity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Policy changes are not an easy process. They take time, resources and most important of all, they require consensus from relevant stakeholders who may take very long or even never agree for a certain change. However, no matter how unwanted, crisis situations offer windows of opportunity for such changes in a short duration. The reason is that they highlight the concerns that are otherwise not taken seriously or are pushed down the policy priority agenda in normal times. The Covid crisis was such a crisis which highlighted the need for redefining sustainability and reconsidering the role of state for affirmative action all over the globe.

Since the financial crisis in 2007-08, employability has acquired the agenda of education policies as a *global norm* (Singh & Ehlers, 2020). Countries have been racing through effective use of resources for education, creating possibilities for those that could equip themselves with better skills. In this phase, the high-skilled have been given advantage over the low-skilled and the younger over the older, irrespective of equity and marginalization (Singh, Schmidt-Lauff & Ehlers, 2022).

During the COVID crisis, the relevance of innovation, access (especially digital), and inclusion in education got highlighted specifically. Despite facing similar challenges and competing in an integrated global knowledge economy, different countries reacted differently because of the resources they had including finance, infrastructure, expertise and the like. Further, factors like political will influenced the implementation of such responses. This paper analyzes the global patterns of investment in education, comparing the education policies and financing of education in the high, middle and low-income countries by asking the questions: How has the investment in education varied after the COVID crisis in high, middle and low-income countries and why?

Schuetze (2009) categorizes the stakeholders who pay for education as: 1. State; 2. Private Providers; 3. Collective Groups/ associations; and 4. Individuals and their families (Schuetze 2009). The paper uses Schuetze's (2009) framework, policy analysis and comparative approach to analyze the policies and data regarding the investments in education.

Statistics from key international organizations, especially the OECD, the World Bank, the UNESCO and the IMF are used. In general, education policies tend to achieve comparatively better quality of education and human capital to promote economic outcomes and development (Bowrin, 2013; Elbasir & Siddiqui, 2018). However, compromises with equity in terms of resource allocation by the state for education is quite common due to political considerations (Johnson, 2011; Bowrin, 2013).

Stakeholders bargain for public funding and those who are already marginalized often stay at the receiving end (Johnson, 2011). World Bank data confirms that this is a general trend and shows that more resources, especially as the income of countries goes down, are allocated to the better-off rather than the poorer ones (World Bank 2021). Thus, out of the total public spending, the poorest receive less benefits as compared to the rich in low-income countries. In high-income countries, the balance is a little better, yet not perfect (Fig. 1).

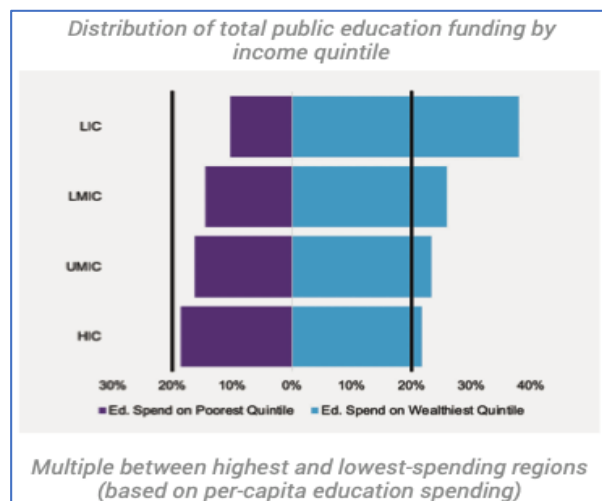


Fig. 1. Public education spending is unequal (UNESCO, UIS & the World Bank, 2021: 14).

The EU marked it clearly after the financial crisis (2007-08 crisis) that investment in quality education was necessary for development and had the potential to deal with all kinds of crises situations (Eurydice, 2013). Thus, after the COVID crisis the EU insisted on not only increasing but also reallocating the funding in favor of bridging the gaps that became apparent during the crisis (European Commission 2022). The member states are still to implement the mentioned change. Data shows that most public funding increased in high-income countries (UNESCO, UIS & the World Bank 2022; see figure 2).

| | Global | | HIC and UMIC | | LMIC and LIC | |
|---|--------|------|--------------|------|--------------|-------|
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 |
| Total education spending | | | | | | |
| Change in education spending (%) | 6.7 | 1.9 | 2.9 | 3.5 | 11.5 | 0.0 |
| Share of countries decreasing education spending from previous year (%) | 27.7 | 50.8 | 22.2 | 58.3 | 34.5 | 41.4 |
| Average decrease in countries that decreased their spending from previous year (pp) | -7.9 | -8.2 | -8.7 | -5.1 | -7.2 | -13.5 |
| Average increase in countries that increased their spending from previous year (pp) | 12.4 | 12.4 | 6.2 | 15.6 | 21.4 | 9.6 |
| Education's share of the total spending | | | | | | |
| Average change in percentage points from previous year | 0.3 | -1.0 | -0.1 | -0.8 | 0.8 | -1.2 |
| Average share (%) | 15.2 | 14.3 | 13.8 | 13.0 | 17.0 | 15.9 |

Total number of countries (N) = 65 (LIC & LMIC = 29, UMIC & HIC = 36).

Note: Changes are expressed in real terms (see technical note for details).

Source: Own estimates using the World Bank BOOST database, as of May 11, 2022.

Fig. 2: Change in spending on Education in high, middle, and low-income countries (UNESCO, UIS & the World Bank, 2022, p. 05).

OECD data about high-income countries shows that even though the situation is comparatively better than the low and the middle-income countries, much needs to be done in relation to the low-paid, low-skilled, unemployed and older adults (Fig. 3).

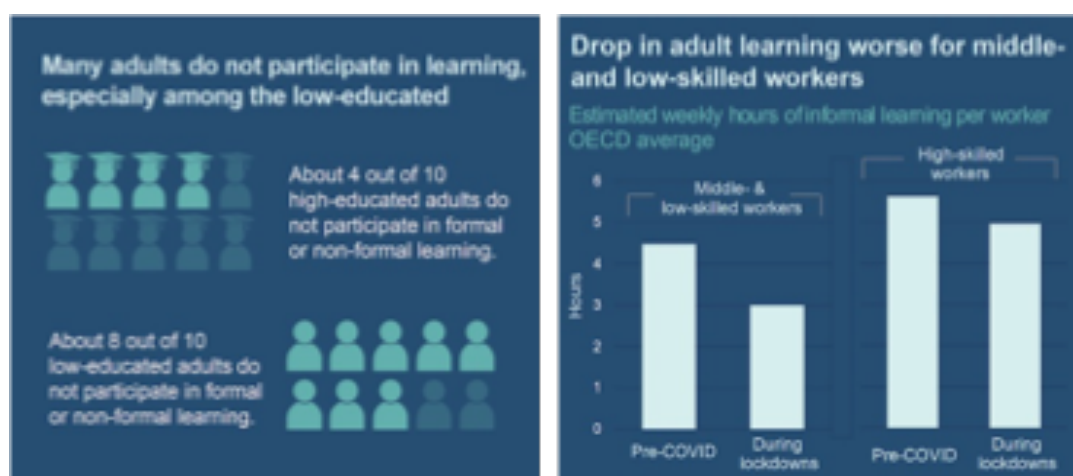


Fig. 3: Data regarding participation of adults in learning (OECD, 2021, p. 1).

The proportion of low-educated adults is comparatively half the number of high-educated adults regarding participation in formal and non-formal learning offers in OECD countries. During lockdowns, the situation became worst as informal learning¹ of middle and low-skilled workers reduced significantly (reduced by about one-third time) as compared to that of the high-skilled workers (reduced by about less than 10% only) (OECD 2021).

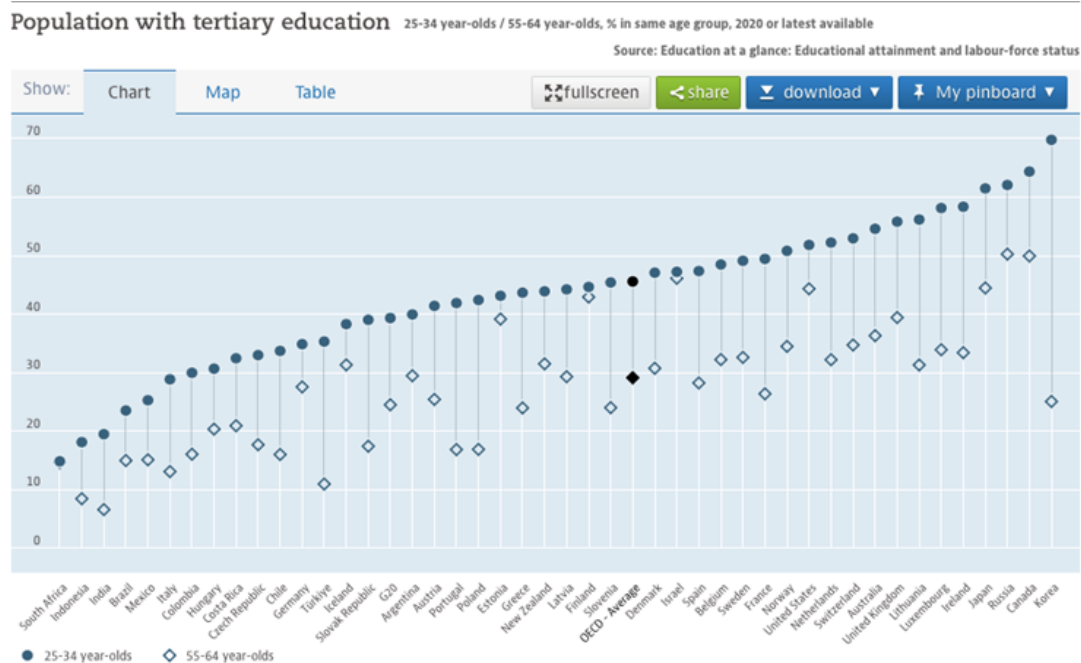


Fig 4: Population with Tertiary Education. Source: OECD (n.d.)

Further, OECD data shows that most of these low-educated, low-skilled adults are between 55-64 years of age, closer to retirement and therefore chances for their hiring might be further reduced. However, this is less promising not only for their individual lives but also for the state with the responsibility for social security back-ups. In low and middle-income countries, funding rather went down (UNESCO et al., 2022; see Fig. 4) which is concerning, especially because in countries with lower income, households (individuals and their families) pay a large part of the costs as compared to other stakeholders.

Current data suggests no change in this situation and in fact points out that the situation might have worsened as households lost their income during the crisis and needed to adapt to technological change involving more investments (for e.g., personal equipment for digital learning). In fact, the prospects look bleak in the coming decade with the rising level of learning poverty, especially in the low and middle-income countries to 70 per cent now (World Bank, 2022).

Further, even when the resources will be available, their use would be done by individuals towards education with *apparently higher rate of returns* rather than what is better for the society as a whole in the long run. The vulnerability of the low-paid, low-skilled, older and unemployed during the crisis to keep up with the investments and the decline and reallocation of funding from other stakeholders due to sudden change in priorities for addressing emergencies (Boeren, Roumell & Roessger, 2020; European Commission, 2020; Shibata, 2020; UIL, 2020; OECD, 2021a; b; UNESCO, UNICEF & World Bank 2021; Sutton, 2022) is going to push them towards further marginalization. Thus, the already increasing Matthew Effect (Singh & Ehlers, under publication) appears to have further possibilities for expansion with the reallocation and decline of resources ignoring additional affirmative action.

¹ Please note that measurement of informal learning is done by the OECD according to specific parameters, widely criticized but without working alternatives yet.

2. DISCUSSION

The Covid crisis has highlighted the need for prioritizing affirmative action in favor of the low-paid, low-skilled, unemployed and the older adults in general and in high-income countries in particular. In case of low and middle-income countries, it has shown that the need for developing better cost-sharing models is indispensable. The state has been slowly withdrawing from its actions in favor of the social partners in the high-income countries. In the low and middle-income countries, the market approach is becoming more predominant with individuals and their families left to pay for education.

Since the state has a macro approach compared to the social partners, the market stakeholders and the individuals, its shrinking role appears to have severe consequences for those who are lagging. In the last decade, owing to the prioritization of employability and the so-called effective use of resources, favoring the high-skilled and actively participating ones is becoming the core target group everywhere.

There is a need for affirmative action to ensure that reallocations and higher investments do not lead to the further marginalization of those who are already lagging in the mainstream process of development, for instance the low-paid, the low-skilled and older adults. Gaps highlighted by the COVID crisis point towards the need for broadening the understanding about sustainability in policy terms and developing indicators that reflect this broader understanding in a concrete manner. The post-COVID policies might promote innovation, access and inclusion owing to the way the current understanding about sustainability has proven insufficient during the crisis.

3. CONCLUSION

The Covid crisis has opened a window of opportunity for policy change in favour of a more affirmative role of state to balance the taking-over of education investments by social partners and/or market. This further points towards the need to rethink and redefine sustainability with stronger components of inclusion and equity instead of effective use of resources for higher economic outcomes and employability. The lesson from the financial crisis of 2007-08 seems to have not been completely learnt in the sense that most countries did not take affirmative action for the low-paid, low-skilled, older adults and the unemployed. This absence of action clashes with the policy recommendations of key international organizations like the OECD, the EU, the World Bank and the UNESCO. The window of opportunity was not used enough which illustrates that the political will of governments and relevant stakeholders has been weak in relation to adult learning and education. The aftermath of the Covid crisis has thus demonstrated the lack of relevant insight among governments and relevant stakeholders which needs to be addressed before it is too late.

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Transitions in the Policies for the Education of Adults. Comparing the Funding Regimes in Denmark and Slovenia

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Abstract - This study of policy designs in the education of adults (hereafter EA) is focusing upon the funding possibilities for the achievement of Lifelong Learning for All. Comparison of the transitions in Denmark and Slovenia is the core of the study. It discusses the difference between the policy designs adopted in the 1970s and in the 2010s.

KEYWORDS: Funding regimes, nation-building, path dependency, policy design, social partners, vocationalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study of policy designs in the education of adults (hereafter EA) is focusing upon the funding possibilities for the achievement of Lifelong Learning for All. Comparison of the transitions in Denmark and Slovenia is the core of the study. It discusses the difference between the policy designs adopted in the 1970s and in the 2010s. Denmark and Slovenia represent two contrasting contexts in relation to social, economic and political parameters. They have over time implemented very different policy designs but are both committed to the policy goal Lifelong Learning for All. While in Denmark, the current policy design is predominated by tripartite negotiations, the state plays a predominant role in the Slovenian policy process. Historically too, Denmark was in the 1970s coordinating policy formulations with the Nordic Council of Ministers while Slovenia was a member of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Both are members of the EU and the OECD and the participation rate in EA is high (over the EU-27 average). The participation of adults with low qualifications has for decades been a policy goal for in Denmark and in Slovenia.

Both countries are eager to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, *Lifelong Learning for All*. Despite a similar objective, therefore, they have developed policy designs which are completely different. While Denmark has integrated EA into the education system per se, Slovenia has organized a special sector for EA. Denmark dropped the state-led model existing in the 1970s in favour of a model where the social partners and the market are playing a predominant role, Slovenia has done vice-versa. From the model of the 1970s where “self-managing” social partners organized EA, it relied in the 2010s upon a state-led model. How can these contradictory transitions be explained?

The hypothesis is that an examination of the funding regimes over time can explain why the policy designs were revised. The authors claim that researchers will get a better picture of a certain policy design if they decide to “follow the funding”. Therefore, the leading research question is: What were the linkages between the chosen policy designs and the contextual factors in the Danish and the Slovenian case? In other words: The authors want to examine the socio-economic realities behind the revisions of policy designs. The situation in the 1970s was that both countries were industrializing their economies, while in the 2010s Denmark and Slovenia were as EU member states striving to become knowledge economies.

1.1. Lifelong education was a policy goal in the 1970s

Several international organizations recommended Lifelong Education in the 1960s and the 1970s. The recommendations from the UNESCO world conferences in 1960 (in Montreal) and in 1972 (in Tokyo) influenced a number of countries in Europe where the development of a specific sector for EA came on the policy agenda. However, the two oil crises combined with unemployment meant limited progress. The national governments in Europe were not willing to make sufficient investments. Proposals from international organizations as Recurrent Education (OECD 1973) and Paid Education Leave (ILO 1974) remained proposals in most of Europe.

However, the political will in Denmark and in Slovenia (embedded in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) was strong in relation to EA already before the oil crises. Both countries adopted laws in the late 1950 which supported EA and regular reforms were implemented shortly afterwards. But the funding regimes were different: The Danish state was per tradition the main funder, while Slovenia focused upon EA funded and organized by the local social partners (Ehlers 2009, Krajnc 1981).

1.2 Lifelong Learning was a policy goal in the 2010s

Denmark had joined the EEC in 1973 but the policies for EA were for decades coordinated with the other Nordic countries. Slovenia got independence in 1991 and became an EU member state in 2004. The European Commission implemented from 2007 the Lifelong Learning Programme which caused a flow of EU recommendations because the EU vision was to develop national lifelong learning systems based on integration. The European Social Funds meant that supplementary funding became available (Ehlers, 2009; 2013; Mikulec, 2021).

A Further Education System for Adults was adopted by Denmark in 2000 and EA was hereafter integrated into the national education system. The sector for EA declined: the Directorate for non-formal education of adults (Folkeoplysning) and the Development Center for EA were abolished. The provisions were now market-led and the Danish state reduced its role to monitoring (Ehlers, 2009; Rasmussen, Cort, & Larson, 2019).

The opposite happened in Slovenia after its independence. Funding of EA was allocated to the budgets for the Ministries for Labour and for Education, the Slovenian Institute for EA was established, the universities developed programmes for andragogy as well as a scientific journal for andragogical studies. Special laws for EA were adopted by the Parliament in 1996 and in 2018 (Mikulec, 2021).

The funding regimes in the 2010s differed much. Denmark promoted a demand-driven model, where private and public providers competed on a market for educational services. The main funding was now coming from collective training funds administrated by the social partners, and the state was only monitoring the system (Rasmussen, et al., 2019). In contrast: The Slovenian state was governing a specific sector for EA and the funding was mainly coming from the EU. 76% of the funding was in 2017 coming from the European Social Funds. That is: The Ministries for Labour and for Education covered only 24% of the costs (Mikulec ,2021). It seems fair to state that the funding regime in Slovenia was supply-driven.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Policy design is a key concept in the study. The application of the concept is based on an article by May (May, 2012). The concept path dependency (Pierson, 2000) is used in the discussion. Three organizational models (state-led, social partner-led and market-led) are the core in the conceptual framework (Green, 2000). The comparisons are based on a macro-level analysis based on three dimensions: 1) space (geography), 2) time (history), and 3) political level (society).

2.1. The Danish case: The 1970s compared with the 2010s

EA was in the 1970s a matter for the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor. The Ministry of Education funded a decentralized model where the municipalities facilitated part time general education organized by local NGOs. The legal Framework was the guidelines in the 1968 law about leisure education (Ehlers, 2009). The Ministry for Labor governed the 1960 law about non-formal education of un-skilled workers. New public vocational schools were established in all parts of the country offering courses lasting one week or more. That is: Un-skilled workers in the private sector were able to get shorter paid education leave in the day hours. The target group was later expanded to include skilled workers and employees in the public sector. The Danish state covered all cost until the late 1990s (Pedersen, Andresen & Lassen, 2012).

The 10 Point Program for the future EA, adopted by the Danish Parliament in 1984, maintained the dividing line between general and vocational education. However, a number of reforms adopted in the 1990s meant the two strands began to melt together (vocationalization). The change was finalized with the 2000 law about a Further Education System for Adults which was meant for formal EA only (Ehlers, 2009). The law on non-formal leisure EA was revised several times, the public funding cut much down, and the monitoring moved from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry for Cultural Affairs (Rasmussen et al., 2018).

Actually, Denmark had then implemented policy goals which were formulated in the 1970s: Recurrent education (OECD, 1973) and paid education leave (ILO, 1974). These innovations were now possible because the funding regime had been revised: The social partners took the lead through the new collective education funds. The EA was now based on demand from enterprises and individuals while the social partners were administrated the funding of the whole system, including paid education leave. The Danish state was only monitoring (Singh & Ehlers, under publication). The Danish market for EA expanded fast and the participation rate became one of the highest in the EU (European Commission, 2020).

2.2 The Slovenian case: The 1970s compared with the 2010s

The General Law on Education (1958) was the legal framework for the establishment of a sector for EA and already in the 1960s was education regarded already as a lifelong process (the UNESCO approach). The political vision in Yugoslavia was to decentralize the administration and make education a right but also a duty for the workers. “Self-management” of all units in the society was the core in this vision. Work and labour should be linked together for the benefit of the workers and the industrialization (recurrent education). A professor in andragogy stated that the federal approach included “freeing education from the guardianship of the state” (Savicevic, 1979). In other words: The social partners were supposed to organize and fund the efforts.

Slovenia was having a decentralized sector EA based on People’s and Workers Universities, special schools for adults and education centers within the enterprises (Mikulec, 2021). The participation of adults was considerably high in the midst of the 1970s and a Slovene study showed that in a sample of about half a million employees, about 30% joined education. The self-management groups running the enterprises were authorized to give workers paid educational leave and to fund their leave from the workplace through the income of the enterprises. EA was regarded as “a contribution to production, an investment which creates wealth in a knowledge-based society” (Krajnc, 1981 & 1985).

The economic crisis in the 1970s hit Yugoslavia very hard and the rate of unemployment was doubled between 1970 and 1986. Actually, 14% of the labor force had left the republic by 1986 (Soljan, 1991). But the Slovenian youth did not suffer much from unemployment (Woodward 1995). Slovenia, the richest and most industrialized country within Yugoslavia was having a strong tradition for vocational education of young people. However, the Yugoslavian federation

decided to strengthen the vocationalization efforts more: A law about “career-oriented education” was adopted in 1980 and implemented in all parts of Yugoslavia. This meant for secondary education that all general-type education was “vocalionalized”: The graduated were prepared for a direct integration into the labor market (Bacevic, 2014). A number of report from the OECD evaluated the outcomes (Soljan, 1991). The consequence was that EA was integrated into the vocationalized education for youth. EA per se disappeared (Krajnc, 1985). But only for a decade.

Slovenia got independence and the policy design was again revised: The career-oriented education of youth was abolished, and traditional secondary education was re-introduced (Bacevic, 2014). The 1996 law about EA referred to “lifelong education” (the UNESCO approach) while the 2018 law used the term “lifelong learning” (the EU approach). Slovenia was now orienting itself towards the policy formulations released by the European Commission. This is obvious from a reading of the Slovene policy documents and also documented through interviews with experts. The national funding regime for EA was mainly based on the European Social Funds and was therefore much influenced by the conditions specified by the European Commission (Mikulec, 2021). The participation rate became high (over average in EU-27) (European Commission, 2020).

3. DISCUSSION

EA in Denmark was in the 1970 funded by the state. There was more focus upon general education than vocational which can be explained as a path dependency related to the Danish folk high school tradition. The policy design was based upon a sector approach. A transition occurred in the 2010s: The policy goal was now to develop a competitive knowledge economy. EA was for this reason integrated into the national education system. The system approach was combined with a shift from supply to demand.

The self-managing social partners in Slovenia were in the 1970s organizing and funding a decentralized system. Their focus was upon the demand as expressed by the individuals and the enterprises. Vocational education had a high priority per tradition (path dependency). The career-oriented law integrated EA into a system which was meant as an instrument to fight the threat from the rising unemployment and to boost the industrialization. The Slovenian independence caused a fundamental revision of the policy designs which had been developed by Yugoslavia. A sector for EA was established by the state and general education was again appreciated.

It is evident that the Danish policy design shifted from a state-led model to a market-led model. This meant a change from supply to demand. While the state pulled back from its predominant position in Denmark, it gained a predominant position in Slovenia.

Table 1: Typology of policy choices for the Education of Adults in Denmark and Slovenia (as a part of the former Yugoslavia till 1991) during the 1970s-2010s

| Period | Denmark | Slovenia (as part of former Yugoslavia till 1991) |
|--------|----------------------------------|---|
| 1970s | State-led sector (Supply-based) | Social partner-led system (Demand-based) |
| 2010s | Market-led system (Demand-based) | State-led sector (Supply-based) |

Source: Created by authors and based on Green (2000).

The two countries were in the 1970s industrializing their economies. But the need for supplementary funding was apparently more urgent in Yugoslavia which may explain the model with social partner-led demand. The Danish policy design which was having a focus upon general education was traditional, and the Yugoslavian was not. A policy design based on the social partners and with a focus upon vocational education was radical.

The need for mobilization of non-state resources was urgent for both countries in the 2010s. Denmark and Slovenia had as EU member states adopted the Lisbon strategy for knowledge economy in order to be competitive worldwide. The Danish policy design based on a system approach was radical: The social partners provided supplementary funding and were made responsible for the administration. The Slovenian policy design based on a sector approach was traditional. This can be explained as a nation-building policy. However, there was supplementary funding available in the European Social Funds which was administrated by the Slovene state.

4. CONCLUSION

The policy goal Lifelong Learning for All was in both cases influencing the policy designs. Denmark was in the 2010s mobilizing funding for EA through the social partners while Slovenia used the European Social funds in order to be able to fund EA. A consequence of the revised policy designs is that the provisions in Denmark became demand-driven and supply-driven in Slovenia. The revisions of the policy design (and the funding regimes) can be explained as a result of path dependency: Denmark was having a tradition for giving influence to the social partners and this was also the approach in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. However, a sector for EA was relevant for Slovenia as a new nation state. Mapping the revisions of the funding regimes provide significant insights to the rationale behind policy designs. A key factor in comparative studies of EA can thus be to follow the funding.

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Radicalization and Violent Extremism Prevention. A Socio-Pedagogical Approach

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Abstract - In the last years, educational theories have been used to redefine the field of radicalization prevention, shifting the focus from a macro and security approach to the study of contextual and micro situations (Bailey, Edwards, 2017; Caramellino, Melacarne, Ducol, 2022). The main goal of this PhD research is to study how it is possible to use educational practices to prevent radicalization and violent extremism. The focus is on primary prevention and the approach based on socio-pedagogical concepts is used also as a guide to interpret the processes that lead to radicalization.

KEYWORDS: Radicalization, violent extremism, prevention, education.

1. BACKGROUND: RADICALIZATION AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM PREVENTION

It has been estimated that more books were published on the subject of radicalization leading to terrorism in the five years following the September 11, 2001, attacks than in the 50 previous years combined (Silke, 2008), and that the use of the term ‘radicalization’ in English-language press more than doubled between 2005 and 2006 (Sedgwick, 2010). On the one hand, this growth on the number of studies is understandable, but on the other hand it has increased the risk of producing research based on cognitive and methodological biases. It has also stimulated in many cases meta-stereotypes (Komen, Can der Pligt, 2016). The concept of radicalization has led to the construction of Muslim populations as ‘suspect communities’, and sometimes has led also to civil rights abuses (Kundnani, 2012).

The tendency to confine radicalization into the religious (and most of all Islamic) sphere has left aside the possibility of studying the several precursory phenomena of radicalization from an educational perspective. In the last years, the focus of this field of study has been shifted from macro-readings of the processes of political, cultural and religious radicalization to the study of contextual and micro situations (Bailey, Edwards, 2017; Caramellino, Melacarne, Ducol, 2022).

Although radicalization has increasingly been subjected to scientific studies, a universally accepted definition of the concept is still to be developed. It is not the intention here to discuss the definition of the term, but some clarification is needed. First of all, as Schmid (2013) affirms, radicalization is related to advocating any kind of sweeping change in society, since the status quo seems to be unacceptable, but the means advocated to bring system-transforming radical solution may be non-violent and democratic or violent and non-democratic.

Moreover, under an educational lens, radicalization is seen as the result of formal and informal socialization that produces a sense of belonging and recognition, along with meaning perspectives that become rigid and impermeable to debate, dialectics and evolution over time (Fabbri & Romano, 2021). As it will be exposed in the following paragraphs, this is where social-pedagogical approaches to radicalization primary prevention may play an extremely important role.

1.1. Socio-pedagogical approaches to radicalization and violent extremism prevention

Addressing some of the underlying factors that can lead to radicalization and violent extremism and role that education might take in helping to repel or mitigate the attractiveness of violent extremist ideology and actions is a central issue and a key concern for governments and agencies around the world (Upton & Grossman, 2019). Education is considered as

one of the main paths to prevent radicalization from occurring or developing further, since it is known that it can play a key role in the behavior and beliefs of individuals (Sas et al, 2020).

In the last decades there has been an increase in the number of young people becoming involved with violent extremist networks throughout the world. Along with this increase has come a debate regarding the appropriate role of education and educational institutions in countering violent extremism (CVE). A recent development has been to bring together the notions of Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and CVE under the single banner of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE). Violent extremism is not confined to particular religions, nations, cultures, or ideologies - and is constantly evolving and changing. Therefore, efforts aimed at P/CVE need to evolve in order to address the most pressing threats of violent extremism as well as their root causes (Pistone et al, 2019).

Most authors agree that purely security approaches are not helpful to prevent radicalization and may even be counter-productive. The British program “Prevent”, first established in schools in 2006 is a negative example used widely in literature (Thomas, 2020). The program has been considered deeply problematic because it has targeted Muslims and has been considered Islamophobic. It has placed undue attention, fear, and stress on a population that already faces marginalization. Some of the pitfalls of Prevent include encouraging a fear and surveillance-based culture that further stigmatizes Muslims over-emphasizing Muslim-based extremism over other forms of radicalization such as right-wing extremism and ignoring community-based initiatives. Other countries in the Western world have also used securitized views toward Muslim populations and teachers have also been involved in surveillance roles through the program, and this role has had negative repercussions (Novelli, 2017; Shirazi, 2017; Sjøen & Jore, 2019; Azqueta and Merino-Arribas, 2020). In the systematic review published by Brouillette-Aallarie and colleagues (2022), it is underlined quite clearly that programs that target a specific ethnic or religious group generate more negative/iatrogenic effects than benefits.

The major social-pedagogical approaches focus on developing cognitive resources and on promoting or strengthening values in order to prevent individuals from being drawn toward violent extremist ideologies or groups (Stephens, Sieckelinck & Boutellier, 2021). Current evidence suggests that most efforts to develop education interventions for the prevention of violent extremism tend to focus on promoting tolerance and understanding through citizenship education and the teaching of civic values (Aly, Taylor & Karnovsky, 2014). One of the most prominent roles ascribed to discussion in the literature is creating the space and opportunity for the exploration and critique of ideologies. It is suggested that censoring or avoiding discussion around controversial issues means there is no opportunity to challenge or alter “extreme” views. Therefore, attention is given to the environment required for such dialogue, referring to the need for safety to explore and discuss issues without fear of condemnation (Stephens, Sieckelinck & Boutellier, 2021). It is emphasized also by many authors, such as Taylor and colleagues (2017), the need to promote dialogue, cultural hybridity, restorative justice, critical digital literacy, critical thinking, as well as human rights in order to prevent radicalization and violent extremism.

A recent scoping review published by Pistone and colleagues (2019) has shown that, in general, there is a lack of evidence-based interventions within the field of P/CVE. More specifically, out of the 112 publications included in the review, only 15 publications were primary studies supported by empirical data and only two publications measured the comparative effectiveness of specific interventions. The results of the few empirical studies are though encouraging, as they imply that educational interventions increase knowledge about, and change attitudes towards, radicalization and violent extremism. Jamte and Ellefsen (2020) conclude that there is a discrepancy between the complexity identified in a vast amount of research and the tendency to simplify and generalize on the policy level creates challenges for public servants tasked with preventing radicalization and extremism in local communities.

2. THE RESEARCH

2.1. Aims

This research aims to contribute to the field of radicalization and violent extremism studies with a particular attention to socio-pedagogical approaches in primary prevention. Also known as universal prevention, it includes all kinds of activities developed with a general public, not considered particularly at risk. The approach based on socio-pedagogical concepts has been used as a guide to interpret the processes that lead to radicalization, and also to think about ways to prevent it.

2.2. Methodology

The first part of the research is based on a literature review, divided in two parts. Firstly, an analysis of radicalization and violent extremism studies have been made. Other concepts linked to radicalization have been considered, like polarization, misinformation and conspiracy theories, hate speech and incidents. On the second part, concepts that are used in primary prevention activities have been analyzed, such as critical thinking, resilience, pluralistic dialogue, empowerment and counter speech. Online databases such as ERIC, Torrosa, Scopus and Google Scholar have been used for this scope.

The empirical research was developed through a case study in Québec (Canada) from April until July 2022. This location was chosen because of its important radicalization prevention centers and also because of the Unesco Chair on Prevention of Radicalization and Violent Extremism. Created in the fall of 2017, the Chair aims to act as a center of excellence to develop, share and promote research and actions in the context of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of violent radicalization and extremism. It ensures close cooperation among researchers and communities of practice in a comparative, multidisciplinary and north-south perspective. The creation of the Unesco-Prev Chair is the result of a close partnership between Université de Sherbrooke, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM) and Concordia University.

2.2.1 Sampling

Since the main interest of this research is radicalization and violent extremism prevention practices, the interviews were focused on the subjects that idealize, organize and lead these activities. The sample has been composed of 38 interviewees - directors, coordinators and staff of the three Universities (Université de Sherbrooke, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM) and Concordia University) and also the chair's partners - Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV), Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence (CPN-PREV), Actions Interculturelles (AIDE), Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (MIGS), Recherche et Action sur les Polarisation Sociales (RAPS).

2.2.2 Interviews

The semi-structured interview track was built on three different thematic topics: 1) Working practices learning; 2) representations of the radicalization concept; 3) Prevention practices. To each topic a maximum of five open questions were defined.

The first part of the interview began with a brief description of studying and working experiences and ended with a question about a working critical episode. It is interesting to underline that the interviewees had extremely different studying paths – such as Pedagogy, Political Sciences, Statistics, Sociology, Psychology, Psychiatry, Anthropology, Law, Criminology, Communication. Not only the educational, but also the professional experiences of the subjects were quite

heterogeneous. Some of them had wide experience with violent radicalization and prevention, others were experts on the subject only through research and had never met any radicalized person. More than half of the sample have stated that they have learned to do what they do on the ground, through informal learning and through exchanges with more experienced colleagues or directors. Around one quarter of the sample was composed by PhD and post-doc candidates, who were whether doing research directly about radicalization or collaborating in projects on the subject.

Many of the interviewees have underlined the difference among violent and non-violent radicalization and some have cited Schmid's (2013) definition. The security approach and the first definitions of radicalization that were directed linked to religion and specifically to Islam were widely criticized. The importance of radical ideas through History to improve social conditions was brought up by some interviewees. Despite this apparent homogeneity, when questioned about the concepts they considered as linked to radicalization, more than half of the sample have named negative terms like "violence", "terrorism", "violent extremism", "harassment", "racism", "polarization".

One of the questions of the third part was about prevention activities' critical aspects. Some answers were in line with the scientific literature – for example, the lack of solid evidence on efficacy and on methodology. Some talked about the need of more collaboration among different institutions and stakeholders, the need to work on school's curriculum and also to introduce prevention in working spaces. Others reflected about the need to create context specific activities and also more experience based, instead of content-based practices, with more flexibility and with less assumptions. Furthermore, the need of the academic and the research worlds to be more open and to do more efforts to communicate with the community was brought up.

The interviewees were also asked about the most important capacities to promote in primary prevention activities. Critical thinking, pluralism, resilience, empathy, dialogue, digital literacy, understanding and accepting diversity and different opinions, and cognitive complexity were among the most cited.

Based on a preliminary data analysis, it is possible to observe that even if the sample was not extremely large and was composed mostly by people who in some way collaborate or at least know each other, the answers given were not homogeneous at all. In addition to different backgrounds and experiences, the interviewees had different ideas on the definition of radicalization and on the best ways to prevent it. This diversity of points of view is consistent with the scientific literature on the subject. This lack of homogeneity certainly adds value to the research, but at the same time represents a challenging situation.

3. CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review and on the field research about Unesco-Prev, it is possible to draw some primary conclusions. First of all, radicalization has been considered lately more associable to polarization and extremist positions than to terrorism. Some of the practitioners do not even use the term "radicalization" anymore and have substituted it with violent extremism and social polarization. Secondly, security and targeted approaches have been gradually replaced by educational and universal ones, that seem to be much more effective. More research still needs to be done on efficacy, but studies show that some pedagogical approaches contain results attesting to the effectiveness of improving protective factors against violent radicalization (Brouillette-Alarie et al, 2022). Lastly, a community approach that takes into consideration real needs of participants seem to have much more lasting and positive effects than top-down ones, in which the researchers think to have all the answers a priori.

Future research should focus on comparative analysis of prevention activities and on their efficacy in long term period. As it is suggested also by literature, mixed methods could add value to this kind of research, since qualitative and quantitative data can inform the researchers about different aspects of the process and of the results.

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Educational Support. Knowledge and Gestures in the Perspective of *Accompagnement*

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Abstract - The contribution aims to investigate the theme of educational support, through the *accompagnement* paradigm. At an exploratory survey level, it is proposed to deepen the educational concept of *accompagnement*, under the theoretical and epistemological aspects. To this end, the significance of this practice in adult education should be investigated to identify to what extent it can represent a relevant and effective practice within today's society. Referring to the complexity and frailty of educational work, it could be an opportunity to reflect on the educational work and to strengthen the educators' identity from a reflection on the meanings and the intertwining of knowledge and professional gestures. Theoretical exploration will open the field to new paths of empirical research in education.

KEYWORDS: Pedagogical support, *accompagnement*, educators, professional gestures.

1. THE PARADIGM OF ACCOMPAGNEMENT

The most significant studies on the theme of *accompagnement* are placed in the French area, starting from the mid-eighties, following a proliferation of this practice within multiple sectors and professional fields (Paul, 2004). Already at the beginning of the 1990s, it was a central element in the field of social work, of vocational training and adult education (Biasin, 2010). In the paper, it was decided to use the French term *accompagnement*, as specific to a form of educational support that does not find a similar equivalent in English.

The perspective of *accompagnement* offers a significant paradigmatic change because it indicates the passage "from a conception of the individual as an anonymous object [...] to his consideration as person, subject, actor" of his life projects (Paul, 2007, p. 256, auth. Trans). *Accompagnement* is understood as a relational process in which a person takes advantage of another whom they are close to and encourages formative and transformative processes, in view of the definition of existential planning and mutual humanization itineraries (Paul, 2004).

The *accompagnement* gives centrality to the person who is accompanied, recognizing his/her active participation and responsibility in the choices of life. The transition phases, as well as the ordinary critical situations, require the subject to draw on the resources and skills available in the family, social and relational sphere. At the heart of this process, there are modalities of intervention which aim to promote reflexivity and to design the future, facing change.

The process of *accompagnement*, also asks the professionals involved to make their own posture marked according to the logic of recognition (Ricoeur, 2005), of going towards and walking alongside. The professional assumes a style that encourages a problematizing vision; the growth of awareness; the conquest of autonomy. It is a constant stimulus of reflection on practice, and it offers a conceptual framework through which to evaluate and make intelligible the educational action.

Can we ask ourselves how the social context is involved in this change of paradigm and what are the consequences on the educational services? Le Bouëdec (2002) believes that the *accompagnement* represents a "Signe de temps" related to a "mutation de civilisation". It originates from the post-modern socio-political system, in an attempt to respond to some specific needs of the person and society. This practice intertwines the process of individualization, with its subjective responsibility and the task of being fully realized, and the process of solidarity (Bec & Procacci, 2003).

In traditional society, references were established by an external authority and were imposed on everyone without prejudice. In post-modernity, there are no longer predetermined patterns. Complexity and the 'liquid' modern world

(Baumann, 2000) require the subject to construct and choose their own principles and values. In this way, a shift from a collective to an individual regulation is implemented.

However, sometimes the person requires support to cope with the needs for repositioning that challenges pose, to analyse situations and to find appropriate tools or strategies. *Accompagnement* is an effective tool in the field of adult education, as it restores centrality to the subject and urges change, through training and self-training. This vision improves the transition from a logic of assistance-oriented interventions to a logic of personalization, which aims for the development of reflexivity; in the acquisition of meta-skills; in the promotion of transformative learning and social growth. The person, through participation and awareness, is responsible for the choices they make in their life, in a horizon of real possibilities of decision-making and action. According to the perspective of empowerment (Bacharach, 1993), the *accompagnement* encourages responsibility and expands spaces of opportunity. In this way, it moves from the idea of a potential for "personal development" to the idea of the "development of competence" (Paul, 2010, p. 147, auth. Trans).

2. THE PARADOXES OF ACCOMPAGNEMENT

The conceptual framework just presented allows us to understand how *accompagnement* is one of the possible forms of educational support in which the prevailing logic is that of integration. In fact, it looks at the globality of the human person beyond the risk of a fragmented and sectoral view. This process also changes the perception of the educational professions. In a complex society, the temptation may be to adhere uncritically to the professional habits and cultures of the service of belonging; or, conversely, to avoid precariousness, relying on hyper-specialization (Palmieri, 2018). In this way, the technique becomes an element of strength for the professional, because the proceduralism and the stimulus-response process contribute to identifying solutions that have been built to govern uncertainty.

Not infrequently, educational action unfolds between unpredictability and a plurality of concomitant critical factors, which involve flexibility and personal action. It is necessary to overcome the Myth of Stability, to which Schön (1983) refers, based on the logic of technical rationality or the standardization of interventions. It is urgent to reconfigure the relationship between theory and practice by recovering a reflective rationality which restores value to the experience and the dialogical relationship between people. The educator does not follow a linear, standardized logic, but a spiral logic of formation and *accompagnement*, which allows the design of adhocratic paths for and with the person.

Creating an educational relationship according to the paradigm of *accompagnement* means reconceptualizing the educational bond in "auto-normative terms" (Biasin, 2010, auth. Trans). A new way of thinking about training emerges, in which the professional walks alongside the person, sharing one's authority and power according to the logic of the alliance. This perspective allows to recognize, on the one hand, the competence of the person who accompanies (*augere*: to make us grow, to increase); on the other hand, the freedom of those who are accompanied and their role in the process of change (*auctor*: author, creator). The educator does not replace people, but he/she aims to strengthen them and to give them the lead. In the process of *accompagnement*, despite the diversification of approaches, the common denominator is an axiological orientation that supports the acceptance, in the perspective of Rogers' unconditional positive regard; the participation in the unveiling of meaning; the posture of standing alongside to confirm (Le Bouëdec et al., 2001).

This paradigm is not exempt from criticality. The lack of the ability to rely on the technique and the unpredictability in which the educational action unfolds undermine identity and professional recognition. "The result is a fragility of professional identity since trainers, who have no specific content to transmit, no longer know on what their professional skills and therefore their identity are based" (Paul, 2004, p. 89, auth. Trans).

Moreover, it is possible that the hierarchical mode is only weakened, concealed, or removed and that the *accompagnement* passes through the relational aspects to arrive at less noble purposes than those aimed at the autonomy

of the person (Paul, 2010). The educator has to examine his professional posture (Schwidt, 2017) and to be aware of the ethical dilemmas in education. Training focuses on the dialogical model of co-investment (Pineau & Le Grand, 1993), which implicates the logic of partnership, cooperation and co-education. This is a complex process, that requires reflection on one's practice; on one's relationship with others; on one's involvement and engagement; but also, on distance and closeness to others (Paul, 2004). *Accompagnement* emerges as a space of paradox: between self and other; person and society; the logic of the project and that of contract; emancipation and social control (Paul, 2007). A framework of "réflexivité critique partagée" (Le Goff, 2012) is required, which involve all the stakeholders and allows to grasp the resources and aspects that need to be monitored. The complexity of post-modernity therefore leads to problematize reality and to pursue paths of social integration.

3. KNOWLEDGE AND GESTURE OF ACCOMPAGNEMENT

At this point of reflection, we wonder how it is possible to investigate the *accompagnement*, a complex practice, substantiated by knowledge and actions not free from risks and paradoxes. Education is "a practical event, made of gestures and words, which, however, always arises from theoretical reflection and refers to it" (Iori, 2018, p. 24, auth. Trans). The practice needs to be based on a reference theory; while the theory finds validation and increases its effectiveness through a verification of the action in the field. The theory specifies "the sense of education, in accordance with a chosen anthropological conception"; it circumscribes the field of investigation of pedagogy in an epistemological horizon; it identifies "purposes congruent with the ideal of humanization chosen"; it elaborates models and methodologies useful to the educational work (Pati, 2003, pp. 231-232, auth. Trans). Practice can provide learning aimed at confirming or making more explicit educational thinking and understanding of the underlying meanings. Education is possible as long as the professional reaches a fruitful circularity and synthesis between theory and practice.

The educational work passes through daily and ordinary actions and practices (de Certeau, 1990), which are part of a wider planning and are imbued with intentionality. In the scientific and educational field, the idea is shared that for a professional it is essential to dwell on their own modes of action and reasoning (Vermersch, 2016), implementing awareness and skills. Reflecting on experience becomes an opportunity to develop their professionalism (Schön, 1983) and to find growth elements in the dimensions of knowledge, know how to do, know how to be, know how to be with.

In addition to a solid position (Cadei, 2017), it is therefore necessary for the educator to be available to work on themselves, to match their knowledge, acquired skills, personal and social attitudes with the concrete situations experienced and to the professional culture of the Educational Services. However, it is difficult to narrate the educational work and bring out the consistency and intelligibility of the educational action. At a superficial glance, in fact, the educator carries out actions typical of any adult with an educational task, substantiated by daily life and an attitude to the relationship. "The ordinary is little thought of as the axis of intervention in which the nodes of existence are bound and untied", despite the fact that the educator is the creator of circumstances that can produce concrete effects (Cadei & Padma, 2018, p. 88, auth. Trans).

It is then possible to try to focus on what is the *proprium* of the educational profession and action. Literature, particularly in the Francophone context, highlights the urgent need to revisit the opposition between "instrumentality" and "intentionality", in order to seek a fruitful interweaving and an interrelation between the two dimensions (Jorro, 1998). In education it is not a matter of dwelling on the "how", understood as a standardized and universal technique, but on the "why", on the intentionality underlying ordinary gestures.

An intrinsic link between knowledge and professional gestures is thus evident. They constitute the set of tools capable of forming in the sense of "giving shape", recalling "the meaning of artistic and artisanal doing, which cannot be separated

from knowledge of principles and methods" (Iori, 2018, p. 28, auth. Trans). The result is the search for a continuous interweaving between reflexivity and action, theory and practice, intentionality, and educational purposes.

In the practice of *accompagnement*, the educator should evaluate one's posture and educational action, to increase awareness about one's approach to the person to be accompanied, the strategies put in place, the tools and methodology used to achieve the aims and objectives of the educational project. The educator is not limited to researching educational techniques or tools, but he/she has to evaluate their own actions, in order to discern, in individual situations, the forms of support and *accompagnement* put in place.

In the perspective of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000), lingering on knowledge and professional gestures allows us to reflect on the practice of *accompagnement*, with its intentionality and the values that guide the action. It is therefore significant that educators investigate their own "repertoire" of knowledge and professional gestures, to bring out the underlying meanings and educational culture and to watch over the paradoxes of *accompagnement*.

4. PROFESSIONAL GESTURES AND EDUCATIONAL WORK

What has been asserted thus far leads us to understand how words and gestures are the instrument through which the aims of the educational project are pursued. If the reflection on knowledge in the educational work and on the role of the word seem to have found full diffusion in the pedagogical reflection (Pati, 1984), the field of educational gestures appears less explored. The term gesture (*gestus*) comes from the Latin *gerere*: bear, wield, perform. The Oxford English Dictionary presents a restricted sense of gesture as "a movement of the body or a part of it, intended to express a thought or feeling". In a figurative sense, instead, gesture is an "action undertaken in good will to express feeling". The etymology of the term refers to the fruitful interweaving of gesture, feeling, thought: the gesture is an action that involves a part of the body in view of a meaning (Cadei & Padma, 2018). The apparent "facticité" (Jorro, 1998) of the gesture reveals a relationship with the world and a way of being. The gaze tries to understand the gesture not simply as a movement aimed at the other, but as a message with its own purpose and intentionality. The register of observation is quickly superseded by that of interpretation, and it prompts reflexivity.

Investigating gestures in the practice of educational *accompagnement* makes it possible to grasp the consistency of educational action. But what are professional gestures? The definition seems complex. Professional gestures stem from reflection on action (Schön, 1983) and unfold in action (Jorro, 1998). With Jorro, we can consider that gestures convey an epistemology of action, an ethics of action, some knowledge in action that originate within educational practice and professional contexts. However, it is a question of understanding this deployment as a process and not as a result. Indeed, "when the process concerns the initiator of the gesture, the movement prolongs an intention, a way of being in relation with the world " (Jorro, 1998, p. 10, auth. Trans). Moreover, we can recognize how gestures are intimately connected with the biography of its authors.

In this perspective, gestures constitute a starting point for the construction of a professional posture, understood as the situation in which the professional acts, just as much as the attitude system he adopts in this exercise (Mulin, 2014). The professional posture speaks of a transition from interiority to externality, which is expressed in and through professional gesture (Lameul, 2016). In other words, the professional posture constitutes a knowledge in action, which contribute to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of actions. This work would lead not only to the recognition of how to act with others but also the effects of this act with others (Jorro, 2006).

We can therefore ask ourselves whether studying gestures and professional knowledge can be an added value for the delineation of a specific posture of education professionals. In addition, it is possible to question how the practice of *accompagnement* can be a propitious context in which to explore knowledge and professional gestures, with the

involvement of professionals themselves. It is a matter of lingering with the educators on the gestures put in place, tracing the intentionality and the underlying meanings. This is to evaluate the congruence between the project goals of the *accompagnement* path, the methodologies and the daily actions proposed in the educational work. The theoretical framework presented opens possible avenues for research. Reflection on professional gestures can lead to some cognitive gains. For the professional it is an invitation to examine in depth his action, increasing awareness and evaluating the effectiveness and relevance of such gestures within the wider project in which the practice is part. At the same time, it is a tool to bring out the meanings and to make the educational action intelligible. For the researcher it is a way to enter the practice of *accompagnement*, investigating those areas of dark light and others in which it is appropriate to continue to ensure that this practice does not turn into a device of a person's control or subjugation.

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Pre-placement Educational Preparation and Training for Adoptive Parents

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Abstract - The study of scientific literature and of the socio-cultural context about adoption reveal many unexplored areas in the interdisciplinary research, specifically regarding the pre-placement interventions and training. The research aims to inquire, in the context of family pedagogy, the help offered to couples who are approaching adoption. Empirical research involves some adoptive parents in semi-structured interviews. The analysis of collected data will provide some educational categories to clarify how the adoptive choice is structured and consolidated within the family life project; to outline educational peculiarities of adoptive family; to promote preparation and educational support for adoptive parenting.

KEYWORDS: Adoption, pre-placement preparation, training, adoptive parenting, educational support.

1. BACKGROUND

Over the last few years adoption has undergone significant changes. In particular, the number of intercountry adoptions in Italy has decreased drastically from 2012 to-date (Ministero della Giustizia, 2021). It is important to consider that the Covid-19 pandemic has also slowed down adoptions. Despite this situation, Italy represents the second receiving country in the world, after the United States, in the number of intercountry adoptions.

Although extensive international interdisciplinary literature on adoption is available, studies reveal many unexplored areas, specifically regarding pre-placement preparation and training (Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010; Dance & Farmer, 2014; Lee et al., 2018). There are also few contributions coming from the educational area (Pati, 1999; Bandini, 2007, 2012).

Preparation for adoptive parenthood has long been considered an essential prerequisite and guidance, as the Hague Adoption Convention, with regard to prospective parents' eligibility to adopt. However, "despite the importance of adoption in creating permanency for youth and these legal mandates, the preparation provided to adoptive parents is often lacking" (Lee et al., 2018, p. 63). The training is also necessary with regards to adoptees and their needs. The changing trend in adoptions regards the issue of special needs children. This category includes children who present at least one of the following elements: behavioural problems or severe traumatic experiences (abuse, ill-treatment, abandonment, long period of institutionalization); mental or physical disability; age over seven years; groups of brothers/sisters (The Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2005, 2008, 2015).

The complexity which emerges from analysis of the socio-institutional environments highlights the urgency to support families, offering adequate pre-adoption preparation and suitable support in post-adoption. Support is here understood, in the perspective of *accompagnement*, as a relational process in which personal research takes advantage of another who is close to and encourages formative and transformative processes, in view of the definition of existential planning and mutual humanization itineraries (Paul, 2004).

2. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Family pedagogy is queried with regard to the changes affecting today's society and the request for useful methods to understand and interpret the phenomena. These issues summon it to approach new research topics in the fields of

education (Cadei, 2010).

Identification of the research problem starts from the awareness of an existing gap, between the current and the desirable situation, in the context of educational support for couples approaching adoption. In addition to the institutional path envisaged by the adoption process, couples are often faced with expectations in solitude, with the emotional load that follows the state of uncertainty and unpredictability that distinguishes it. The research project aims to investigate the theme of educational support for prospective adoptive parents. In particular, how the choice to adopt is structured and consolidated within family life plans and how parenting is defined in a lifelong learning process.

The following objectives derive from such elements:

- in-depth analysis, according to pedagogical categories, of the pre-adoption phase;
- assess the adequacy of training and support received and/or desired by couples in pre-placement period;
- identify training contributions available to support the choice to adopt and the transition of each partner towards parenting.

However, upon closer analysis, it is possible to detect aspects of a particular educational value underlying the adoption phenomenon, which call into question the pedagogical reflection. The research is structured through three phases.

i. A *deductive approach* is adopted at the beginning of the research study. The exploratory investigation, carried out starting from the analysis of the scientific literature available and emerging issues and the socio-cultural context of reference, highlights the thematic areas still little studied in the adoptive context. Since adoption is a reality strictly connected with the legislation of each country, it was decided to focus on the Italian system.

ii. An *inductive procedure* is followed to better clarify the key issues of the investigation and formulate the research design. It moves from a systemic and dialogical paradigm, considering family relationships (Pati, 2014; Paul, 2004). The empirical research involved six adoptive parents, both mother and father, in semi-structured interviews.

iii. According to an *abductive procedure*, personal experiences and literature were sought to better understand the phenomenon in question and to develop correlated scientific knowledge (Pierce, 2014).

In the empirical research the use of the narrative method allows us to identify the perspective of the persons involved and to explore the adoptive process (Lieblich et al., 1998; Atkinson, 1998). At the same time, it stimulates reflexivity and the dimension of meaning, constituting a possible training opportunity for those who participate (Cadei, 2017). The adoptive story is an articulated journey which leads each couple through their own personal path. Penetrating reality allows us to detect elements that, regardless of their generalizability, encourage reflexivity and the progress of research (Pati, 2004). The investigation of situations typical of everyday life requires a research process of a more "comprehensive rather than explanatory" nature, says Van der Maren (1995), through which to identify some "similarities of structure", considering the contexts and avoiding the attempt to "formulate laws in view of predictions" (p. 35).

The increased complexity affecting adoption to the present-day leads to the recruitment of respondents on the basis of some selected indicators:

- Involvement of couples of adoptive parents.
- Couples who have completed a national or international adoption process.
- Couples who have adopted between 2012 and 2017.
- Couples without children (biological or adoptive) at the beginning of the adoption process.
- Couples who have adopted only one child.
- Membership of a family association based in the Varese area (Italy), called Afaiv. Afaiv was founded in April 1999 by adoptive families with decades of experience in self-help and mutual-help groups at the Family Planning Centres in the districts of Arcisate and Malnate (Va).

The empirical research plan foresees three levels:

i. *Preliminary contact with the interviewees* to illustrate the research plan, the aims, and the underlying objectives. This moment, for Englander (2010), activates a level of pre-reflexivity, which facilitates enriched and more integrated thought in participants.

ii. *Timeline and first interview*. In the initial phase of the interview, visual tools were used. Specifically, the lived timeline which could provide "different information" in addition to the simple story (Harper, 2002; Buckley & Waring, 2013), stimulate ordering between memories and access to "dormant" meanings (Clarke-Ibáñez, 2004), facilitate narration, by carrying to the present time, elements otherwise perceived as distant. In the first part of the interview, we focused on pre-adoption: from the choice to adopt to the beginning of the adoption process and the waiting period.

iii. *Conclusion of the interview*. The second part of the interview focuses on the description of the time that had elapsed from match-up with the child to the present (the interviews were conducted during the year 2019), with an insight into the meaningful aspects related to the future.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

The empirical research made it possible to collect the stories of each couple, stimulating retrospective reading of family history. In processing the data, the paper-pencil analysis was privileged (Pati, 2012). The transcriptions of the interviews were organized by macro-areas, then recurring themes and sub-areas of analysis were defined. An intertwining of narratives and literature allowed us to categorise the main topics that emerged, referable to specific phases of pre-adoption.

i. *The time preceding the choice to adopt*. A lot of couples start to think to adoption as a result of fertility problems (Monaco, 2012). Often couples approach adoption in a time of suffering for the absence of a biological child. Everyone reacts in their own way to these events (Schuchardt, 1990) and it is difficult to find an adequate support.

ii. *The choice to adopt*. People need correct information about the adoptive process and the needs of adoptive children. The choice, therefore, requires the ability to approach adoption as a privileged way of becoming a family. Through the interviews, in line with scientific literature, it was noted that there are previous personal or familiar experiences which usually encourage a couple to start thinking about adoption (Dance & Farmer, 2014). However, everyone is called on to reinterpret previous experiences and values in view of a more mature existential plan, in order to understand the deep meaning of adoption and to recognize the best interests of the child.

iii. *The adoptive process*. The adoptive process starts with presentation of the application to adopt at the Juvenile Court. The duration of the procedure is unpredictable and depends on several factors related to personal, political, and institutional aspects. Furthermore, there is no assurance to the finalization of the adoption.

The assessment and the home study process are, often, seen as an invasive and critical period. Despite this, the challenges faced during pre-placement strengthen personal resilience. Pre-adoption training has to consider the preparation for parenthood (Pati, 1999; Rosnati et al., 2003) and upcoming aspects that involve the family in the medium-long term, such as: inclusion in the social contexts, adoption storytelling and memories, identity building, adolescence.

In this phase, it is essential enter in contact with adoptive parents or other adoptive prospective parents, which "provide a considerable amount of mutual support during the preparation period" (Dance & Farmer, 2014, p. 106). The present research, confirms the important role of family associations, because they offer the opportunity to investigate issues related to adoption; to share experiences within a group, and to find support

4. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The interviewees' narratives and the scientific literature on pre-adoption made it possible to outline educational support proposals that meet the needs of prospective adoptive parents.

i. Educational support for those who deal with infertility problems. An emotional and appraisal support is required for people with infertility problems, to find personal strategies to deal for this event and to elaborate the absence of a child.

ii. Educational support regarding the choice to adopt. There is a significant need for pre-adoption preparation and training, in which partners can receive informational, instrumental and appraisal support in order to the choice to adopt. It is important that couples understand adoption as a children's right, in the perspective of Palacios' adoptive quadrilateral model (Palacios, 2009). For this reason, it can be useful to invest in educational counselling and to offer preparation groups for prospective adoptive parents.

iii. Educational support during the pre-placement period. Adoption requires a long waiting period for prospective parents (26 months in 2010; 45 months in 2018; with the pandemic situation times have become inexorably longer). If at the beginning, it is urgent to state and confirm the motivation to adopt, then it is necessary a specific training. Couples need to implement parenting skills, to monitor the evolution of family life situations, and to overcome critical issues that gradually arise, even the possibility that the adoption might not be finalized. For this reason, there is an urgent need for educational counselling, speaking groups and training groups dedicated to prospective adoptive parents, through an integrated intervention between Local Adoption Services, Adoption Agencies Approved by Central Adoption Authority responsible for Intercountry Adoption and Adoptive Families' Associations.

In particular, family associations offer a valuable resource for pre-placement, by making available training courses and tutoring between families. Listening to and discussing with those who live or have lived a similar experience is a precious opportunity to project themselves into the future; to identify their resources; to implement strategies and to develop skills in adoptive parenthood.

However, it is also necessary to invest in public services. In Italy, an important role could be played by the family counseling centres, which support pregnancy, responsible parenthood and, consequently, also correlated critical issues.

In addition to the institutional process, there is a training and self-training process that is essential for prospective adoptive parents. Pre-adoptive training has the important objective of favouring a transformative process, which can be compared to "the butterfly effect" (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017). The inner work and the alternation of regular and irregular events lead to increased awareness, resilience and access a wider vision of adoption. There is also the urgency of post-adoption services throughout the family life cycle and a training for adoptive families in the perspective of lifelong, life-wide, and life-deep learning process. In this framework, it is necessary to provide special support for adoption, as well as to promote family policies and a correct adoptive culture.

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Coevolution narratives. The power of narratives in approaching crisis

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Abstract - Our questioning about that biographical capacity is situated at the frontier between research and training, where we constantly stand. In this writing we explore how being able to tell one's story is essential when facing a crisis, itself considered in terms of "*perturbation as occasion for transformation*". The paper presents ten "intuitions" that emerge from our analysis of reflective writings and two focus groups. Those intuitions help us to understand how a coevolutionary perspective enriches the reflections about the importance of the biographical dimensions of training, especially of future teachers.

KEYWORDS: Narrative capacity, coevolution, perturbation, transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a context strongly transformed by several worldwide crises, where human health and global peace are at stake, it is to the *narrative capacity* (Formenti and Gamelli, 1998; Vanini De Carlo, 2014; 2016; Breton, 2017) that we want to give a central place in our work, as an essential competence for adults. Our questioning about this biographical capacity is situated at the border between research and training, where we constantly stand. Today, we explore a new trail: how being able to tell one's story is essential when facing a crisis, itself considered in terms of *perturbation as occasion for transformation*.

Our activity as a trainer in teaching and adult education leads us to promote a co-evolutionary (Zanelli, 2017), ecological (Severi e Zanelli, 1990) and therefore eminently narrative approach, namely in training for preschool teaching, our major field of intervention. The person with her individual characteristics and as an actor is central in this approach: "The co-evolutionary educational perspective assigns centrality to the learner, the latter has a role as an active participant in the evolution of the educational process" (Zanelli, 2017, p. 21). Such an approach constitutes a paradigm shift for future teachers during their initial training. They are invited (or let's say conducted and inducted) into a new way of thinking that substitutes opposition – the *either/or epistemology* as a characteristic of a positivist, linear approach – with the possibility of coexistence of apparent oppositions in the *and/and epistemology*, specific to the complexity theory. In such a logic, seemingly contradictory inputs, issues, and levels are seen, considered, and treated as compatible, complementary, and meaningful for a system.

Young future teachers struggle to attain autonomy – literally "self-control, from the Greek *autos* (self) and *nomos* (law), results from the recursive structure of the system" (Bateson, 1979, pp. 171-172, cited by Severi and Zanelli, 1990, p. 21). In such a systemic dynamic, the interconnection between context and stakeholders - learners and educators - makes them constituents of an ecological totality: one's action changes the other's structure and internal organisation, and reciprocally, through a system of feedbacks that are typical of a systemic logic. This ecological totality – here is our hypothesis – will emerge and define itself through narration, particularly in a training situation.

Our investigation aims to explore the transformative power of a narrative approach to professional writing and more generally to training situations. Through an analysis of traces produced within our teachings, and two focus groups with a selected group of teachers-to-be, we want to better understand the constant co-evolution in this systemic interconnection as all the elements of this system experience it. Echoing with what we elsewhere explored about the power of telling stories (Galimberti & Vanini De Carlo, 2015) we still consider, with Fabbri (2005) that, "'*récit*' (*in French in the original*

version) becomes a metaphor of change, but at the same time an operative, methodological tool to grab it and describe it” (pp. 94-95). The closing of the circle of our hypothesis, as we want to explore it here, would therefore be the fact that crisis becomes itself a coevolutionary situation, with the narrative capacity as resource to develop a collective autonomy.

Our hypothesis is grounded in the link between the experience of entering complexity as a framework, and the narrative capacity. We postulate that having a certain narrative power, or nurturing and developing one's narrative capacity, is a powerful tool to deal with different kinds of crisis. More specifically, the “crisis” we are interested in is what happens to a young teacher-to-be when approaching for the first time a complex, dialectical, and non-antagonistic epistemology (Vanini De Carlo, 2022) such as the one we have shortly described above.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

Therefore, in this exploratory phase of our research, we have sought, through content analysis, the narratives and/or narratological traces that can be found in students' writings and speeches, and especially some syntactic markers that signal bifurcations, development, significant moments, triggering experiences, and the “before-after”. We consider all those under the definition of “biographical moments”. In other words, these marks show that the history of future teachers' learning experience teacher becomes a story as told.

We have asked nine of our students to give us permission to use and analyze their reflective writings¹, after having assessed them at the end of the semester. After this first step, we have gathered them in two focus groups (where 8 out of 9 could attend) and discussed some of our first “intuitions” with them. In our content analysis of their reflective writings as well as the transcriptions of the focus groups, we looked for different markers of narrative capacity. What makes the quality of these writings? What made me choose them over the 40 writings I have assessed in that session? And what are we searching in those writings? An excursus in our theoretical background is necessary.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

We refer, among others, to Pastré (2011) for whom “human development is at once historical, microgenetic and made up of discontinuous surges” (pp. 104-105). That discontinuity of the development is explained via the emergence of what Pastré calls *episodes of development*, that he associates with Vygotskij's ‘*Aha experiences*’ (*expériences-décliv*) (Vygotskij, 1997, p. 347). What is particularly interesting in Pastré's contribution is the following statement:

[...] subjects have an eminent part in the way they react to events. One will overcome the contradictions he encounters fairly quickly; another will do so with infinite difficulty; and a third will remain stuck without being able to reconfigure his operative model (Pastré, 2011, p. 110).

Research on teachers' personal and professional epistemologies is not new. As stated by Melacarne (2006) “implicit and tacit theories constructed through reflexive and narrative forms of rationality can be recognized in teachers' actions” (Melacarne, 2006, p. 215). We ourselves have already reflected on this by adopting a vygotskijan point of view to make the following hypothesis:

¹ It is noticeable to say that no specific instruction where given to mobilize biographical, personal or narrative components in their writing.

[...] that the narrative capacity could be considered as a primary function, that arises from the interaction of the narrator with the addressee of the narration. Through the narrative *emplotment* (*mise en intrigue*) as conceived by Ricœur (1983) ‘the narrating subject learns, through the dialogical interaction, to say oneself’. This inter-subjective dynamic would afterwards be interiorized in an intra-subjective dynamic [...] (Vanini De Carlo and Perrin, 2016, p. 27).

We are now taking a further step towards understanding the concept of biographical/narrative capacity, or narrative art. We are intrigued by what intuitively emerges as a feature of those writings that we have isolated – for example, some authors dare going beyond the textual genre of the reflective text, taking some liberties, assuming a form of disorder, although this kind of liberty is not especially encouraged in our university of applied sciences. As Formenti already stated in 2010, it is a real paradox: “[...] The more a person is trained, in our advanced education system, the more they are asked to separate themselves from what they study. For a teacher, this is a real disaster” (Formenti, 2010, p. 73). We believe, like Formenti, that “[...] in autobiographical training, there is an effort to recompose what we have been, what we are and what we could be, together with the validation of our knowledge and know-how” (Formenti, 2010, p. 74).

What we are looking for is clearly embedded in a trans/formative perspective: we want to improve and develop our interventions in teacher training towards more effective and heuristic approaches, thus, for example with a more explicit biographical and narrative slant, giving the possibility to our students to elaborate several levels of experience including difficulties and obstacles. We believe that to become aware of one's development is also to express what is not (yet) developed, what has to be inscribed in a long term perspective, as stated by Alhadeff-Jones: “Learning, change, transformation and development take place over time, just as they affect one's experience of time (2018, p. 44)”.

4. TEN EMERGING INTUITIONS – FIRST FINDINGS

We present here our first conceptual intuitions, or insights, emerging from data analysis. Each of them is a piece of the puzzle we are starting to see in our intent to understand how biographical capacity works as a tool towards better and more profound understanding of complex concepts and its application in teaching practice.

Intuition 1 – “Let’s try something else” - opening the door of flexibility with a narrative key.

The narrative components in the reflective writings, and their comment in the focus group, seem to become a key to open the door to flexibility when learning to teach (especially to young pupils). Biographical storytelling would therefore be a way to understand and develop the ability to improvise, to react to the unexpected, because it is trained in a protected situation and by the fact of being able (or having the courage) to narrate, even about failed attempts to write the reflective text; those students appear to have grasped the certification mode required in these reflective texts: not aiming to defend, but to understand.

Intuition 2 – “The elf came to peek through our window” - assuming a metaphorical, creative, and fantastic language gives access to the complexity of experience.

These students’ writings are characterized by some creative and metaphorical sentence breaks, with a touch of fantasy. It seems that this enables them to have an easier access to the complexity of the teaching experience they had during their practicum.

Intuition 3 - "In the following days..." - temporal conjunctions, locutions and verbal tenses embody the diachronicity of the narrative.

The chosen nine texts are particularly rich in temporal conjunctions, temporal locutions, and a recurrent choice of different verbal tenses that give body to the diachronicity of the narrative. For example, the use of the imperfect tense (*'All'inizio non capivo...'*) to give account of their initial state, then the past tense expressing the gap between before and after, and the skills being developed, and then the future tense to show what they want to remember for their future practices.

Intuition 4 – "The kid, with his eyes twinkling..." - narrating emotions and affects enable comprehension.

All the writings are riddled with traces of emotions – the one of the pupils but also the ones of themselves as teacher-to-be. We assume therefore that emotions could open the door to deeper comprehension.

Intuition 5 – "Dear me..." - spontaneously making personal connections with one's teachings seems to be a mark of an in-depth learning process.

Often in their writings but also when expressing themselves in the focus group, those future teachers tie connections between their professional/training experiences and their personal life experiences. Also, in the focus group there are several of them to say that they address their reflective writing to themselves, much more than to the trainer (i.e. me).

Intuition 6 – "Very strong enrolment and great motivation" - grammar is a vector and enhancer of the narrative function.

The use of particularly strong-willing adverbs, such as *definitely, undoubtedly, very, immediately*; as well as particular adjectives such as *precious, flexible, open, of great value, great motivation*; but also, of absolute superlatives² (*fortissimo*) – all those grammatical choices seem to strengthen the intensity of the narration of the training experience.

Intuition 7 – "All of a sudden..." – creating a surprise in order to show the twist in the plot development reinforces the narrative richness of the writing.

While reading the texts it appears that they have taken up the challenge of choosing a narrative form, including some kind of surprising effect or twist in the plot. It appears that transforming the reflexive writing by telling the story of the teaching experience with narrative marks has a positive effect on reflective practice.

Intuition 8 – "Goodbye our friend, we will remember you in our hearts" – transcribing direct speech of the children.

Again, this is a storytelling effect that seem to reinforce reflection: all those texts stand out for their power of evocation, using also direct citations of what the pupils said during the significant moments of the pedagogical project.

Intuition 9 – "I believe... That's me" – personal beliefs, descriptions of oneself and other biographical traces as lightings of the professional learning process.

Often the students make explicit link to oneself, one's characteristics (even if not requested); this appears to be a fundamental help for gaining profound understanding and therefore professional identity.

² The absolute superlative form of the adjective is a specificity of the Italian language.

Intuition 10 – “Ultimately, this initial difficulty enabled a discovery” – ordeals seen as teachable moments.

We have studied elsewhere (Vanini De Carlo, 2014) the concept of ordeal (*épreuve*) as an analytical operator of biographical material, and as source of transformation and identity development, inspired by Martuccelli (2006). This hypothesis gains new insights with the present ongoing research.

5. COEVOLUTIONARRATIVES – AN INCONCLUSIVE CONCLUSION

To write one’s experience is to be able to learn from it, bringing it out of aphasia, out of trivialization, out of obvious frames. It means firstly recognizing that we have an experience of things, of the world, and translating it into knowledge. Giving order and form to events that are by definition complex, elusive; it also means having to choose a ‘punctuation,’ that is, to select, to create sequences of action, a before and after. Social time is generated only through narrative. Thus, it turns out that the lived is always surplus to what is narrated, and this opens up endless possible narratives. But narrative is also surplus to experience: there is a more, a creation that arises precisely from the use of words, those words. Experience writing, then, is generative. It creates a new focus on events and changes (Formenti, 2010, pp. 79-80).

Through our intuitions, many perspectives have been opened. The above citation seems to summarize our position and opens to several explorations that we want to pursue, understanding how the coevolutionary perspective enriches the reflections about the importance of the biographical dimensions of training, especially of future teachers. We want to enable our students to “[...] *to take on oneself as an object of knowledge and a field of action, in order to transform oneself, correct oneself, purify oneself, and edify one's salvation*” (Foucault (1984), in Demetrio, 1996, p. 44).

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The Paradox of Exclusion through Inclusion: Lessons Learned for Adult Education

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Abstract - Inclusion is the new buzzword in policy initiatives related to economic, social, and cultural settings in many countries. The spread of this new buzzword requires some critical observations. Is 'inclusion' more than 'a feel-good rhetoric'? In our contribution we investigate firstly the general discussion on inclusion in education that had its origins in educational reform movements and in special needs education policies and practices. We furthermore analyze how these concrete policies and practices of inclusive education often coalesced with deficit approaches. Then, we consider alternative views as developed by Ranci re and Arendt. In a final section we consider how in adult education research literature, this paradox of exclusion through inclusion has been commented and what answers have been developed in this particular field of research.

KEYWORDS: Inclusion, exclusion, intersectionality, adult education, critical perspective.

1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is the new buzzword in policy initiatives related to economic, social, and cultural settings in many countries. In these contexts, inclusion means that efforts should be done to give both children and adults, particularly the ones who live in precarious conditions, a proper place in society through various initiatives. The spread of this new buzzword requires some critical observations. In our contribution we investigate firstly the general discussion on inclusion in educational policies. We furthermore analyze how these policies and practices of inclusive education often coalesced with deficit approaches. Next, we consider alternative views developed by Ranci re and Arendt and in a final section we consider how in adult education research literature, this paradox of exclusion through inclusion has been commented and what answers have been developed in this particular field.

2. THE ORIGINS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education has a long history, already going back to the reform pedagogies of the first half of the 20th century (Danforth, 2019). The reform movement in education again gained prominence in the sixties and the seventies of the previous century. Teachers, parents, students, and school directors experimented with new forms of school practices, while paying attention to the inclusion of different categories of persons who, for various reasons, could not fully participate in mainstream education (Armstrong et al., 2011). In adult education, the 'discovery' of important groups of illiterate persons prompted the development of diverse practices of adult literacy education (Isley, 1985). This broad reform movement was inspired by various critiques of the exclusionary character of mainstream education and by attempts to democratize educational institutions.

Around the same time, initiatives of inclusive education were increasingly associated with the domain of special needs education. From the fifties and the sixties onwards this domain of educational research and practice operated on the basis of diagnosed deficits and 'within-child' explanations (Schuelka et al., 2019). Individuals who were diagnosed as deficient, were relegated to special education institutions that were expected to remediate the differences and deficits on a scientific basis.

From the eighties onwards influential international policy initiatives and institutions began to pay attention to the phenomenon of inclusion and increasingly influenced national inclusion policies on a global scale. This brought Slee (2013) to the conclusion that:

In an astonishingly short period of time, inclusive education has firmly planted itself in education and public discourse. Libraries and bookshops have dedicated shelves to this genre. Education jurisdictions around the world have adopted the vocabulary of inclusive education (..) and invested significant resources into the production of policy texts, the development and renewal of capital and human infrastructure, and modified curriculum programmes to make schools and higher education more inclusive (ibid, 2013, p. 896).

3. INCREASING SKEPTICISM

In spite of these positive signals coming from international organizations, the reality on the ground was much more complicated. Various authors became increasingly skeptical about concrete special education practices and policies, particularly for their strong ‘deficit’ orientation and the lack of awareness among policy makers and practitioners of how the political context strongly influenced the way inclusive education was being developed (i.a., Schuelka et al, 2019; Thomas & McNab, 2019; Done & Andrews, 2020; Spandagou, 2021). They all observed that inclusion practices often failed because they are implemented in neo-liberal times which continually create new forms of exclusion and situate the solution of the problem in the individual rather than in the community or the social policies.

4. WIDENING THE SCOPE

According to many protagonists of critical pedagogy, the interpretation of exclusion/inclusion needs to be broadened. They thereby often refer to the notion of ‘intersectionality’ first introduced in the academic debate on racism by Crenshaw (1989). She suggests considering exclusion as an intersectional phenomenon, whereby different forms of discrimination interact in creating oppression or exclusion. In line with this, critical pedagogy claims that exclusion operates at the *intersection* of different forms of marginalization and that strategies of inclusion should encompass different lines of action (Schuelka et al., 2019., p. 4).

As a response to this challenge Portelli and Konency (2018) plea to situate efforts for inclusion in a broader perspective of democratic education. Inspired by Biesta (2009) they argue that, for an order to be democratic and inclusive, it has to be continuously reinvented, refined, aligned with new contexts and new publics.

5. ASSUMING EQUALITY OF INTELLIGENCE

This reinvention of the democratic order can find inspiration in the work of Jacques Rancière. This French philosopher has indirectly dealt with inclusion in his writings about emancipation. He has repeatedly stressed that emancipation – in a similar way to inclusion - is an ambivalent, paradoxical term. (Rancière, 1991, 2009). He argues that, rather than liberating the students, well-intentioned teachers often make students dependent on the knowledge of the ‘master’. As a response, Rancière develops a radical alternative. He thereby departs from the presupposition of ‘equality of intelligence’. In his view, equality is not the outcome of the process, but an assumption with which the process begins. Equality exists insofar as someone asserts that equality exists.

The idea of equality of intelligence is also present in the way Hannah Arendt conceives of education. Korsgaard Timmermann (2016) informs us how Arendt, argues that all humans dispose of the faculty of disinterested aesthetic judgement, detached from subjective positions of self-interest. He calls this kind of judgement a form of enlarged

reflectivity to which education can contribute in important ways, by creating a school where the events and objects of the world are represented to students in a safe, protected, and suspended environment.

6. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM ADULT EDUCATION?

The question that remains now is how the matter of inclusion in adult education has been conceived. To answer this question, we conducted a literature review in some of the most important adult education research journals¹. In these papers, we identified three major themes regarding inclusion: (a) skills and competence building for vulnerable groups, (b) Questioning the policy rhetoric, (c) pathways of transformation.

7. SKILLS AND COMPETENCE BUILDING FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

Adult education has in recent decades increasingly moved away from its initial broad social and cultural orientation as expressed in the concept of 'liberal' adult education. From the seventies and eighties of the 20th century onwards policy makers ushered adult education in an instrumental direction, predominantly focusing on the inclusion of vulnerable groups. This went hand in hand with the upcoming discourse of lifelong learning and an orientation on the enhancement of functional skills and competencies. This trend is reflected in a set of papers that are particularly concerned with the inclusion of immigrants and refugees (Anderson & Osman, 2008; Lodigiani & Sarli, 2017; Slade & Dickson, 2021). Moreover, some papers are concerned with other socially vulnerable groups such as unemployed, people with low skills, or older adults (De Greef, Verte & Segers, 2012, 2015). Here inclusion is mainly connected with access to the labor market by the non-privileged adults.

De Greef, Verte & Segers (2012, 2015) have produced a series of papers where they examine the contribution of adult education programmes to the social inclusion of their participants. They found that a significant share of the adult population they researched did not experience an increase, but rather a stabilization or even a decrease in social inclusion after participating in an adult learning course. This made the authors argue that participation alone is unlikely to enhance individual inclusiveness.

The skills and competence approach of inclusion is mainly developed in the context of human capital theory, and the role of adult education is perceived as a process that ensures the necessary certification that will transform participants into an attractive skilled workforce. Even in this economic view of inclusion, Lodigiani and Sarli (2017, p. 141) acknowledge that the processes of recognition and certification have a risk to become "invisible instruments of discrimination among different groups of citizens".

A similar view is expressed by Andersson & Osman (2008) who in their paper examine how the inclusive practice of recognition of prior learning (RPL) involves elements of control, observation, and scrutiny (technologies of power) that may in the end result in the social exclusion of migrants from the labor market in Sweden. Finally, in this group of papers the work of Slade & Dickson (2021) discusses the importance of immigrants' acquisition of language skills. The interesting notion here is that the authors recognize that social inclusion through language learning is possible mainly if the learning process includes elements of transformative learning based on the lived experiences of the participants.

¹ For reasons related to access and time constraints we searched for inclusion-related papers in the following journals: European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, International Journal of Lifelong Education, Adult Education Quarterly, New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, Studies in Continuing Education, Journal of Adult and Continuing Education and Journal of Transformative Education.

8. QUESTIONING THE POLICY RHETORIC

Various authors reiterate the skepticism about the instrumental orientation of policy makers. For example, Rockhill (1996) points out that the ideology of lifelong learning is masking how adult education provision inescapably privileges the learning of some at the expense of others. In a similar way, Edwards, Armstrong, & Miller (2001) raise critical questions about policies. They argue that the promotion of lifelong learning policy as a social inclusion strategy is based on social assimilation. In their view, the notions of inclusion and exclusion are binary and as such the overemphasis on lifelong learning for inclusion actually reinforces difference and social exclusion. Williams (2011) is also critical on policies that consider social exclusion as a result of low aspirations and promote lifelong learning as a “remedy” for inclusion. She argues that the assumption which considers the socially excluded as persons that suffer from a lack of confidence or low self-esteem distances the discussion from the real material reasons that create conditions of exclusion. In her view lifelong learning that incorporates a therapeutic approach may lead to the “infantilization” of the socially excluded groups (ibid, 2011, p. 465).

9. PATHWAYS OF TRANSFORMATION

As an alternative to these policy orientations, several authors suggest pathways of transformation enhancing the acceptance of cultural identities, the recognition of diverse social frames of reference, the overcoming of race and gender inequalities, while making use of the individual experiences of the participants in inclusionary adult education processes (i.a., Gouthro, 2007; Alston & Hansman, 2020; Fernandes-Osterhold, 2022). A unique position in these debates for an inclusive pedagogy in adult education we found in the writings of Sheared (1999) who introduced the concept of polyrhythmic realities. The articulation of lived experiences by participants in the educational process is, in her view, essential for any attempt to recognize, understand, and assess how exclusion works in daily life and in educational activities, but more importantly to enhance equal involvement in the learning processes. Hence, for Sheared, the intersectionality of learners’ polyrhythmic realities has to play an important part in the education and learning processes of adults.

Our review of adult education research journals highlighted a number of issues that are central in the debates for inclusion in the field of adult education. Firstly, it seems that adult education and lifelong learning are considered to have the potential to contribute to mitigating social inequalities caused by exclusionary factors such as gender, race, social class, educational attainment, unemployment, etc. However, it is also clear that participation in adult learning processes is not in itself capable of preventing social exclusion, and that in many cases the learning processes designed to be inclusive actually create new situations for exclusion. Secondly, it seems that the concept of inclusion for the field of adult education has several interpretations, depending on the social group and the causes of its exclusion. In many cases, particularly in the context of lifelong learning rhetoric, inclusion is linked to individual responsibility and employability. In other cases, inclusion is about critically examining social reality and recognizing diversity. There are voices that call for an inclusive adult education recognizing diversity and celebrating different cultural frames of reference and the intersectionality of the factors that lead to exclusion. Social inclusion is an important end for adult education and at the same time it is vital foundation for the rhetoric of its development.

10. CONCLUSION

In this contribution we have observed how the concept of ‘inclusion’ has become omnipresent in different domains of education. Particularly in the field of special needs education inclusion has become an important motive for empowering

disabled students. Also, in the domain of adult education increasing attention has been paid to the inclusion of socially excluded people. We have looked at these developments from a critical pedagogical perspective. In line with this, several researchers have articulated critical comments on the discourse and practices of inclusion. On the one hand they salute bottom-up initiatives that support vulnerable individuals and groups to acquire a respected position in society. On the other hand, they warn for practices of inclusion with a strong deficit orientation. Difficulties to participate in society are often not due to the failures or disabilities of individuals, but rather the consequence of broader exclusionary mechanisms. Many researchers have observed how such exclusionary dynamics have coalesced with the rise of a society that has increasingly become competitive, pushing individuals and groups, who cannot meet the “standards of perfection”, further into the margins.

In response to this, various authors suggest linking inclusion practices and policies to principles of democracy, whereby existing hierarchies of power are questioned and redistributed. Hence, it matters to create places of formal and non-formal education as spaces where students learn in very concrete and positive ways how to engage with others that are not like themselves, that may have different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or religious backgrounds, and different abilities to engage with the world. Moreover, various scholars have suggested to concentrate on the intersection of different forms of discrimination such as race, class, gender, agism, etc. Such approach will require spaces of education and learning that not only enhance the development of instrumental skills and knowledge, but predominantly understand inclusion as the creation of space and time to explore lived experiences of exclusion and to jointly develop capacities to overcome different forms of discrimination.

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Exploring the Association of Learning a Foreign Language with Cognitive Improvement of Older Chinese Adults. A Case Study

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Abstract - Foreign language learning (FLL) has been proposed as a promising cognitive training for the elderly. This study investigates cognitive processes as they were in interaction with the wider environment. It was a case study of six Chinese lower-education older adults joining a short-term intensive English learning program. Cognitive Assessment showed a slight enhancement of their cognitive skills after FLL with a small to medium effect size. Qualitative analysis of lesson observations and interviews reveals that FLL helps them make new meanings of old concepts and contexts, thus maximizing the cognitive benefits.

KEYWORDS: Senior learning, foreign language learning, cognitive health, sociocultural theory.

1. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, it is expected that around one in six persons will be over sixty by 2030 (World Health Organization, 2021). In China, the current number of people over sixty is 264 million, representing 18.7% of its overall population (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2021). Growing size and increasing proportion of older adults in every country urges that strategies be sought for to modulate the negative effects of age-related cognitive decline.

So far, no pharmacological medication has been reported to be effective for age-related cognitive decline. Intellectually stimulating activities have been found to lead to cognitive improvements in older adults (Binder et al. 2016; Zuelsdorff et al. 2019). Learning a foreign language (FLL), as a socially and mentally stimulating activity, has been proposed as a promising measure to contribute to older people's cognitive health (Antoniou et al., 2013). However, most of the prior research that establishes the potential positive effects of FLL on older adults' mental fitness remains hypothetical, while at the same time, the available empirical works offer mixed results and inconclusive evidence.

This study aims to add to existing knowledge with a case of six lower-education Chinese older adults, documenting their learning of English and testing their cognitive functioning before and after the FLL.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. FLL and its Cognitive Benefits

Researchers believe that FLL is an activity relevant to cognitive improvement because it puts high demand on older adults' many cognitive processes, such as working memory, semantic memory, sustained attention, to name but a few (Issa & Morgan-Short, 2019; Kliesch et al., 2021). Also, the neurocognitive network of brain activated by FLL has an extensive overlap with the area known to be associated with age-typical cognitive decline (Wong et al., 2019), including prefrontal cortex, and temporal lobe (Antoniou et al., 2013). A psychosocial circuit has also been hypothesized: participation in FL training naturally involves more chances for meeting and communicating with a wider circle of people. This helps older adults mitigate feelings of loneliness and depression, which could have negative effects on their global cognitive functioning (Tzang et al., 2015; Zhong et al., 2016).

Only ten empirical studies were found to examine whether a certain period of foreign language training can lead to cognitive improvement in older adults. Among them, half reported positive effect of FLL on the senior learners' cognitive

functioning (Wong et al., 2019; Pfenninger & Polz, 2018), the degree of which ranging from slight enhancement (Valis et al., 2019), moderate modulation (Bak et al., 2016) to significant improvement (Bubbico et al., 2019;). The remaining ones found that FLL did little to improve cognitive functioning (Ramos et al., 2016; Ware et al., 2017; Berggren et al., 2020; Klimova et al., 2020; Kliesch et al., 2021). In spite of these differences, these studies were alike in that they all construed cognition as an independent ability or set of abilities that reside within an individual and assess these abilities with measurements, from which numerical results were generated and subject to quantitative analysis. While statistics could reveal significant or insignificant differences in cognitive performance between groups (i.e., experiment vs. control) and conditions (before and after learning the foreign language), numbers alone could have neglected the experiences and voices of the participants.

2.2. Sociocultural Perspective on Cognitive Capacities

Previous studies utilized various measurements to test older adults' cognitive functioning. In such approaches, cognitive functioning is regarded as an abstract entity inside an individual independent from the outside world. In fact, cognition involves one paying attention to or making meaning of objects or others in the outside world, which is in line with the sociocultural perspective. Sociocultural theory recognizes the interaction between individuals and the environment. The hybrid nature of human cognitive capacities (Donald, 2010) rejects the idea that cognitive operations take place in the mind or brain as a closed or isolated entity. Rather, cognitive processes emerge at the interface between an individual who tries to construct meaning and the outside world that provides inputs, help and resources (Säljö, 2020). Such a view requires an examination of cognition not as a stand-alone activity within the mind. An assessment of cognition should consider context and what's available in it. Following this, more research on elderly learners that allow "any person and/or institution that welcomes, surrounds, accompanies, meets, supports them" to have a role to play is called for (Tartas, 2021, p. 1).

3. CASE STUDY DESIGN

The present study was a case study of six older adults joining a short-term intensive English learning program. The overall aim was to understand whether these older adults could improve their cognitive health with a period of FLL, and to identify processes relevant to possible improvement. The participants included five hospital janitors and a driver at a hospital in Shaanxi, China. They were 5 females and 1 male (aged 61, 60, 61, 65, 61, 58). They were generally low-educated, with an average of 6.3 years of school and little prior English learning experience. They all reported to be healthy physically and mentally. The intensive English course delivered to them included twelve 1.5h lessons. The instructor taught letter names, letter sounds and basic vocabulary, such as numbers, food and family members. Some practice of making simple sentences, such as "I like ..." were incorporated in the course. Participants underwent general cognition evaluation using the Beijing version of Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) at pre- and post-tests before and after the FLL program. How individuals constructed meaning with both social and material circumstances during FLL was mainly explored through observation and interview. The participants' pre- and post- MoCA results were analysed in Wilcoxon tests. Field notes and interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis (Bazeley, 2013).

4. QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

These participants' cognitive performance generally improved to a small degree. Average MoCA score rose from 23.3 to 24.5. Four out of the six participants had higher scores in the MoCA post test. Their improvements ranged from 1 to 2 points. Two participants showed no change in terms of the MoCA scores. Wilcoxon test was run to compare their scores

in the two conditions. Slight improvement in cognitive functioning was enabled following the short period of FLL with a small to medium effect size ($p=.05$, Cohen's $d = .36$). Next, an analysis of the qualitative data helps explicate the possible processes relevant to these cognitive changes.

5. QUALITATIVE RESULTS

5.1. Challenging Task

Learning a foreign language constituted a challenge for the group of participants. This was observed by the instructor as “comprehension problem and memorization difficulties” from students. Reasons for the challenges involved in FLL for this group of older adults were identified in the interviews with them and the instructor's notes. Firstly, the participants' low literacy was an issue. Meryl recalled problems in her learning. “I used to know nothing about A,B,C,D. So when we were dealing with words, I could not even write them down”.

Low literacy in L1, especially inadequate knowledge and skills with pinyin impeded this group of older learners' learning of English. Pinyin shares the Latin alphabet with English. However, the participants did not acquire a good command of the alphabet in their early school years. They were unclear with some of the letters that looked alike, for example, u and v. This resulted in the occurrences of some mistakes when they tried to copy in their notebooks the spelling of learned words, as observed by the instructor.

One of them made another point relevant to the challenges to FLL. Shone said that he couldn't memorize some words because he “seldom saw English words and had little contact with English”. Taking his words into consideration, it is unsurprising that these group of older adults felt it challenging to learn a foreign language because, in their everyday life, they were far from where English was used, and the foreign language was somehow alien to them.

With these challenges, these learners' learning of English tended to be slow. As noted by the instructor, the participants “took in slowly” and “made responses slowly”. They were not used to reading things with English or producing something with English.”

Wendy's reflections provided the learner's perspective into the slowness in learning. “I feel that I can't keep up with learning some time. Why I cannot react promptly. Why I try to think of something and it wouldn't come to me!” By questioning herself with what she couldn't have achieved in learning, the learner revealed that she had to remain slow in learning because of problems with processing (“cannot react promptly”) and retrieval (“it wouldn't come to me”).

5.2. Positive Changes

The participants' remarks collected from the interviews and the instructor's notes revealed some positive changes that happened during FLL.

First, their classroom performance showed improvement. The instructor noticed that the learners learned to “take notes without being reminded” during the lessons and read after her “voluntarily” when learning new words, and it became easier for them to understand the rules of class activities. Apart from development in general learning skill, they were also stronger English learners. The instructor recorded the following in her notes.

In the beginning of the FLL course, most learners would read aloud all the letters in a word individually, rather than treating it as one collective lexical item. This was their way of reading a word. This habit did not diminish until the last two lessons.

These participants started learning English with barely no knowledge of it at all. For them, understanding that a lexical item stands on its own and its sound is not the simple sum of all letters in it is development.

In addition to classroom performance, five of them reported that learning English had brought them new experiences in everyday life. Meryl expressed that after she learned English letters, she could recognize the capital letters on car plates, and that brought her a sense of contentment. Wendy described her experience looking at the logos everywhere, with both Chinese characters and English translations, for example, “lady’s room”. She could not make sense of those bilingual logos at all before the FLL program. Now, she could notice the letters on them and she felt good about this. Celia shared similar experience, with her stories based in superstores about the English on item packaging, for example, “Garden crackers”. Sally and Helen found new meanings in the connection with people around them. Sally said “I used to not know anything about what those kindergarten kids said, now I know some of that”. She was referring to some English words children used, which she could now notice and recognize. Helen reflected on her relationship with her grandchild.

My grandchild goes to primary school. I watch him do homework everyday. He learns new English vocabulary everyday and needs to do dictation. I help him with that. I used to read the Chinese meanings and he wrote down corresponding English words. I had no idea what he had written down. You have taught us now. I know some English. This makes me care for him better.

Newly learned knowledge in English gave these older learners completely new experience of their surroundings, including physical context and people around them. They could make sense of what they used to feel innocent about.

5.3. Feeling Good

The content of learning was welcomed by the participants as it gave them a sense of enjoyment. The instructor observed that participants showed “stronger interests and willingness to learn” when she expanded on the background meanings of words, and it was in these cases that learners “talked more and interacted more often”.

Sally reflected on one such incident about what she learned that made her feel good.

One day, we were learning about words like daughter, son and beautiful. This kind of experience was really good. These vocabulary, they were all close to our life, to our family and to what’s around us. For example, children, this makes us happy. These are related to our everyday life, like daughter, beautiful, tall. I feel good, very good.

The above excerpt clearly shows that the content of learning, which derived from everyday life, provided another source of contentment. The participants were happy that their newly-gained knowledge in English could be associated with what they already knew and liked.

Participants appreciated the FLL program also because of the cognitive stimulation and activation they received. When asked about the most unforgettable moment in learning English, Shone described an afternoon in which they learned the number words. “At that moment, looking at the clock on the wall, the numbers, I felt that my mind was opening.” The “mind-opening” moment he experienced represented the cognitive stimulation in him. Likewise, other participants called similar experience “enlightening” and commented that it was beneficial because “learning this helped us think deeper”.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

For the participants in this study, FLL constituted a challenge, or a cognitively demanding task, as they experienced problems with memorizing, processing and retrieval. It has been demonstrated in cognitive literature that effortful engagement in cognitive training has a chance to stimulate cognitive functions to develop (e.g., Mårtensson et al., 2013; Schroeder & Marian, 2016), especially for learners with a lower global cognitive level (Bubbico et al., 2019; Kliesch et al., 2021). As most of the lower-educated participants in this study showed improvement in their MoCA post-test, this study offers data to substantiate the claim that struggling may help maximize cognitive benefits.

The broader context in which their FLL took place also has a role to play. As they learned English as beginners, things could be represented in completely new symbolic system. To be specific, looking at the clock on the wall, Shone realized that previous known numbers now had new representations and new ways of being in English. He had different ways of looking at things and making sense of them. “Daughter” and “children” were familiar concepts to them, and now, developed new representations in English. Such new ways of seeing and living resulted in the “mind opening” moment in the participants. Beyond the classroom, all the participants have lived in their surrounding for long. Previously, they did not know English and therefore, decided that it was something that they could not relate to. Learning English blows new life into their sociocultural context. They identified letters, saw a familiar word, understood what the grandchild was doing for English homework. Constantly picking up new information in English from what’s around them provides cognitive stimulation. It is in these processes that they found new meanings in the old world and extended their cognition to include the interaction with other people and with the environment.

Our study lends support to FLL as a viable cognitive training for lower-education older population. To help them activate learning potential and combat cognitive decline, language learning opportunities can be provided at community centers, third-age universities and so on considering that it is low-cost and easy to implement.

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How do you learn in the workplace?

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Abstract - Continuous adult learning is therefore essential for the productivity of the company and economic systems, guaranteeing benefits both in terms of innovation and profit and the motivation and satisfaction of its workers. This situation is particularly relevant in the current post pandemic economic scenario. In this scenario there is an important question: how do workers can learn? In work contexts, learning can be of two types: either non-formal, or informal. The research's aim is to understand when and how workers learn in their daily life and to understand if and how work contexts recognize and value the learning acquired in other contexts.

KEYWORDS: Adult learning, workplace, incidental learning.

1. ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

During their career, people find themselves having to face multiple transitions: between contexts, places, contents and forms of work. To cope with these changes, often unforeseen and marked by uncertainty, and to be able to face and manage them, without suffering them, the worker needs to develop and enhance his asset of knowledge. In other words, he needs to continue learning. This situation is particularly relevant in the current post pandemic economic scenario.

Continuous adult learning is therefore essential for the productivity of the company and economic systems, guaranteeing benefits both in terms of innovation and profit and the motivation and satisfaction of its workers.

Life-long learning (LLL), then, is a crucial resource for dealing with the social and economic uncertainty that characterizes our time and the time to come. Numerous, in fact, are the challenges posed by the complexity of modernity: increased mobility, the climate crisis, technological changes, threats to global wellness and democratic systems, and new patterns of production and consumption. Life-long learning represents a tool for meeting these challenges.

In other words, LLL turns out to be an economic, social, political and environmental imperative for every country, making an important contribution to sustainable development, the reduction of inequalities and the improvement of civic and community life (UNESCO, 2022 a).

Building on these acquisitions, the 7th International Conference on Adult Learning and Education, organized by UNESCO in Marrakech from June 15-17, 2022 with the participation of 142 countries, adopted "CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for action" (UNESCO, 2022 c), a Framework for Action to harness the transformative capacity of adult learning and education. The important document, which will be the basis for a series of recommendations to governments, reflects the global effort to promote Adult and Lifelong Learning Education. Adult Learning Education (ALE) is a key component of social progress at different levels: individuals, families, organizations, workplaces, cities and regions.

Confintea VII took up the Recommendations on Adult Learning and Education (RALE), adopted by UNESCO's General Conference in 2015, and in particular the definition of Adult Learning and Education (ALE). "Adult education is a core component of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all youth and adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies.

Adult learning and education involve sustained activities and processes of acquiring, recognizing, exchanging, and adapting capabilities" (UNESCO, 2016).

ALE, therefore, is a key component of lifelong learning, defined by UNESCO as follows: "lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and elderly, girls and boys, women and men) in all life-wide contexts (family, school, community, workplace and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal) which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands. Education systems which promote lifelong learning adopt a holistic and sector-wide approach involving all sub-sectors and levels to ensure the provision of learning opportunities for all individuals" (UNESCO, 2015).

From the Confintea report emerges the admonition to create a culture of lifelong learning: lifelong learning will be critical to addressing humanity's challenges, from the climate crisis to technological and demographic change, as well as those posed by the COVID-19. To achieve this goal, an holistic approach is needed, encompassing all types of ALE (formal, nonformal, and informal) and all sectors and fields, various learning contexts, including in-person, online, and blended learning, and different learners and groups. Therefore, it is necessary, in order to achieve individual well-being and the common good, to promote inclusive and quality education and foster lifelong learning for young and old.

The report also highlights the long-term structural impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its mixed effects on ALE. Indeed, the pandemic has drawn further attention to the need for governments and communities to develop and implement knowledge, skills and competency acquisition strategies and learning policies that support youth and adults to cope with the effects of this crisis.

The 5th GRALE report (Global Report on Adult Learning and Education) highlights a number of situations where the "multidimensional relevance of Adult Education" seems particularly significant (UNESCO, 2022b). It highlights how ALE must go beyond the needs of the marketplace, recognizing the radical changes in employment in our lives, as well as in civil and public society. Such changes require flexibility, critical thinking, and learning skills. What is called into question, then, is an adult education that can be reconceptualized around learning, that must be truly transformative (Mezirow, 1991, 2000, 2009). It is not, therefore, a matter of simply being reactive or adaptive, but it is required the capacity for change and learning.

Data at the global, European and Italian levels urge us to continue to raise the issue of adult learning and education, recognizing that it is far from acquired and achieved.

2. LEARNING IN DAILY LIFE AND IN THE WORKPLACE

From the framework outlined, it emerges how the socio-cultural instances of our time urge the development of widespread learning, in which the optimal conditions for learning are linked to the subject's ability to independently manage appropriate tools of knowledge (Knowles, 1996, 2008). This is continuous, self-directed learning, which makes people capable of anticipating new conditions and changing continuously, avoiding the risk of obsolescence. Such widespread learning enables people to cope with the many transitions they will experience throughout their lives.

How do people learn in their life? How do people learn in work contexts?

The European Qualifications Framework defines learning as follows: "Learning is a cumulative process where individuals gradually assimilate increasingly complex and abstract entities (concepts, categories, and patterns of behavior or models) and/or acquire skills and wider competences. This process takes place informally, for example through leisure activities, and in formal learning settings which include the workplace" (CEC, 2005). This definition strongly emphasizes that learning takes place all the time. However, there is often a risk of being very focused on formal learning, neglecting the acquisitions and skills acquired in other contexts, in everyday life. There is the issue of making them visible, both to

the person, who is able, in this way, to become aware of them, and to the contexts they inhabit. Informal learning takes place in a context that is not formally recognized, not prioritized for learning. In other words, informal learning is the continuous training process through which each person acquires values, attitudes, skills and knowledge through daily experience and the educational influence exerted by the resources of the socio-cultural context (Mariani, Santerini, 2002).

The significant difference between this learning and formal learning is that in this the protagonist is the person, the one who learns.

In work contexts, learning can be of two types: non-formal, when ad hoc activities are planned and organized to promote the learning of knowledge and skills (training activities), this kind of learning also occurs outside institutions, such as through on-the-job training, community-organized learning opportunities; or informal, if such learning occurs unintentionally.

Informal learning involves daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support. It may be intentional but, in most cases, it is not. An atypically broad area in which informal learning can be promoted includes public learning spaces such as museums and libraries, religious settings, sports organizations and cultural centers. By its very nature, informal learning cannot be implemented deliberately. It is, however, possible to plan conditions conducive to its promotion, such as recognizing learning outcomes in informal settings and creating a culture of public learning to make learning a light and fun event. About informal learning, we have to consider also the family learning, that is particularly relevant.

Marsick and Watkins (1990) theorized incidental learning, which emphasizes how learning occurs in every person's daily experience. It is incidental in that it determines a consequence in terms of learning, which results from other activities related to the learning itself, but which are not the object of attention at that precise moment. Central is the concept of sharing and learning from others. Informal and incidental learning takes place wherever people have a need, motivation and opportunity for learning; it takes place along a path of autonomous awareness, thanks in particular to the context in which the person finds himself or herself.

After a review of several studies conducted on informal learning, Marsick and Volpe (1999) concluded that informal learning has certain characteristics: it is embedded in daily routines, it is triggered by a jolt (Mezirow would say by a "disorienting dilemma"), it is unconscious, it is random, it is an inductive process, and it is social, because it is linked to the learnings of others.

It occurs, according to Marsick and Watkins (2001), only under certain conditions: it must be experience-based, circumscribed in a specific context, goal-oriented and involving action, originated from non-routine conditions, characterized by thinking, bounded and catalyzed by proactivity, critical reflection and creativity. It is learning marked by spontaneity, depth, and durability over time. Overall, both experience and direct reference to reality and social interaction are central in it.

Thus, it is in practice and in relationships that learning finds its foundation: there is a need, in this sense, to restore dignity to educational interactions among adults, pursuing a relational path, characteristic of the hermeneutic turn, which makes it possible to avoid the risks of subjectivism and objectivism and to reframe experience in a reflexive sense (Schön, 2006).

To promote lifelong learning, it is essential to develop flexible pathways that establish connections between formal, non-formal and informal learning, recognizing that the boundaries between the different modalities are blurred and that their integration is to be promoted. Learning cities are to be promoted, extending the centrality of learning and training outside and beyond educational agencies (Longworth, 2007). It is to promote what Knowles calls a life-long learning

resource system (LLRS) (Knowles, 2006): "a consortium of all learning resources in a community" , which include institutions, private organizations, businesses, media, environmental resources, everyday events, and people.

"Flexible learning pathways" that combine formal, non-formal and informal learning modes are to be pursued. Pathways that allow learners to move within and through formal and non-formal education, training, and work (UNESCO, 2022 a). A range of learning possibilities, then, according to the five key elements proposed by UNESCO for LLL: different age groups, levels of education, modes of learning, spheres and spaces, purposes. The following is a visual representation of this interweaving of proposals, where commonalities between levels and potential stakeholder engagement interventions are evident.

LLL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

| FORMAL: Leads to a recognized award, diploma or certificate | Early childhood education (ISCED 0) | Primary education (ISCED 1) | Lower secondary education (ISCED 2) | Upper secondary education (ISCED 3) | Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4) | Short-cycle tertiary education (ISCED 5) | Bachelor's or equivalent (ISCED 6) | Master's or equivalent (ISCED 7) | Doctoral or equivalent (ISCED 8) |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Special needs education, vocational, technical and professional education | | | | | | | |
| | | Second-chance education | | Apprenticeships, practical applied learning, residential practices | | | | | |
| | | QF: Validate non-formal and informal learning | Qualifications Framework Level 1 | QF Level 2 | QF Level 3 | QF Level 4 | QF Level 5 | QF Level 6 | QF Level 7 |
| NON-FORMAL: Leads to a non-formal certificate or none at all | Early childhood care | Youth and adult literacy programmes | | Work skills training, professional development, internships | | | | | |
| | | Out-of-school programmes | | Life-skills training, health and hygiene, family planning, environmental conservation, computer training | | | | | |
| | | Social or cultural development, organized sport, arts, handicrafts | | | | | | | |
| INFORMAL: No award | Family-based child care | Self-directed, family-directed, socially directed learning: Workplace, family, local community, daily life | | | | | | | |
| | | Incidental learning: Reading newspapers, listening to radio, visiting museums | | | | | | | |

Figure 1 – Learning possibilities. Source: UNESCO 2022, p. 102.

It is, therefore, a holistic system, based on "building blocks" that meet the needs and requirements of different groups of learners .

In the context of work organizations, there are several perspectives with which one can look at organizational learning. Of particular interest turns out to be the social one, which allows us to represent organizational learning as situated in everyday work contexts; distributed within communities that create, employ, innovate bodies of specialized knowledge; guarded within social relationships and transmitted through them; rooted within material situations and contexts, objectified in artifacts (Senge, 1992). Learning becomes, therefore, a process and not an outcome, in which prior experiences assume a relevant role. Accepting this perspective leads us to recognize that learning develops in participatory

contexts and is not confined to people's minds. In other words, it is the community that learns, not the individual. Important, however, is to highlight that not all work contexts become learning contexts for people. They become so if they allow genuine participation in communities of practice and if they ensure full access to all aspects relevant to practice, including in it activities, artifacts, places and people (Lave, Wenger, 1991). We can, in this sense, assert that organizations that are configured as educational settings, which promote the growth and learning of their workers, become learning contexts. In this perspective, learning turns out to be situated in work contexts, distributed in communities, cherished and transmitted in relationships.

To this end, the work learning place (WLP) perspective is particularly relevant. WLP, learning while working, focuses attention on invisible learning, shifting the focus from doing training (teaching) to learning outcomes applied to work (knowledge). WLP is, therefore, an environment for facilitating learning in the workplace, which is structured into a series of possibilities for using tools and resources, made available to the person, so that when the desire, need, opportunity, and motivation to learn is triggered in that person, he or she can immediately find what he or she needs to be able to learn and develop (Rotondi, 2005). WLP makes it possible to bring work and learning together in one context; it means focusing on what are the most appropriate places, times, and ways to be able to strongly accelerate people's natural learning process.

3. THE RESEARCH

In this scenario, it is appropriate to ask ourselves about various issues. Specifically, it is necessary to ask oneself how to make the learnings resulting from work experience evident, just as it is necessary to ask oneself about how the working context can enhance the learning acquired in other life contexts.

To investigate these issues, research is being carried out to understand:

- A. when and how do adults learn?
- B. when and how do workers learn in the workplace today?
- C. how can the working context enhance the learning acquired in other life contexts?

These questions pose a number of issues. There is, in fact, the issue of making informal knowledge evident: there is, therefore, an implicit character of informally acquired learning, an unexpressed sphere that generates an initial bewilderment but also a certain difficulty in verbalizing and making evident the knowledge mobilized to perform certain activities (Di Rienzo, 2017). Furthermore, there is the issue for organizations and workers of recognizing the knowledge and skills acquired in other life contexts. Think, in this sense, of the family context and the transversal skills learned in exercising different family roles (child, sibling, parent...). The answers to these questions have an impact on how to design and implement training courses that promote learning.

To investigate these issues, research is being carried out to understand when and how workers learn in the workplace today and to understand if and how work contexts recognize and value the learning acquired in other contexts.

From the methodological point of view, the story collection is the framework (Pineau, Le Grand, 2003). Through the narrative method, it would be possible to collect stories, access experiential knowledge and value dimensions that are manifested in the world of work, during training, and during one's lifetime. The narration allows us to order the experience and construct more complex reference frameworks.

Following the identification of a sample of workers, narrative interviews are conducted. They are useful for retracing the work experience and identifying learning opportunities and methods. This methodology makes it possible to respond to the research objectives but also takes on a formative value, favoring the reflection of the workers involved and the assumption of awareness of their learning (Cadei, 2017).

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Re-imagining lifelong education in socio-culturally complex communities.

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Abstract - The paper starts by focusing on some key elements that characterize postcolonial and intersectional analysis of the relationships between lifelong education and migrations. It will then proceed to briefly present various aspects of recent Italian policy documents, addressing issues related to migrant background families. To conclude, the paper suggests that, starting from reflections on 'educating communities', we can explore the developments of lifelong education in sociocultural complex environments.

KEYWORDS: Lifelong education, postcolonial education, intersectionality, migrant families, educating communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to present some theoretical aspects emerging in current Italian research on lifelong education in diverse communities, with special reference to needs and challenges characterizing urban environments featured by situations of high migrant and postmigrant population.

I will begin by presenting some background issues, drawing on various literature on lifelong education and migrant communities and on postcolonial and intersectional perspectives on educational issues within heterogenous contexts.

Within this theoretical background I will introduce some aspects of migrant presence in Italian urban and/or semiurban areas, and I will briefly recall some aspects that have emerged in recent Italian policy documents addressing issues of educating communities in socioculturally complex environments, such as *Orientamenti interculturali* (MI, 2022) and *Una politica nazionale di contrasto del fallimento formativo e della povertà educativa* (MIUR, 2018).

Finally I will suggest that educating communities themselves offer a relevant opportunity for re-imagining lifelong education within diverse communities.

2. LIFELONG EDUCATION AND MIGRATION

The first theoretical background element I would like to recall is connected to the relationship between lifelong learning and migration. This is relevant because it influences the concrete aspects connected to the educational actions that we can plan and then implement with migrants and non migrants. The relevance of this theme is also linked to the idea itself of lifelong education, and in particular to the following question: which idea of lifelong education is the basis of our educational action? Is it an idea of lifelong education as a transformative action? In other words, is it an idea of lifelong education that seeks to transform at least some aspects of the everyday situations in which people, migrants and non-migrants learn and live? Or instead, is it an idea of lifelong education which does not challenge the status quo situation and therefore does not challenge the starting points from which learners start their learning experience, and with them the relationships between the different components of society? This, in fact, is the dilemma that we have to deal with in different learning environments.

In this perspective, the relationship between lifelong education and migration can be seen as an opportunity to reflect on the ultimate aim of lifelong education in social contexts.

Not surprisingly this relationship has been for many years the core of the theoretical reflections of one of the forefathers of lifelong education itself - Ettore Gelpi, who at the same time was one of the critical voices against some of the developments of this very idea.

As I underlined in a recent paper (Zoletto, 2022a, pp. 54, 57), Gelpi had a dialectical approach on issues like lifelong education itself. He was well aware that lifelong education could sometimes actually contribute ‘to promoting democratization and development processes’, but he was also aware that in other cases it could lead ‘to the strengthening and reproduction of the existing social system’ (Gelpi, 1985, p.87)

So, the role played by migrants within lifelong educational projects could, in Gelpian analysis, reveal one or the other of these approaches. Gelpi focused on the fact that migrants should not be considered simply as recipients of our lifelong educational interventions. They must be involved in those very interventions with an active role starting from the contribution that migrants themselves could offer within the social contexts in which they lived.

3. LIFELONG EDUCATION AND POSTCOLONIAL CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

A second relevant theoretical element I would like to recall is the possible relationship between lifelong education and postcolonial critical perspective. This connection seems to be very relevant for a critical approach towards lifelong education, especially (but not only) when we deal with contexts of high socio-cultural and linguistic complexity, where both natives and migrant-background people live together.

A critical postcolonial perspective on lifelong education in diverse environments is connected to the just mentioned idea by Gelpi of lifelong education, where migrants take an active part in educational processes.

In fact, a postcolonial critical perspective underlines three important aspects.

First, while the colonial type of education is built on a binary type opposition (us versus them; those who know versus those who don’t know; colonizers versus colonized), a critical postcolonial perspective tries to move away from this opposition and tries to underline the many relationships that bind people and groups together (and not just the aspects that make us different) (Spivak, 2002).

Second, while a colonial approach sees the other (in this case the migrant) always and only as someone ‘lacking’ something, one in need of help – and as a consequence considers ‘us’ as those who are called to help – a critical postcolonial approach also tries to underline the strengths of the others (in this case the migrants’ strengths) and therefore does not see education only as a form of ‘depository’ action (as if filling an empty box), but – according to a Freirean perspective – as a process that tries to promote empowerment starting from the strengths of others (Zoletto, 2022b).

As a third point, a colonial approach to education ‘for’ migrants focuses only on the migrant background component of the population, while a postcolonial approach – as a consequence of the two previous points – focuses rather on a process of transformation which involves all those who are part of a complex community, trying to produce empowerment for everyone living in diverse communities (with or without migrant background).

4. LIFELONG EDUCATION AND INTERSECTIONALITY

A third theoretical aspect which seems to be relevant in lifelong education within diverse environments is connected to a well-known field of studies that has developed in recent years, starting from the context of women studies, and that today appears widely spread in different sectors of human sciences. I am referring to intersectionality studies.

From this field there has emerged an increasingly clear awareness that we cannot describe and understand biographical paths of people considering only one element: for example, it is not possible to describe and understand the plurality of the migrants' experiences reducing them simply to their migrant background nor is it possible to understand those experiences reducing them to the so-called cultural differences.

Rather, people's paths (so-called 'subjectivation' processes) emerge, following intersectionality studies, from the intersection of many different aspects (gender, age, social group, ethnicity, different kinds of social capital etc.) (McCall, 2005). Moreover, a relevant role is played by the context within which these elements intersect, specifically from the different position that the learners occupy within those contexts: in fact, Gill Valentine (2007) has spoken of 'power-laden spaces'.

From the perspective of lifelong education within high complexity contexts this means that the contribution that migrants can bring to community learning processes (as well as the contribution brought by natives) is not only connected to the migrant background, but to this broader intertwining of different elements.

5. SOCIOCULTURAL COMPLEXITY WITHIN ITALIAN URBAN AREAS

It is no coincidence that Danny Wildemeersch and Ruud van der Veen, in analyzing the challenges lifelong education has to deal with in today's diverse learning environments underlined that we cannot read this diversity only as an effect of migration flows because the diversity is more generally connected to 'processes of individualization and pluralization' (van der Veen, Wildemersch, 2012, p.5) that characterize the entire population – not only the migrant population. And it is not by chance that, drawing on the classic definition of 'urbanism' by Louis Wirth, Adriano Cancellieri suggests that 'urban life is characterized by the fact that many different 'social worlds' live together' (Cancellieri, 2012, p. 63).

Perhaps, we might add that these processes are connected to those very intersections which we mentioned in the previous pages. As Cancellieri suggests, today a diversity of 'spatial practices' is connected to a complexity of aspects, ranging from migration flows (which bring together people from different sociocultural backgrounds) to transformations in the media (that affect the way in which we deal with our everyday life) (ibid.).

This is something that in the Italian context seems today to affect not only big metropolitan areas and urban suburbs, but also small and medium-sized towns, which are probably the most common situation in Italy (ibid.). Indeed, Cancellieri himself observes that sociocultural and economical processes and transformations concur – also within these small areas – in producing a growing disorientation (Cancellieri, 2011), that seems to produce forms of 'uprooting' instead of forms of identity, community and participation (ibid.).

Of course, local situations are very diverse. In any event, we can say that – at least as far Italy is concerned – in the last years migrant individuals and families have arrived in territories that were (and still today are) diverse, and marked by different kinds of vulnerabilities (Zoletto, 2023, p. 16; see also Albani, 2019).

6. MIGRANT BACKGROUND AND NATIVE FAMILIES

During the spring of 2022, the Italian Ministry of Education published a relevant policy document entirely devoted to issues concerning intercultural perspectives in educational contexts. I refer to the *Orientamenti interculturali* edited in March 2022 by the 'National observatory for migrant background students' integration and intercultural education'. In spite of the fact that this document mainly addresses issues related to formal education, we find within it also many significant aspects regarding lifelong education. Among these, the *Orientamenti interculturali* deal with issues such as those related to migrant background families.

In addition to underlining the relevance of increasing and improving school-family relationships, the document highlights the importance of promoting actions, that appear to be consistent with both a ‘community education’ approach and the awareness that we have to address both migrant background and native families.

In fact, the document highlights that it is important to involve families in a range of school-related activities, such as sport, as well as cultural and leisure activities, encouraging families themselves to manage some spaces and activities within the school and promoting forms of parents’ associations involving both migrant and not migrant components of a community (MI, 2022, p. 27).

Moreover, in a perspective that seems not so far from the intersectional approach that we mentioned in the previous pages, the document also underlines that it is relevant to support the female components of families, especially mothers who live in situations of isolation and social exclusion, in order to foster their involvement in opportunities of both learning Italian and promoting/valuing their own knowledge and competences (for example with regard to their native language), also by using the resources and spaces of school libraries (ibid.).

This kind of attention – that testifies to a commitment of building on the strengths of the whole community and of valuing the contribution that migrants themselves can offer to lifelong education practices – can perhaps be developed, also in the perspective of the territorial networks for lifelong learning to whom the Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIAs) are today called to concur, following current Italian policies in the field of lifelong and adult education (TIAP, 2021; CRRS&S Lombardia, Rete regionale CPIA Lombardia, 2021).

7. TOWARD EDUCATING COMMUNITIES

Issues about families and communities emerge in a relevant way also in the document *Una politica nazionale di contrasto del fallimento formativo e della povertà educativa*, edited in 2018 by the Experts group of MIUR (Italian Ministry of Education University and Research) for fighting leaving school and educational poverty (MIUR, 2018). The main focus of the document was, indeed, policies against drop-out. However, it clearly emerges – from the pages of the document itself – that one of the key aspects in this direction is a strong community education perspective (ibid). Likewise, the document seemed to highlight the relevance of the field of lifelong education, with special reference to complex environments.

In fact, the document underlines that a pivotal role can be played by ‘educating communities’, established in each territory through the partnerships between different educational agencies (both formal and informal), such as schools, sport centers, third sector, churches and volunteer organizations, These can act as a network and build on different kinds of knowledges, competences, experiences (ivi, p. 29).

Among other relevant strategies, the document refers to the strengthening of the already mentioned CPIAs, and to actions aiming at increasing the relationships between schools and communities, such as extended opening of the schools, and seeking to promote families’ participation to/through a range of extracurricular activities and workshops (ivi, p. 49).

Again, these are all strategies and actions that – in spite of the fact that they were mentioned in the frame of a document whose main focus was formal education – they seem to be well connected to the already mentioned territorial networks for lifelong learning and to address – through an empowerment perspective – all those who are part of a diverse community, including the whole population (with or without a migrant background).

8. RE-IMAGINING LIFELONG EDUCATION

In a recent chapter in which she analyses the future prospects of lifelong education in Italy, Laura Formenti writes that ‘a ‘prophetic’ education has to look to the future in order to create possibilities, generating concrete, open free spaces and

times, where we can discuss, socialize and plan together with others' (Formenti, 2021, p.41). In the context of the already mentioned CPIAs and networks for lifelong learning, Formenti herself suggests that we have to imagine the future development of lifelong education trying to recognize a deeper unity between learning, training and education (ibidem).

In this perspective, referring back to what we mentioned in the previous pages and in particular to the Gelpian idea of the relationship between lifelong learning and migrants, we can perhaps say that in order to critically 're-imagine' (Spivak, 1999) lifelong education in diverse communities 'to come', we should also connect this future development to the reflections on educating communities (which, as we have suggested, can be in many ways linked to the theme itself of territorial networks for lifelong education and to the role of CPIAs). Moreover, in order to promote educating/learning communities and networks that can actually be more inclusive and equitable, we can perhaps suggest that we should become able to build on local stories that in the present circumstances are becoming more and more plural and collective (Spivak, 2012).

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Symposia

Conceiving Heterogeneous Temporalities and Rhythms in Biographical Research and Adult Education (symposium)

Abstract - The three contributions presented in this symposium question how we can access and describe the heterogenous temporalities and rhythms through which adults learn, transform, and develop themselves throughout their lifespan. They focus on the use of life history and biographical approaches, as research and training methods developed and promoted in adult and higher education. Each of these contributions revisit existing practices referring to life history and (auto)biography in adult education, by analysing the temporal and rhythmic dimensions they involve.

KEYWORDS: Life history, biography, rhythm, temporality, unconscious, narration, learning.

1. OVERVIEW OF SYMPOSIUM

This symposium is the third one proposed in a series of three symposia, bringing together ten researchers from seven countries, focusing on time, space, and rhythms in adult education (Alhadeff-Jones, Finnegan, Dakka & Cappa, this volume; Alhadeff-Jones, Maubant, Roquet, Biasin, & Wittorski, this volume). The specific aim of this third symposium is to question how we can access and describe the heterogenous temporalities and rhythms through which adults learn, transform, and develop themselves throughout their lifespan. The particularity of the three contributions presented in this text is to focus on the use of life history and biographical approaches, as research and training methods developed and promoted in adult and higher education (e.g., Alheit, Bron-Wojciechowska, Brugger, & Dominicé, 1995; Delory-Momberger, 2003; Dominicé, 2000; Pineau, 2000; West, Alheit, Andersen, & Merrill, 2007). Following three different paths, each of these contributions revisit existing practices referring to life history and (auto)biography in adult education, by stressing and analysing the temporal and rhythmic dimensions they involve, as they relate to various forms/formats of adult learning. Doing so, they demonstrate the need and the relevance to enrich research and practices, through a more detailed account and understanding of the multiple temporalities, and the relational (re)framing of subjectivity in time identities, as part of modern biography and rhythms that shape people's learning experiences throughout the course of their lives.

2. A TIME-SENSITIVE (RE)CONSTRUCTION: BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH AS TEMPORAL REORDER OF LEARNING IN ADULT EDUCATION

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2.1. Biography in adult education and learning

Focusing on biography in adult education and learning (ALE) involves a specific use of life history, life course, or narrations, as (auto)biographical constructs of lived-times, and the ability to exercise "biographicity" (Alheit, 2020). In modern times the idea that the "nature of time" can be shaped (Sorokin & Merton, 1937) and is a matter of individual responsibility and individualisation (Elias, 1988; Nassehi, 2008) created a "Zeitgeist" from which the notion of (auto)biography could emerge. Biographical research in education has "... privileged an understanding of personal development, growth, or manifestations of human agency as experienced by subjects located in specific historical and social contexts" (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017, p.132). The analysis of (auto)biographical texts aims at revealing collective and individual-subjective forms of "temporal (re)ordering [of] a person's life" (Alheit & Dausien, 2018, p.891). Central

question is: how do people (re)construct their identity and the temporality of their existence (narratively) throughout their lives, and in the context of lifelong learning?

2.2. Biography, identity, time, and learning

Analogous to history as a “processual self-reference” (Nassehi, 2008), an (auto)biography refers to a self-description in which a person describes, observes, and narrates a series of events, referring to him/herself in a processual way. Thus, the narrative produced is not identical with the course of one’s life, and with what “really happened”. In no way can “historical time” be assumed to be a reality in biographical narratives (Leitner, 1982). The frame of reference is a person’s lifetime, understood as “a quantifiable stretch or duration, which is the time span of an individual human life” (Alheit & Dausien, 2018, p.880). However, this only refers to a first level of the time potential of biographical research. By analysing (auto)biographical narrations and texts whose structures are genuinely based on temporality, it gives access to collective temporalities, social patterns of time, and individual modalisations within time. For ALE worthwhile is the imbedded transformative idea of learning: unfolding one’s own biography, the “self-shaping in this process” is a kind of a temporal modality bound onto the present and connected to the past and the future. In his work on educational biographies, Kade unfolds its potential on how education and learning aim at “enabling and generating the uniqueness of individuality” (Kade, 2011). Alheit (2020, p.1) emphasizes the “resilience potential of biographical learning”. Biographical work in education contributed to a broad range of biographical methodologies and practices focusing on the processual (time) aspects of diversification in socialities, identity formation, self-development or training (cf. Schmidt-Lauff & Hassinger, 2023i.p.).

2.3. Biographical temporalizations: Interlacing past, present and future

Biographies are a complex matter and subject to permanent construction through the interlacing of the three temporal dimensions of past, present, and future. According to the process of doing biography and *uno actu* identity formation, subjective time-consciousness plays a crucial role. Husserl (1917/1985) formulates this “how” of a temporal setting-in-relation of the internal and external, as a play of real events and lived experiences, as well as sensations. The internal time-consciousness (*Wahrnehmung*) continues to produce new levels in different modes of “presentification” (*Vergegenwärtigung*), either as retentions or “primary memories” (in the sense of a flow of consciousness), or as “forward-looking” (*Protentionen*) (in the sense of irritating the flow of consciousness). The fact that the “stream of consciousness” is also a self-reflexive process is highly relevant to biographical research. It can be grasped, as we can observe how it is continuously changing from phase to phase. Such reflexive moments do neither unfold in a chronologic nor in a linear way. In narrations they appear in parallel along long-lasting memories (“in my childhood I was already interested in...”), short retentions (“since I started the course...”), present moments (“now, when I am learning together with my colleagues...”) and future protentions (“when I know more about, I will start...”).

2.4. Temporal differentiations within the time modes

Referring to Kornwachs’ (2001) philosophical contribution, relational frameworks of time could be described even more precisely:

Table 1: Relational Interlacing of the time modes past, present, future (Kornwachs, 2001, p.169)

| ... of the ... | future (Z - Zukunft) | present (G - Gegenwart) | past (V - Vergangenheit) |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| future (Z) | ZZ | ZG | ZV |
| present (G) | GZ | GG | GV |
| past (V) | VZ | VG | VV |

This multi relational interlacing of the time-dimensions in adult learning is a strong moment in biographical-narrations like the following quote from an interview with a woman, doing formal-learning in a course (switched into online during pandemic times) show: “After my divorce, it was kind of a healing for me to go to this community, regularly turning my attention to something new that I have always wanted to learn [musical programming] and engage in new activities connected to music ... also, just for the sake of learning something new, to develop myself as a person, as it seemed a good idea to face new challenges for personal growth.” (Schmidt-Lauff et al., 2022, p. 27). What we see is not only the “*present of the past (GV)*” (divorce), and the “*present of the present (GG)*” (new activities) but the “*future of the present (ZG)*” (healing), as well as the “*future of the future (ZZ)*” (develop myself).

2.5. Narrated time and temporal indexicality

The context-dependency of language in space and time – the “temporal indexicality” – plays a key role in biographical research. Narratives and narration (Ricoeur, 1984) provide material required for temporal-indexical analyses by including explicit temporal vocabulary and implicit contextual knowledge about time, such as embedded time experiences, as relations of the self to time as *narrated time* and *narrating time*. This distinguishes between the “narrating self” and the “narrated self”, while the *narrative situation* is a constructive “interaction” established through “conventions of communication”, role ascriptions, the narrator’s communicative intentions (“self-portrayal”) and through the interviewer’s influence when listening (von Felden, 2020, p.32).

The “time of language itself” precedes all this (Leitner, 1982, p.24) and is based on the simple fact that narrating takes time. Which leads to a next temporal particularity: we may be able to experience different things at the same time but need to describe and narrate them one after the other. Another temporal particularity is the specific time-independence of texts: We can read narratives of spring in autumn, and we can read them recurrently – the present moment of living, the moment of telling and reading and analysing the narrative, however, cannot be repeated. Narratives contain grammatically different tenses to portray processes, changes and dramaturgy and the speech tempo varies. Speech tempo variances depend, for example, on the emotional state, peculiarities of language or dialect spoken. Identifying temporal semantics helps reveal the “symbolic character of time” (Elias, 1988) and the resulting consciousness-related and perceptual modalisations of time as “intrapersonal temporalities”.

2.6. A time-sensitive professional practice

Biographies genuinely provoke work over individual and subjective modalisation of time in the context of collective temporalities. Time is of central importance for researching and understanding biographies. The purpose of biographical research is to untangle the interwoven complexity between identity, time, learning and the life-course. By using biographies and narrative methods sensitizing insights for adult educators, about the (re)construction of identity and learning transitions within may occur. Biographical research and work in adult education practice leads to (empirical) knowledge, how “the unique ‘code’ of the biographical processing of experience comes about, how it has to be thought

from a temporal perspective as ‘constituted’ by social influences, how structure and emergence, social constitution and individual construction in a lived life build a specific mélange...” (Alheit, 2020, p.2).

3. THE TEMPORALITIES OF NARRATIVES: KINETIC VARIATIONS BETWEEN LIFE STORY AND MICRO-PHENOMENOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

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This contribution first focuses on the theoretical aspect of narrative practices in the field of social sciences, then on the methodological aspect, in the field of adult education and narrative research. Secondly, the epistemological impact of the narrative inquiry approach is considered, in particular to clarify the singularity of the first-person perspective to which narrative research belongs. Following the methodological aspect, a discussion will be proposed on the singularity of the knowledge generated by a qualitative research based on time, rhythm, and anchored in an experiential learning paradigm. The aim is to examine the plurality of temporalities during narrative activity in adult education. Different aspects are examined in order to understand the relationship between narrative technique and the effect on comprehension and learning processes. Amongst the elements, particular attention is paid to narrative regimes (Breton, 2022) based on those variations in kinetic regimes that can be observed in autobiographical texts (Baudouin, 2010), but more broadly, in the variation of procedures between biographical narrative and micro-phenomenological description.

3.1. Narration, temporalisation and kinetic regimes

The field of research concerned by this theme is part of an interdisciplinary perspective, mainly in educational sciences, in the phenomenological theory of experience, but also in narratology (Brémond, 1973; Baroni, 2007) and in cognitive sciences (Depraz, Varela, Vermersch, 2011). This research on the plurality of narratives can also be anchored in hermeneutics. The variation of kinetic regimes during the expression of the first-person point of view can be considered to engage different effects of understanding. If we consider, as Delory-Momberger (2010) does, that human understanding is based on the interpretation of lived experience, and that this interpretation needs narration to become part of memory and anticipation, then research on narration is becoming one of the main themes in adult education. From a theoretical point of view, and according to a first-person approach (Varela & Shear, 2002), temporalities are the operator of the variation of the kinetic regimes of the self-narrative. In order to speed up or slow down narrative activity, it is necessary to go through different types of absorption that transform the perspectives from which experience can be captured. As described in Vermersch’s (2011) work, these types of absorption affect access to memory, and then to the materials that can be incorporated into the narrated experience. From this perspective, and this is one of the focuses of this paper, narrative research can focus on the correlation between the speed of the text and the process of configuring or elucidating the lived materials that are captured by the narrator when composing his or her life story. The construction of these methods can be understood as a tool to observe the effect of variation in temporal processes on the materials that can appear in the narrative: aspect of experience (Petitmengin, 2010), rhythms of the everyday life (Alhadeff-Jones, 2020).

3.2. Temporal granularity and methodological perspectives

Research on narrative practices is not only theoretical. It also has pragmatic and concrete perspectives in the field of adult education (Pineau, 1984, 1986). For example, in order to be able to grasp the phenomena that are part of the process of professionalization, it would be necessary to work over a long period of time. This could be the period during which

someone engages in a new activity and learns to work in a specific field of activity and a singular profession. Thus, to become confident and relevant in a new professional activity takes time, the combination of various resources, the integration of gestures, the way of working with others, the habits of moving in a physical environment. In order to understand this type of phenomenon through a narrative approach, the time scale from which the narrative can find a ground of origin can extend from three to ten years. It is therefore necessary to focus on a biographical narrative approach, which requires a combination of specific formulation, temporalization, and configuration processes (Ricoeur, 1984). Conversely, if the aim of the work is to describe how specific gestures are carried out in a particular situation, the time scale that it will be useful to grasp in order to examine the experience will be reduced in order to be able to specify micro-processes with a fine granularity through the description. This will require a specific process of description, close to “micro-phenomenology” (Depraz, 2020). Between biographical narration and micro-phenomenological description, the unit that operates the evolution of the modes of expression is time. And, more precisely, it is through the variation of temporal scales that the self-narrative is constructed. Secondly, and this is the main purpose of this contribution, research on temporalities and kinetic regimes makes it possible to question what can be highlighted, through the narrative, depending on whether the apprehension of the experience privileges the longitudinal dimension or, conversely, whether it focuses on singular moments (Vermersch, 2003).

4. STUDYING RHYTHMIC UNCONSCIOUS WHEN USING OF LIFE HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACHES AS TRAINING METHODS

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4.1. Revisiting the transformative role played by the experience of repetitions

The reflection developed in this contribution is based on the (repeated) observation that the use of life history and biographical approaches as training methods (e.g., Dominicé, 2000) tends to neglect the (trans)formative role played by the experience of repetitions; whether it is a question of experiences constituting the banality of the everyday life, the memory of which tends to fade over the months and years, or the recurrent experience of behaviours, attitudes, or moods, manifesting themselves over time in a more spaced-out way, more discrete and more irregular, but whose imprint is just as decisive on the fabric of existence. The experience of these repetitions appears indeed as central to understand the way in which adults reproduce, throughout the course of their life, patterns that are constitutive of their singular development, including emancipatory processes. This contribution thus claims a filiation with the Bachelard’s (1950) rhythmanalytical project, stressing the importance of the factor of repetition to interpret the existential fluctuations of the life course. Such an approach acknowledges the (trans)formative role played by the narration of the key events and ordeals that punctuate a life history (Dominicé, 2000; Galvani et al. 2011; Lesourd, 2009). However, it emphasizes the understanding of the rhythms from which the temporal fabric of existence undulates (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017). The purpose of this contribution is thus to problematize the (trans)formative dimensions inherent in the repetitions and periodicities that are constitutive of the ebb and flow of experiences unfolding throughout the lifespan (Alhadeff-Jones, 2020).

4.2. A brief presentation of the life history seminars that inform this contribution

The approach I am referring to emerged during the 1980s and the 1990s in French-speaking countries, following the intuitions and the impulse of scholars, such as Pineau, Dominicé, Josso, Le Grand, De Villers, and many others. As I

practice it, the collective work done around the production of autobiographical narratives aims at providing participants with a trustful setting that enables introspection, interpretive work and dialogue in order to promote at least five kinds of process: (1) the narration of lived experiences that have (had) (trans)formative effects for the individuals and/or the collectives they belong to; (2) the uncovering of patterns in the way participants learn and develop themselves throughout their lives; (3) critical self-reflection on the meaning schemes and the assumptions (Mezirow, 1991/2001) through which participants interpret their life experience; (4) the appropriation of academic contributions (psychological or sociological theories, historical facts, etc.) that provide with additional interpretations of life experiences; and (5) the development of a critical position toward the specific theme of the seminar, informed by experiential and theoretical insights.

4.3. Limitations inherent to the approach from a temporal and rhythmological perspective

One of the key benefits of the approach is to allow participants to relate past autobiographical experiences with each other to reinterpret their meanings in the present context. Doing so, the narrative establishes a temporality through which people can reorganize and reappropriate for themselves, in a deliberate way, their lived experiences. Life narratives usually carry a strong bias: they put the stress on singular or critical experiences (e.g., first time, epiphany, rupture, crisis, transition) that appear as temporal milestones punctuating one's life. Life narratives tend to neglect the repetitive or recurring dimension of lived experiences: Routines, habits, rituals that constitute the everyday life are rarely evoked in detail; everything that relates to the banality of one's existence is usually neglected. More broadly, life narratives tend to stress the discontinuities of existence and the uniqueness of the successive periods of one's life (childhood, adolescence, etc.), rather than evoking what seems permanent, what remains continuous, or what is repeated or reproduced at different stages of one's life.

4.4. Problematizing the relationship between repetition and (trans)formation

The repetitions that shape the life course take different forms: words, feelings, or gestures, repeated on a daily base; complex situations reproduced only a few times over the lifespan (e.g., birth, death of a relative); recurring situations (e.g., professional transitions, migration); or fluctuating psychological states (e.g., feelings of success / failure, safety / risk, high / low self-confidence). From an educational perspective, two kinds of repetition should be distinguished: those that have no cumulative effects; and those that have, and that lead to the emergence of new properties influencing our existence. Such a distinction is not always easy to establish, because cumulative effects and emergences are sometime unpredictable and relative to one's interpretations (e.g., micro-aggressions). The difficulty to establish the effects of repetitive phenomena is also related to the fact that our mind tends to erase them from our memory, to stress specific thresholds associated with the emergence of more pregnant experiences, or to privilege causal attributions that are more direct (e.g., events happening just before a significant change). It remains that the most significant changes that occur in one's existence rarely emerge spontaneously. They usually are the product of "silent transformations" (Jullien, 2009) unfolding below the level of consciousness, through the repetition of phenomena that are not pregnant enough to mark one's memory or to be spontaneously recalled retrospectively.

4.5. Defining the notion of "rhythmic unconscious" as a repository of tacit knowledge inherent to the experience of repetition

There are at least three reasons to pay attention to phenomena of repetition, from an educational perspective. (1) They give access to learning and transformational processes that remain tacit, either because they are too familiar or hard to perceive. Their enunciation display patterns of activity that contribute to the development of adults. (2) Repetitions occurring at low intensity, unfolding at different levels of one's life (everyday, recurring periods, existence as a whole)

give access to the periodic dimension of informal learning and (trans)formative processes. Encounters, separations, migrations, struggles, etc. repeat themselves through specific frequency, period and tempo that translate the idiosyncratic temporalities through which people learn and develop themselves. (3) Working on such phenomena opens new possibilities to interpret life narratives and to conceive educational strategies, considering at the biographical level: the ways people regulate changes of low intensity, reproduce ways of being and acting, or manage recurring transitions between lived states or periods of activity. The specificity of such phenomena is that they refer to learning, transformation and developmental processes that are organized around patterns and periodicities, without being reproduced strictly in the same way. As “forms in movement”, they may be conceived as “rhythmic”. Understood from its etymology, the concept of rhythm immediately refers to a critical tension between order and movement, substance, and flow. The Greek *rhuthmos* evokes both the form that a thing takes in time and the form as it is transformed by time. Referring to a “changing configuration” or a “fluid form”, the concept of rhythm thus makes it possible to evoke an evolving order without reducing it neither to a substance nor to a formless flow. Such phenomena express the rhythmic dimension of one’s existence (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017; Bachelard, 1950; Pineau, 2000). Because they often remain tacit, unconscious, it appeared that they may be qualified through the notion of “rhythmic unconscious”.

4.6. Exploring the temporal organization of learning, transformation, and development through the study of “patterns of duality”

Based on my experience, there are developmental benefits to bring adult learners to analyse the repetitive experiences suggested by their life narratives. Such experiences can be conceived through “patterns of duality” (Bachelard, 1950) that express their rhythmicity. Patterns of duality refer to fluctuations that characterize the evolution of a person, and more specifically the alternance between states or actions associated with antagonistic poles of one’s experience. Examples of such patterns include phases of mastery or lack of, autonomy / dependence, high / low self-esteem, good / bad health, etc. At the scale of one’s existence, highlighting patterns of duality reveals configurations of experiences whose periodicity unfolds through a variable amplitude. The relatively weak intensity of such alternance, the distance between occurrences, and the variability of their qualities, make it difficult to perceive and interpret them retrospectively. From a processual and rhythmological perspective, such patterns contribute to “silent transformations” (Jullien, 2009). Such a conception of (trans)formative processes suggests one to explore more systematically the rhythms that organize the fluxes of existence and the knowledge that may emerge from reflecting and discussing about them. An approach focused on the interpretation of patterns of duality may constitute a privileged entry point to conceive a “rhythm analytical” method aiming at identifying and challenging alienating and emancipating forms of repetitions experienced by people throughout their lives, and more specifically the singular rhythmic modalities through which adults learn, transform, and develop themselves throughout their existence.

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Spaces, Times and the Rhythms of Critique and Emancipation in Adult Education (symposium)

Abstract - The aim of this symposium is to explore how to conceive the influences of both spatial and temporal configurations through which adults learn, transform, and develop themselves, from a critical perspective. What is at stake is to determine how to identify, interpret and evaluate the relations through which space and time influence educational processes, including the way they are lived subjectively.

KEYWORDS: Space, time, rhythm, critique, emancipation.

1. OVERVIEW OF SYMPOSIUM

This symposium is the first one proposed in a series of three symposia, bringing together ten researchers from seven countries, focusing on time, space, and rhythm in adult education (Alhadeff-Jones, Maubant, Roquet, Biasin & Wittorski, this volume; Alhadeff-Jones, Schmidt-Lauff & Breton, this volume). The aim of this series of symposia is twofold: (1) to provide researchers and practitioners working in the field of adult and higher education an opportunity to share and discuss recent contributions to an emerging field of research; and (2) to valorize research conducted in different linguistic, cultural and geographic areas, in order to highlight proximities, reinforce connections, explore differences, and ultimately strengthen international collaborations around theories and empirical studies related to the study of space, time and rhythm in adult education. More specifically, the aim of this first text is to explore how to conceive the influences of both spatial and temporal configurations through which adults learn, transform, and develop themselves, from a critical perspective. What is at stake is to determine how to identify, interpret and evaluate the relations through which space and time influence educational processes, including the way they are lived subjectively. Recent developments in educational research have shown the significance of considering changes taking place in the policy, practice, and study of education, considering the way people perceive, conceive and experience space and time. Both indeed represent critical lenses to describe and interpret phenomena through which autonomy, identity and inequalities are produced in society (e.g., Alhadeff-Jones, 2017; Bright & al., 2013; Ferrare & Apple, 2010; Gulson & Symes, 2007; Usher, 2002; cited in Alhadeff-Jones, 2019; Pineau, 2000). Focusing on the situatedness of educational processes raises questions about how people (e.g., learners, educators, policy makers) determine the meaning, the relevance and the value associated with specific environments, in relation to learning, transformational or developmental processes, as they may be lived, desired, or expected. Building up on the contributions of the four authors involved in this symposium, its aim is to question more systematically the relations that exist between the development of criticality and the spaces, times and rhythms that shape the praxis of adult and higher education, and which raises questions about the relationship between situated context and general social processes, including about emancipation.

2. QUESTIONING THE EXPERIENCE OF TIME IN ADULT EDUCATION: TOWARD A NEW CRITICAL AGENDA OF RESEARCH?

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When considering some of the key contributions that inform critical traditions in adult education, it is striking to observe how much their assumptions about the temporal dimensions inherent to educational, critical, and emancipatory processes remain tacit, taken for granted or decontextualized. It is for instance the case with authors such as Freire, Rancière, or Mezirow (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017). Their contributions illustrate well how their respective approaches do privilege specific temporal dimensions. They explore the historical, quotidian, and biographical aspects that are constitutive of educational temporalities. The forms of criticality they enable stress specific rhythmic features inherent respectively to the discontinuities of emancipatory processes, the ways they rely on repetition, and the specific patterns they may involve over time (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017, p.179). However, such contributions do not refer explicitly to a theory of time to position and discuss their assumptions regarding the different ways changes unfold, at different scales of one's existence. Nowadays, such a blind spot appears as particularly problematic. Considering the current stress put on "presentism", and how time scarcity, the acceleration of social life, or the experience of being split between antagonistic temporalities (e.g., family, work, studies) invade the everyday practice of adult education, such temporal phenomena jeopardize the possibility to exercise critical reflection and make it more difficult for people to assert their own rhythms of development. In the current context, the exercise of critical reflection requires one to explicitly take into consideration the temporalities that shape the experience of alienation, and that constrain emancipatory processes and the praxis of adult education (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017).

During the past two decades, various contributions have attempted to address such issues. Some authors refer to contributions that may fall under the umbrella of "slow education" (e.g., Domènech Francesch, 2009; Holt, 2002; cited in Alhadeff-Jones, 2017). Claiming the humanistic values of the "slow movement", they challenge and deliberately subvert the dominance of speed in schools and higher education through specific prescriptions and policies. Others criticize the effects inherent to the increasing "acceleration" that interfere with the praxis of adult education (e.g., Brookfield, 2003; Plumb, 1999; cited in Alhadeff-Jones, 2017; Wienberg, Grotlüschen, Schmidt-Lauff & Boyadjieva, 2020). Moving beyond the dualism between deceleration and acceleration, a third trend has emerged in Europe inspired by research conducted at the crossroad between biographical research, sociology and philosophy of time, and rhythm theories. These contributions explore a more nuanced and complex understanding of educational temporalities (e.g., Alhadeff-Jones, 2017, 2019; Galvani, 2019; Lesourd, 2009; Roquet, 2018; Pineau, 2000). On one hand, such contributions have the merit of introducing original and useful resources to critically interpret the relations between time and adult education. On the other hand, because of the limited number of researchers involved, the linguistic compartmentalization of their work, the diversity of their objects of study and the heterogeneity of their theoretical backgrounds, they have not led yet to a consolidated body of research, significant enough to reorientate strategies that may shape the contemporary development of critical traditions in adult education.

In order to capitalize on such contributions, I believe that a new research agenda needs to be envisioned. Three axes of development seem to be particularly critical to consider. First, researchers should focus on the constraining effects of the temporalities that shape educational situations and environments, whether formal or informal. What is at stake here is: (a) to discriminate the heterogeneous temporalities (e.g., biological, psychological, and social rhythms) that determine the unfolding of educational processes; and (b) to interpret the limitations they introduce in the ways people envision their experience of change (symbolic constraints) and the way they feel, act and think in a given context (functional constraints). The second axis of development should focus on the temporalities that are constitutive of educational processes themselves. The development of a critical capacity unfolds through time. It is therefore important to identify relevant frameworks in order to interpret and evaluate the temporal features (e.g., patterns, periodicities, variations) that characterize learning, transformational and developmental processes. New research should inform how we envision and represent the temporalities involved in critical self-reflection, critical dialogue, actions that challenge the status quo, or

the rhythms that compose an emancipatory journey. The third axis of development should consider the experience of time as a trigger for critical inquiry. What is at stake is the capacity to question how we learn to interpret and regulate the heterogeneous temporalities of our lives, especially when they are conflicting with each other. Temporal pressures, temporal dilemmas (e.g., balancing work and family life), rhythmic dissonances (conflicting experiences related to environments that valorize heterogeneous rhythms), schizochrony (the experience of split temporalities), temporal double binds (contradictory temporal constraints imposed on us) should appear as opportunities for learners and educators to question how they relate to themselves, others, and their surrounding environment. Taken all together those three axes of research should contribute to the emergence of a renewed conception of criticality, more sensible to the rhythms through which people learn, change, and evolve throughout the span of their lives. Such a conception of criticality, explicitly informed by time and rhythm and theories, may eventually lead to the development of more appropriate pedagogical resources, strategies, and policies to address some of the contemporary challenges that shape adult education in the early 21st century.

3. THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE AND CRITICAL ADULT EDUCATION

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There is a fascinating body of participatory research on space and place in adult education (AE) (Brown, 2017; Clover, 2020; Ford, 2015; Kilbride, 2022; Lucio-Villegas, 2020; Luraschi, 2020; O'Neill, forthcoming) but overall space remains under researched, except in terms of AE as a scientific field, and is weakly theorized. Work on temporality (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017) has broken new ground but without fully addressing how this relates to space. Thus, I want to sketch out how Bourdieu and Lefebvre understand space and link this to critical AE as part of collective effort to develop an integrated, dialectical approach to time *and* space.

Much, and often too selective, use is made in educational research of Bourdieu's (1984, 1987) understanding of how capitals accumulate over the life course and through history. To have critical force the idea of capitals needs to be linked to the concepts of social space and field (Bourdieu, 1985, 1989, 1996). Fundamental to Bourdieu's work, both theoretically and empirically, is the proposition that social space is structured by relations of domination linked to access to, and conflict over, these economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals. One's position in social space is internalized as a sense of how the world operates, forming a set of embodied durable dispositions which underpin practice through time – habitus (Bourdieu, 1991). According to Bourdieu (1996) we also need to consider the specificity of fields. A field is a defined area of social practice (e.g., education, housing markets, literature etc.) and is structured by the way capitals accumulate and circulate within it and the symbolic work that constitutes its boundaries and create the principles of division and vision for actors engaged in the field. These boundaries and principles are shaped and reshaped by conflicts within the field. It is also crucial to examine how a field relates to wider social space, analyzing the level of autonomy and permeability of a field (including how this is mediated by the State) and the type of knowledge/practices that help define the field. This approach has been developed further by examining the differentiating impact of cultural and ideological milieux within a largely homogenous area of social space (Vester, 2003).

Working through Bourdieu's ideas empirically (Finnegan & al, 2014, 2017; Fleming & al, 2017) has convinced me that they have significant explanatory value for a critical analysis of space in AE. However, there are major gaps. Somewhat ironically Bourdieu's work is far better at capturing the lived experience of domination than what might be termed "identity distant" social mechanisms and powers (for instance the arcane processes of finance). While Bourdieu is invaluable for analysis of the cultural and symbolic dimensions of power, he is far less insightful on economics and the

dynamics of capitalism (2005). He also tends underestimate the significance of contradictions and countercurrents to domination in social space and gives too little consideration to how social space has, or can, be transformed (compare Bourdieu, 1986 to Thompson, 1963).

These weaknesses can be overcome if we combine Bourdieu's insights with those contained in Henri Lefebvre's (1991) remarkable, if uneven, book *The Production of Space*. Based on a deep, heterodox reading of Marx Lefebvre integrates the critique of the commodity form in the capitalist mode of production within a theory of space. Space is not a 'container' of historical processes but is actively produced and the fundamental to both the deep structure of social relations and the texture of everyday life. Lefebvre (1991) proposes a multidimensional analysis of how space is lived, perceived, and conceived (the spatial triad). Lefebvre describes the production of space as processes which material and symbolic, physical, and social. He traces the history and development of capitalism in terms of the space that it produces, and is produced by, what he calls abstract space. Abstract space is fragmented, hierarchical, quantifying and orientated to the stark utopia of homogeneity.

Abstract space predominates globally with 'lethal' consequences according to Lefebvre (1991). Like Bourdieu he foregrounds domination, but he is more sensitized to the layered, hypercomplexity of space, to the dynamic flow and pooling of power, but also where abstract space is weakly meshed. Lefebvre's biographical experience alongside his intellectual and political commitments means he is attentive to the desire for subversion, resistance, play and festival. He uses the spatial triad to discern contradictions and movements against abstract space on various scales what he terms "differential space". For Lefebvre struggles in and over space and the need to resist fragmentation, embrace complexity and particularity and foster agency are central to the contemporary emancipatory politics.

Together Bourdieu and Lefebvre offer the basis for a critical, multidimensional, spatialized theory of social reproduction and resistance. Bourdieu outlines how inequalities are produced in and through space whilst rigorously exploring the specificity of fields. This is invaluable for understanding the role of education and the state in social reproduction and grasping the 'peculiarities' of AE. While Lefebvre is less precise and empirically grounded than Bourdieu *PoS* his critical depth and foci provide the resources for a fully dialectical theory of space.

What concretely might this perspective add to critical AE? I want to begin to answer this by turning very briefly to Freire (1970). The primary focus of his work is on rupturing the repetitive time of oppression, to make a decisive break in history for emancipation. But he also offers the seeds of pedagogy of 'differential space' with his celebration of particularity and richness of knowledge within oppressed communities and his arguments about the value of AE in contributing to the creation of a new type of democratic and reflexive space located between movements and communities. However, the centrality of space, its layering and complexity, and its structuring role in relations of domination, is not fully worked through and I think this gap – which is rarely addressed in the vast body of work that builds on Freire – means that his insights on differential space and knowledge are submerged behind a largely temporal, and therefore one-sided conception of social and educational transformation.

4. TOWARDS AN ETHICS OF RHYTHM IN (UNIVERSITY) EDUCATION: FROM PHILOSOPHY TO PRAXIS

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In keeping with the spirit and main theme of this conference I would like to offer some reflections and observations guided by the following questions:

- What can be learned from living in/ through prolonged, interlocked planetary crises?

- What happens when we turn crises into horizons of/for action?
- What kind of adaptive transformations should we invite, initiate, and activate for universities, education and learning to nurture meaningful change?

Since March 2020, we have seen the unprecedented re-orientation of the universities' mode of delivery toward online provision in teaching and research in response to the global Covid-19 emergency. This has determined the most rapid and profound alteration in the everyday educational practices and routines ever witnessed in the history of the (HE) sector.

To make sense of them, I draw on Lefebvre's Rhythmanalysis (1991/2004) as a philosophy and a method that attends to the body in space and to patterns of activities and movements, foregrounding the mutuality of the spatial and the social, of time and space and of place and space in the analysis of the everyday. Said otherwise, through rhythm we can appreciate the making and remaking of social practice – with attention to its relation with the repetition of routines and the emergence of difference as critical moments that have the potential to re-orient and transform the everyday.

My research pre-Covid focussed primarily on the making and remaking of social practice, namely the rhythms of teaching and learning in the *embodied* institution. Since the advent of the pandemic, I have however started to consider the sudden shift to online provision as a test to our intrinsic ability to adapt. Lefebvre defines it a process of “rhythmic recuperation”: once the unfamiliar becomes gradually normalised, we have the capacity to adapt even to the unthinkable, turning intentions “against the initial design”, as Lefebvre in *Critique of Everyday Life*. That adaptation is key to survival is no news. What is of interest are the conditions of survival in extremis, more precisely the fact that adaptation might entail the deliberate obfuscation of processes of transition and transformation in order to stabilise and/or reproduce dominant regimes of accumulation and modes of regulation (e.g., capitalism and, by extension the capitalist educational institutions).

Current hybrid environments pose further challenges in this respect, characterised as they are by high levels of hyper-connectivity ‘in presence’ - what I term forms of paradoxical ‘monadic co-existence’ whereby one might be physically sharing offices with colleagues, but each will be inhabiting simultaneously different virtual environments enabled by digital platforms such as Zoom or Teams.

My previous research looked at universities as embodied, rhythmic time-space shelters (Dakka, 2021) where anticipatory presence could be found in the pedagogic appropriation of the times and spaces of learning and teaching. Yet the sudden dissolution of the physical space of the institution and the consequent collapse of boundaries between domestic/work spheres, have prompted a different set of thoughts regarding the nature and meaning of ‘connectivity’ for teaching and learning and, crucially, the quality of the rhythms that hyper-connectivity engenders.

As a result, questions of change, agency and living with others implicit in the idea of an “ineradicability of rhythm” in university time as Ron Barnett posits, needs recalibration and openness to ontological and epistemological re-bordering.

Within this intellectual perimeter, I ask what is gained (or lost) educationally, existentially, and intellectually when “the continuum of conjunctive experience is disrupted by the fractal simultaneity of connectivity” (Berardi, 2019, p.98) and what modes of appropriation, transformative adaptation, dwelling, and enjoyment are rendered available through virtual spaces and hybrid spaces.

As institutions currently enter a new phase - transitioning to varying degrees of hybridity - it is important to investigate and interrogate the new rhythms of co-existence. By that I mean how we experience daily shifts from virtual to physical environments or indeed how we manage to inhabit both simultaneously. Consequently, we also need to take an active role in renegotiating the social contract between students, staff, and the institution, instead of accepting top-down impositions characteristic of what might well become a permanent state of exception (e.g., pandemics, energetic crises, climate emergency, wars...).

Here I urge us to think about our individual and collective responsibility in debating, creating, or resisting, if necessary, aspects of the Post-Pandemic, Hybrid University to be considered as an open field of possibility, hope, experimentation, and reinvention but, equally as site of potential oppression and continuing alienation.

Returning to the initial questions that guide this talk, I would like to offer some “thinking with” authors who might orient our future thinking on education within or without educational institutions - Richard Hall for instance (2020) suggests that we should confront the “hopeless university”:

... the idea that the University at the End of History has become a hopeless space, unable both to fulfil the desires of those who labour in it for a good life and to contribute solutions to socio-economic and socio-environmental ruptures... (...) enables us to consider the potential for reimagining intellectual work as a movement of sensuous human activity in the world, rather than being commodified for value. (Hall, 2020)

The ethical and political re-awakening invoked in Hall’s analysis resonates with Braidotti’s call for the development of an affirmative, relational and inclusive ethics which begins from the awareness that “we need to both embrace and resist: the wave of collective and personal despair at the loss of lives , the hardship of the socio-economic consequences of this man-made disaster, the awareness of all that was wrong with the old world and which has now become manifest” (Braidotti, 2020).

5. TIME AND PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIENCE AS HETEROCHRONY

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Time represents both a crucial concept to interpret one’s own experience and a taken-for-granted dimension of everyday life. These intertwined aspects impact individual and collective actions: time remains essentially a locus of power dynamics, that’s why it must be understood and studied as a ‘dispositive’ and it needs a deep analysis from a pedagogical perspective. There is no doubt that people’s experience of temporal alienation and temporal habitus expressed in different forms of living and acting, had to be questioned from an educational point of view. Starting from this perspective we can try to provide a focusing analysis of the relationship between educational temporality and rhythms of the pedagogical processes. This relationship could develop a rethinking of emancipation exploring the concrete possibilities for educators to promote autonomy and agency transforming the ways we use time and rhythm to project and realize our educative concrete plans.

The intertwining of temporality and reflective practices represents the point of resistance where the ethical possibility of the transformation of subjects can be “created”: this intertwining represents a vital knot that educators should never underestimate.

The Deweyan idea of education as reconstruction, as reorganization of experience, such as to increase the meaning of experience itself and increase the capacity to direct the course of the following experience, can take a concrete shape.

Time-subjectivation, as Michel Foucault (1994) proposed, is intertwined with the power of subjectification, the process, and the effects of the formative “*dispositif*” that shape the self.

The greater part of the recent educational literature has examined, drawn on and interpreted Foucault’s work – especially during the years in which Foucault was fashionable – but it has nearly always done so from a perspective that

is limited to the extent of seeming narrow, confining its analysis to a small number of typically educational themes, and mainly exploring these in relation to *Discipline and Punish* and *The Care of the Self*.

With few exceptions, throughout the Italian, French and English-language literature, scholars choosing to address this dimension of Foucault's thinking have – for the most part – either translated *en pédagogie* his stance on power and knowledge, or, alternatively, have attempted to draw out the implications of his theory for education and training issues, often with an almost exclusive focus on the – generally – perverse relationship between institutions and discipline.

From the 1970s onwards, however, more stimulating pedagogical interpretations began to make their appearance: grasping the broader implications of how Foucault was calling for knowledge and the systems underpinning the formation of knowledge to be conceptualized, several authors began to engage with the new epistemological and methodological departures he was proposing. Although relatively few studies in education have investigated the specific implications of Foucault's thinking, pedagogical reflection on his work has opened up new horizons for the philosophy of education, the history of education, research and teaching methods, adult education, educational practice, and the epistemology of educational science.

If the concept of power-knowledge remains key to understand the genealogy of any subjectivation, the field in which power-knowledge most forcefully manifests itself is that of education. And if education remains the place in which all discourses may potentially be adopted, our task is to observe, independently of disciplinary boundaries and the obscuring effect of academic language, how today's *dispositifs* “are constrained” to implicate their subjects.

Hence, what matters from the educational perspective is the positivity constituting education: time and rhythm have a part in the emerging of this “positivity”. As clarified by Giorgio Agamben (2009), Foucault borrowed the term positivity (which later become “*dispositif*”) from Jean Hyppolite's reading of Hegel. Foucault thus defined his stance on an issue that is critical for his entire work:

... the relation between individuals as living beings and the historical element. By the “historical element”, I mean the set of institutions, of processes of subjectification, and of rules in which power relations become concrete. Foucault's ultimate aim is not then, as in Hegel, the reconciliation of the two elements; it is not even to emphasize their conflict. For Foucault, what is at stake is rather the investigation of concrete modes in which the positivities (or the apparatuses) act within the relations, mechanisms, and “plays” of power. (Agamben, 2009, p.

6)

This guidance is particularly helpful to us today, as the contemporary “protest”, i.e. the discursive place of apparent conflict, tends to challenge the “classical” educational agencies: especially schools and universities. These “agencies”, in fact, have recently been rendered obsolete and of marginal importance by new patterns of identity and new virtual places of learning and shared knowledge, that is to say by the spreading effects of the new educational *dispositifs*. As repeatedly observed by Foucault himself, an explosion of discourses around a given topic does not so much flag the urgency and key importance of the object in question but rather its de facto disappearance from the cultural field.

Foucault reinstates the positivity of educational “objects” as *dispositifs* and procedural systems, both in the sense of external technologies of space, time, body, and action, and in the sense of “internal” subjugation implicated by self-care and self-formation.

We can try to interpret education and formative temporality as “heterochrony”, from a Foucauldian perspective, the temporal dimension of every “heterotopia” gives rise to an ethics of immanence at the heart of pedagogical experience, which contrasts its rhythm with a pre-established pedagogical telos deaf to the needs and the potentialities of emancipative

events. Every formative experience is after all a heterochrony, time and rhythm are levers in the hands of those who educate and form. In adult education, understanding the formative experience as a heterochrony allows us to become more aware of the temporal patterns that shape the projects and practices we undertake as trainers and educators, at the same time allowing us to better understand the nature of the processes that contribute to the formation of self and others.

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Studying the Multiplicity of Temporalities and Rhythms that Shape Adult Education and Professional Development (symposium)

Abstract - The aim of this symposium is to explore the multiplicity of temporalities and rhythms that shape educational settings and processes, and the effects inherent to their antagonistic and complementary dimensions on adult learning and professional development. This symposium is articulated around four contributions providing with a bird-view of some of the main theoretical and empirical issues inherent to the study of time as it relates to professional development and vocational education.

KEYWORDS: Temporality, rhythm, professional development, professionalization, dual education.

1. OVERVIEW OF SYMPOSIUM

This symposium is the second one proposed in a series of three symposia organized during this conference, bringing together ten researchers from seven countries, focusing on time, space, and rhythms in adult education (Alhadeff-Jones, Finnegan, Dakka & Cappa, this volume; Alhadeff-Jones, Schmidt-Lauff & Breton, this volume). The specific aim of this symposium is to explore the multiplicity of temporalities and rhythms that shape educational settings and processes, and the effects inherent to their antagonistic and complementary dimensions on adult learning and professional development. This text is articulated around four contributions providing the readers with a bird-view of some of the main theoretical and empirical issues inherent to the study of time as it relates to professional development and vocational education. As a theoretical contribution, Michel Alhadeff-Jones' contribution aims at defining the relevance of a process-oriented approach to adult education informed by rhythm theories, to conceive the relations between the heterogeneous temporalities involved in adult education. The contribution of Philippe Maubant builds up on two recently edited books, providing with a meta-analysis of French-speaking empirical and theoretical research conducted around the relations between temporalities, learning, professional development and/or dual education. Pasqual Roquet and Chiara Biasin's contribution also capitalizes on an edited collection of research to be published in French language. It stresses questions related to the tensions between continuity and discontinuity, long and short temporalities, as they relate to educational processes, including professionalization and professional identity development. Finally, Richard Wittorski's contribution explores similar themes through an empirical study focusing on the professional development of CEOs. Doing so, it also opens theoretical and practical questions related to the experience of conflicting temporalities within professional environments in mutation.

2. TOWARDS A RHYTHMOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ADULT EDUCATION

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2.1. Privileging a processual mind-set

Since Antiquity, there has been a long tradition in philosophy emphasizing the volatile and fluid aspects of phenomena, rather than their stable or substantial dimensions. Thinkers such as Heraclitus, Leibniz, Bergson, Peirce, James, and Whitehead have given rise to what some researchers refer to as processual philosophy (Alhadeff-Jones, 2018a; Rescher, 2000). Such a perspective privileges an understanding of the world primarily based on the study of the active and changing aspects that form our reality, rather than what would constitute its substance. Education, training, and learning are all

processes. This is obvious, yet we often observe how much we tend to reduce them to their most prevalent components – whether it is knowledge, people, or places – conceived as stable, even static, endowed with a relative autonomy and an intrinsic nature. A process-oriented approach repositions such stable or static phenomena, as emergences within a series of connected developments, linked to one another, and taking place in a coordinated and programmed way (Rescher, 2000, p.22). The interest of this perspective is to allow the linking of phenomena constitutive of reality that our thinking tends to separate. Privileging a process-oriented perspective, this contribution explores some of the benefits associated with the adoption of a rhythmological lens to enrich the ways in which we interpret the changes that shape educational phenomena.

2.2. Privileging a rhythmological perspective

The concept of rhythm constitutes a privileged entry point for considering the study of temporalities and formative processes, insofar as the experience of rhythm allows one to describe and account intuitively for the way in which time and change are experienced (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). In education, there is a long tradition that focuses on the study of the rhythms that are constitutive of individual and collective development (see Alhadeff-Jones, 2017, for a review). Understood from its etymology, the concept of rhythm immediately refers to a critical tension between order and movement, substance, and flow. The Greek *rhuthmos* evokes both the form that a thing takes in time and the form as it is transformed by time (Sauvanet, 1999, p.6). Referring to a “changing configuration” or a “fluid form”, the concept of rhythm thus makes it possible to evoke an evolving order without reducing it neither to a substance nor to a formless flow. The concept of rhythm is all the more relevant as it is a nomadic concept that has been adopted by different disciplines (Michon, 2021; Sauvanet, 1999, 2000). Referring to rhythm theories opens therefore possibilities to enrich our vocabulary and the ways we envision people’s experience of change and time.

2.3. Interpreting the qualities of lived or observed changes beyond dualities

Educational temporalities are generally considered based on pairs of oppositions such as speed/slowness, attention/distraction, acceleration/deceleration, continuity/discontinuity, etc. Although these terms make it possible to appreciate certain properties of the changes experienced, their use makes it difficult to describe temporal experiences in a nuanced way. Rather than considering changes through opposite and exclusive features, a rhythmological approach suggests one to explore how different states or phenomena relate to each other. It makes it possible to refine the description of the phenomena studied, by suggesting first to distinguish the kinds of rhythms considered (e.g., discursive, embodied, interactional, social), and then by exploring how changes evolve, considering their rhythmic features (what patterns organize them through time, how they are reproduced, how do they variate?).

2.4. Conceiving the fluctuations of educational processes beyond static states organized chronologically

Another way educational research tends to simplify the temporal complexity of behaviours, skills, capacities, or ways of thinking, is by reducing temporal differences to successive stable states, organized chronologically (e.g., biological age, generational belonging, stages of development). A rhythmological approach stresses the fluctuating nature of such phenomena. Thus, people can feel more or less mature, skilled, capable, confident, expert, etc. Such dispositions are not strictly associated to an age, a level, or a stage of development. They fluctuate depending on the context and the situations experienced. The concept of rhythm opens the possibility to inscribe such changes within a continuum, organized for

instance around polarities or “patterns of duality” (Bachelard, 1950), such as: expert/novice, autonomy/dependency, theory/practice, failure/success, etc. Thus, it makes it possible to consider the fluidity of the related states through which we experience and interpret learning and development over time. Accordingly, the purpose and the aim of the educational process is no longer to reach a specific or ideal stage of development (e.g., adopting a sustainable way of living). It is rather to develop the capacity to sustain and regulate the movement through which ways of thinking, feeling, behaving, or interacting, fluctuate between polarities, displaying patterns that eventually (trans)form themselves through time.

2.5. Enriching the language used to describe educational temporalities

Finally, a rhythmological perspective provides us with specific resources to enrich the forms of reasoning used to describe, interpret, and evaluate educational temporalities.

(a) Metaphorically, references to rhythmic phenomena provide evocative representations (e.g., melody, harmony) to represent the plasticity and the dynamics of (re)organization of educational processes.

(b) Reasoning through rhythm-based analogies also contributes to the intuitive understanding of changes and temporalities. Thus, relating physical phenomena (e.g., wave), or biological ones (e.g., synchronization), to educational processes allows one to establish similarities and differences between heterogeneous experiences of time.

(c) Rhythmic phenomena that display some regularity (e.g., repetitions, sequences, periods) may also be expressed through statistics, to establish correspondences and help understanding educational experiences (e.g., probabilistic correlations between the time of day and psychological states).

(d) Rhythmic phenomena are also found in narratives, through both the enunciation of moments of rupture (e.g., crisis, discontinuity) and the description of everyday phenomena, that manifest a certain constancy (e.g., habits, routines). It gives access to the ways people envision the succession of changes experienced or observed, as well as the temporalities they are made of.

The reflection developed succinctly in this contribution illustrates therefore the interest of adopting a rhythmological lens to conceive the temporal complexity inherent to educational processes. It suggests having recourse to new metaphors, new analogies, but also new means of observation, measurement, and narration, to account for the heterogeneity of experienced rhythms, their reciprocal influences and their effects on learning, transformational and developmental dynamics.

3. THREE DETOURS TO THINK ABOUT TEMPORALITIES

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3.1. Temporalities in adult education: Three perspectives

The question of temporalities in adult education is often treated in the literature from three perspectives: training design, dual education (*alternance*) as a specific pedagogy of adult education, and the act of learning. The aim of this paper is to give an account of the main debates that run through these three analyzers of temporalities in adult education. It is based on two international symposia organized in 2017 and 2019, both of which led to the publication of edited volumes (Maubant, Biasin, & Roquet, 2018; Maubant & Roquet, 2021). This contribution deals more specifically with the first two perspectives, while recalling more briefly the meaning associated with the act of learning in situations, as an analyzer of the temporalities involved.

3.2. Training design as a mirror of the issues involved in taking temporalities into account

Designing a training is a process that involves two types of engineering: the design of training policy and the design of training itself. The discourses advocating for the development of professionalization pathways reveal this oscillation between two arguments: the political argument and the managerial argument. For some, a professionalization pathway meets the pressing need to strengthen the links between training and employment, to bring school and business closer together. For others, the success of a vocational training pathway depends on its ability to organize the practices of the various players involved in an educational setting: trainers, tutors, supervisors, mentors, etc. This arrangement is governed by official texts ruled by framing agreements with the social partners. For politicians and managers alike, the question of temporalities is omnipresent as soon as it comes to designing and implementing the professionalization process. However, this question does not have the same meaning or the same resonance for them. The professionalization pathway does not express a duration marked by the end of the school career and by retirement. It corresponds to a long period of time structured in moments of life, alternating work situations, training situations and social situations. The question of temporality is therefore a key factor in the design, implementation, and evaluation of vocational training pathways.

3.3. Training design challenged by new relationships to time

Temporalities, training, work or life times, moments, periods, movements, instants (Maubant, 2013), or rhythms, are concepts present in the texts regulating adult education. Different publications aim at understanding temporalities from the definition of other concepts: rhythms (Alhadeff-Jones, 2018b), moments, phases, stages, periods, or sequences (Biasin & Da Re, 2018), chronos (Faulx & Danse, 2018). These different terms organize and structure training settings and curricula as much as the Labor Code and interprofessional, branch or company agreements. The issue of temporalities is thus part of the daily life of the worker, the student, and the citizen. The relationship with time and social time is therefore a human issue. It is inherent in the relations that humans maintain, consciously or not, with life and death. Thinking about working time means thinking about family time, friendships, and social time. Thinking about training time means thinking about school time and self-development time. To think about lifetime is to think about death, in what it can be, for some, as a point of finitude, or on the contrary, for others, as a stage of a new beginning. Notions expressing temporalities run through educational systems, which are conceived throughout their duration. They reveal everyday practices thought through their immediacy. These new ways of thinking about social time raise questions about training design in the sense that this function makes the task of designing training a prerequisite for implementing the professionalization process. This training design phase must now integrate the new relationships to time carried on by lifelong learners.

3.4. Alternance, the recurring question of the right mix of temporalities and their uses

Studying temporalities means trying to understand the professionalization pathways from the point of view of training design. A professionalization pathway is part of a context and a system. It is a movement alternating places, times, stories, objects, and subjects. By using the concept of alternation (*alternance*) to think about temporalities in adult education, we seek to answer the following questions: (1) how to understand the relations between time and situations, between time, situations, activities and learning; (2) how to understand the movements of time and the role of temporal dynamics in the success of professionalization *dispositifs* and pathways; (3) how to evaluate and understand the use of alternation as a concept revealing the question of temporalities constitutive of the professionalization of *dispositifs* and pathways. Alternation can constitute a barometer of the ways of thinking about educational times and, more generally, social times in their dialectics.

3.5. The act of learning: An analyzer of temporalities

Learning in situations is an aim of professionalization pathways. It is an analyzer of the temporalities of adult education. Understanding the conditions of professional learning sheds light on the times of training and on the stages of professionalization. Learning cannot be reduced to the first time or the beginning of an educational process, however important it may be in vocational training. It is true that vocational learning is often thought of as a preparatory and preliminary time for mastering an activity and progressively exercising the skills required in a work situation. However, learning time is iterative and discontinuous. It is made of leaps forward, returns on experience, and breaks in the continuity of activities. In fact, we should write “the times” of learning (Maubant, Biasin & Roquet, 2018), since they appear to be so protean, heterogeneous in their status and heterogeneous in their use. Times are markers of memories of experiences. Times are markers of the moratoria of the analysis of human action. Times are markers of the imaginary of projects.

4. CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES OF THE TEMPORALITIES EXPERIENCED IN EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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4.1. Temporal processes and challenges

This contribution deals with the issue of temporal challenges (Grossin, 1996; Roussel, 2013) highlighted in present educational, training, and professional activities. The chosen approach concerns the articulation of (or the opposition between) long and short time because of its implications that interrogate both the individual and the institution in the construction of a formative or/and professionalization process. The forms of temporal duration, characterized by plural and heterogeneous configurations (Roquet, 2018), are marked by forms of continuity and discontinuity in the concrete realization of a professional development. Based on a series of research that aim to question that articulation (Roquet & Biasin, forthcoming), the objective of this contribution is to identify the intersection of continuities and discontinuities in long and short time in the social, educational, and professional field. We point out the effects of temporal articulations, shifts, synchronization, and desynchronization that contribute to the visibility of professionalization processes and identity constructions by creating spaces of temporal tensions, alternating periods of continuity/periods of ruptures in personal and professional life.

4.2. Temporal tensions

The dilemmas and temporal tensions between long and short time can be found in professional training issues (e.g., the training of teachers, social workers, support workers, volunteers, entrepreneurs), as well as in the professional experience of a job, particularly in occupations related to the exercise of relations with others (e.g., specialised educators, educational managers). It is mainly the formalisation of writing, in a training or professional context, that requires a significant individual commitment, leading to the mobilisation of specific and sequenced temporalities, linked to awareness and reflexivity (the professional narrative and journaling). This activity of formalisation is linked to the measurement of the time necessary for written production and exchanges between colleagues or trainers. All the previously mentioned is confronted with external times referring to increasingly constrained and evaluative pedagogical or professional

performance objectives. Long time is therefore often perceived and conceived as a slowed-down time where the past is projected into the present and the future; at the opposite, short time is conceived as an alternative time between delays and advances, crystallising the actualisation of the past and the future in the present, or in the immediacy. Short time refers to the temporalities of action and to the reactivity in the sphere of political and societal decisions, as forms of necessity backed by a constrained calendar. Instead, long time is linked to an inevitable horizon of the unavoidable necessity that can guarantee that a finality is known in advance. That type of temporality is declined in the construction of human and social experience.

4.3. Temporalities in learning and professional situations

This long/short-time conflict or antagonism is part of increasingly heterogeneous educational and professional paths, where continuities and discontinuities in the cycles of private and professional life participate in the construction of new spaces of professionalisation. In these spaces, the processes of individual and collective identity construction, within formative and professional activities, generally highlight the construction and valorisation of experience associated with forms of reflexivity (Dewey, 1938). These are forms of professionalisation related to long-term temporal forms. For individuals, this long-lasting time is built on a series of events and trials that solidify or weaken the recognition of their professional career. Taking into account temporalities in learning and professionalisation situations allows us to finely grasp the dynamics of professionalisation in their individual and institutional trajectories.

The friction generated by the tensions between short and long durations can be interpreted as contemporary temporal configurations that explain the complexity of the construction of training and professional activities. Thus, in the research articles, we notice many analyses that reveal an overload of work per unit of time, the reduction of time spent accompanying beneficiaries in favour of tasks of rationalisation and objectification of the educational praxis. These transformations can be interpreted through phenomena of temporal continuity and discontinuity. The effects of the modern arrangement of some social, medico-social and psycho-educational organisations lead (or constrain) employees to adapt their actions to new forms of temporality. The latter are characterised by their instability that leads to contradictions in the conception of support work and by functional and utilitarian imperatives.

5. TEMPORALITIES AND RHYTHMS AT WORK IN THE APPRENTICESHIP OF THE PROFESSION OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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This contribution highlights, based on a case study, how professional activity is organized around multiple scenes – in the sense of Goffman (1973) – each with expected role behaviors and specific frameworks, sometimes crossed by conflicting temporalities and rhythms (Alhadeff Jones, 2018c). This analysis will be developed on the basis of a detailed study, conducted over two years, of the activity of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a large association in France, within the broader framework of a longitudinal qualitative study conducted with six CEOs of large companies. Five scenes of the CEO's activity will be presented; they constitute an overall configuration of the CEO's activity that is relatively common to the six CEOs in the research conducted. However, it has been observed that the experience, the “personality” or the “style” of each CEO gives a particular tone to this configuration of activity.

5.1. The governance scene with the Board of Directors (BoD)

Political governance refers to the responsibility of the Board (the President and the Directors) and that leadership is the responsibility of the CEO and his or her teams. This means that the BoD defines policy and the CEO is responsible for implementing it, while being accountable to the President and the BoD for its implementation. This is what we might call the expected role of the CEO on this board stage: to implement the board's political decisions and to report to the board on the management of the association. Our observation of the executive director suggests that this activity with the board is dependent on an imposed 'time frame' (the board's agenda); it involves a certain predictability (the agenda is known in advance), a long-time frame and a rhythm linked to the annual schedule of board meetings.

5.2. The leadership scene with the association's hierarchy

In contrast to the governance scene, the "leadership scene" is highly unpredictable. It probably concerns what constitutes the "internal" core (to the association) of the CEO's job: the activity carried out with the association's hierarchical line made up of the division directors (each division director is responsible for several establishments), the establishment directors and the directors of the association's head office departments. This is where the political decisions taken by the Board are implemented. This "leadership scene" therefore refers to the combination of a long-time frame (the "macro-sequences": long-term change projects, medium-term policy guidelines) and short time frames marked by the occurrence of emergencies with rapid rhythms given to the activity; we will refer later to the notion of dyschrony (Alter, 2003).

5.3. The management/governance articulation scene

This scene concerns all the activities that take place between the CEO and the President of the association. These are considered by the CEO to be very dense over the period studied: the President and CEO together designed the project of change, presented it and discussed it with the administrators (President) and with the employees (CEO). This activity is part of a long-time frame that allows for the building of mutual trust and common references, punctuated by numerous informal meetings. This long period of working in pairs at a steady pace allows for the construction of a proximity and affinity, the sharing of values and objectives, and vigilance for the respect and legitimacy of the other's function.

5.4. The scene of the association's external representation

The CEO's activities also take place on another stage on which he or she is expected to play a particular role: that of the representative of the association he or she leads. This is the "external representation stage", which is part of an agreed time frame, and which may involve a variety of situations: Inauguration of new premises, participation in a cocktail party at a partner's (another association, company, or government department), etc. The aim is to represent the association in the sense of reminding people of its values, its activity, its contribution to its environment, its major projects and how all this is useful for local development. The activities carried out on this stage take place over a long period of time and at a random pace.

5.5. The scene of negotiations with the supervisory institutions

The CEO's activities also involve regular meetings with the supervisory institutions (multi-annual contracts). This is another stage of the activity which is very different from the previous ones. For the CEO, this involves negotiating a multiannual contract of objectives and resources, which consists of presenting to the supervisory institutions the work carried out over the last few years as well as future projects and negotiating the financial and human resources required to implement these projects. This activity is characterized by a "time frame imposed" by the supervisory bodies and is

rather short (a few months to draw up the balance sheet, the self-assessment and the project, and negotiate the contract). In this example, the scenes of activity frequently overlap or invite each other at a time when others are still “open”, sometimes generating dyschrony (Alter, 2003). There is therefore an overlapping of scenes.

It would be tempting to consider that this is particularly characteristic of a complex profession such as that of the CEO, but we believe that it is also increasingly characteristic of a certain number of professions, particularly at a time when new professionalisms are on the rise in the sense of the emergence (often imposed by institutional environments) of new norms at work leading to the reinforcement of “multi-activity”, the development of new activities in different professional spaces.

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Adult Literacy (ies) for the Immediate Future (symposium)

Abstract - This paper explores the diversity of literacies needed for migrant adults to integrate in complex societies. Its main goal is to present diverse perspectives, from a theoretical journey to experiences such as those based on music or combating stereotypes. Our main conclusion is that research on multilingualism and multiliteracies needs further development.

KEYWORDS: Language education, adult, migrant, multiliteracy, multilingualism.

1. INTRODUCTION

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Literacy has traditionally been considered as the capacity to read and write and even mathematical abilities are included. Migration, globalization and technologies have profoundly changed the concept of literacy and this affects, without any doubt, the needs of adults when facing language education. Nowadays, adults' oral communication abilities for face-to-face or virtual interactions cannot be forgotten but many other types of literacies seem to be of interest as well. In fact, research on literacies and additional languages claims for new approaches to literacy problems and recommends a pedagogy of multiliteracies as an inclusive pedagogical practice (Florian, 2015). Migration and globalization imply multicultural and multilingual development with spaces for translingual literacy practices and with different modes for hybrid and heterogeneous spaces.

The New London Group (NLG) connected the new literacy pedagogy with multimedia technologies (NLG, 2000), an updated concept as multimodality and digital culture surrounds us. For instance, the use of digital technologies has become even wider during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, multimodal elements such as visual, audio, gestural and linguistic ones affect meaning-processing and have an impact on literacy development (Cope and Kalantzis, 2013) as they indicate the need of visual literacy and critical thinking. But adults of the 21st century could be facing some other relevant needs as literacies in an additional language constitute a survival kit for people who want to find a new life in another country. For instance, these adults also need to develop their socio-emotional literacy to regulate their emotions as a new community and a new language and culture affects their identity and sense of belonging.

Psychologists, - mainly in an approach derived from Vygotsky - have considered literacy as a mediation tool for internalizing the higher psychological processes. Considering this point of view, it can be said that literacies are a guarantee for the development of persons as individuals and as members of a community. For this reason, literacies need to be understood as a human right, but literacies can also be considered as a tool for transformation. According to Popular Education (Lucio-Villegas, 2022) - Freire among other authors - reading and understanding the surrounding reality drives people to undertake societal transformation at the same time. However, literacy can be used for other purposes as well, for example, exploitation. History shows us how it has been used to eliminate autonomy and creativity allowing the reproduction of standardized, productive, educational and social processes. In this direction, the school has played, for some authors – not only the ones belonging to the deschooling theory as Illich (1971), for instance -, the role to control literacy. In fact, it can be said that the history of literacy is different from the history of the school (Viñao, 1989). For these reasons, future teachers need to be aware of these new literacies and of 21st century-adult language learners' needs.

Finally, literacy is based on the context, history and situation of a community. Literacies and language learning are at the heart of education for social development. By considering them, we will provide significant answers to diverse personal and social situations. Therefore, and because we acknowledge this diversity, in this symposium we analyze literacies in plural and not only literacy.

To summarize, in order to better understand adult language learners' contemporary and global reality, this symposium addresses the multiple literacies approach as a possible tool to better comprehend adult learners' needs and to prepare future teachers to work with this type of multilingual and multicultural learners in face-to-face, hybrid or online contexts.

Four different presentations cooperate to achieve our goal.

Firstly, contribution 1 analyses what multilingualism and the multiliteracy approach means in adult education, while contribution 2 explores how pre-service language students identify the multi-literacy challenges of the adult migrant population. The third presentation reflects on the visual and critical thinking literacies needed to consume multimodal artefacts. Finally, contribution 4 presents a study where adult learners' socio-emotional and multimodal literacies are analyzed.

These four contributions seek to explore the typology of literacies needed for adults to integrate in distinct societies and live a responsible and peaceful citizenship.

2. MULTILITERACY AND MULTILINGUALISM IN ADULT MIGRANT EDUCATION

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2.1. Introduction

Communication paradigm has been restructured by globalization and digitalization, affecting the way we learn and adjusting language and literacy education. As adult migrants in urban contexts become socialized in learning environments of higher cultural complexity, a dynamic and flexible multiliterate and multilingual learning environment capable of accommodating diverse needs is required in host countries. Particularly interesting for the implementation of multimodal literacies is the consideration of the latest advances in multilingualism proposed by the London Group's mandate, in which multilingualism and literacy are merged. The aim of this study was to empirically explore the interrelationship of multiliteracy and multilingualism by conducting a systematic review. It followed PRISMA protocol to answer three research questions: RQ1: Has previous research incorporated multilingualism / plurilingualism into multiliteracy models for studies with adult migrants? RQ2: What research methods have been used for studies with adult migrants? RQ3: What is the quality of the research methods?

2.2. Multiliteracy and Multilingualism

Mobility is altering the linguistic landscape in the world, bringing about an increase of multicultural classrooms that has turned linguistic diversity into the norm in urban school systems across the western world. There is in fact no exception to this new panorama, every language is exposed to the wealth of languages that migration brings about, we increasingly find a landscape of an official language or languages in a superstratum position, though they are permeable to several substratum languages, and all of them are to be found in the continuum of English as a lingua franca. This new configuration of the linguistic panorama dramatically alters the traditional notion of literacy, as students and communities

get involved in multiple forms of literacy (Cazden et al., 1996; Gee, 2008). As a result, some linguists have addressed the need to tackle this conformation (Cummins, 2000; Lotherington, 2012; Naqvi et al., 2012).

Prevailing pedagogical practices may jeopardize the linguistic competence of the migrants. On the one side, they may find serious problems getting the proper literacy levels in the host country (Collier-Stewart, 2018; Cummins, 2017, 2021; Hakuta, 2009), with the aggravating circumstance that they may be at risk of losing their home languages (Bialystok, 2007; Grant & Wong, 2003; Oller, 2016; Wong & Grant, 2007). This sits oddly with the main goal of education, that aims to increase rather than play havoc with students' potential. Unfortunately, languages are not social equivalents, power is reflected in the way society privileges them, threatening language diversity and endangering minority and heritage languages (Bromham et al., 2022). Science and learning will need to work together to promote linguistic variety as a cultural and knowledge asset.

2.3. Systematic Review

Our study adapted a systematic review protocol from PRISMA-P: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses for Protocols 2015 (Moher et al., 2015). Primary search was performed using the search engines Web of Science and Scopus and Eric (ProQuest) in two different universities (University of Cordoba and University of Huelva), in order to strengthen representativeness and reliability of data. The complementary search included Google Scholar and searching other resources, such as hand searching of relevant websites and associations, literature snowballing and contacting experts. Three screening levels were conducted to complete the selection process, and data was collected by two independent reviewers. From a total of 420 registers, 12 studies were finally drawn. From this selected sample of studies data and information were coded on variables related to: (a) title; (b) author; (c) year; (d) source; (e) type of publication; (f) data (research question 2: qualitative/quantitative); (g) design (ethnographic, case study, grounded study, etc.); (h) theoretical paradigm; (i) focus of the paper; (j) target language; (k) sample number; (l) context (i.e. host country of the migrants); (m) educational level (university, non-formal, adult education, workplace program, etc.); (n) results; (o) database (Scopus, WoS, ERIC, Google Scholar...); (p) research question 1 (yes/no); (q) research question 3 (1 low; 2 medium; 3 high); (r) researchers notes (for any type of observation).

Our findings reveal that multilingualism is embedded in the different models of multiliteracy, however, the epistemological tradition in the field of multilingualism does not seem to have had a significant impact on the implementation of new educational programs that meet the needs of adult migrants. We also found that quantitative research has been rarely used, and that there is a need to increase the research quality standards in this sub-discipline by reducing bias in the processes of designing, implementing, and reporting research.

3. A LEARNING BY DESIGN EXPERIENCE TO MAKE STUDENT TEACHERS AWARE OF ADULT MIGRANTS' LEARNING NEEDS

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3.1. Introduction

The term multi-literacies, coined by the New London Group (1996), later developed in a theory of learning based on elements such as multimodalities, stresses the inclusion of technologies and the importance of learners' transformation to foster a deep learning process. In this vein, the present study follows a Learning by Design approach which places learners at the center of the learning process, immersing them in a multimodal environment. Learning by Design (Kalantzis et al.,

2016) implies the use and modification of existing resources to create and communicate new meanings situated in relevant real contexts. In this framework, integrating multimodality - the use of oral, written, visual or spatial modes - promotes an experiential learning process that facilitates the anchoring of abstract ideas in concrete forms (Holloway, 2020) and engages participants in in-depth reflections of their own learning.

In this study we present the experience of university students enrolled in an applied linguistics course about language learning and teaching where they were asked to analyze and design materials to help adult migrants to develop their multi-literacy skills. During the learning experience participants were required to collaborate in order to identify the multi-literacy challenges of the adult migrant population. As a result, they had to create teaching materials adapted to the needs identified.

3.2. Method

The study followed the knowledge processes of the learning by design framework: experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing and applying (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009). Some key issues targeted in the study were: (1) students reflect about the social change in today's society and classrooms; (2) literacy learning is more than read and write, it is a social and cultural practice that depends on the context where it takes place; (3) new technologies facilitate the creation of multimodal materials that can be easily adapted to digital practices and integrate socio-cultural diversity. All this fosters learners' awareness of current multiliteracies approaches.

In the present study 33 university students (21 females and 12 males) enrolled in a language learning and teaching course participated. Their age range was from 20 to 40, except for one male who was 68. The study was carried out for 6 weeks. Students first learnt about key concepts related to multimodality and multiliteracies. Then, they were asked to select multimodal materials for language learning. Secondly, their knowledge and beliefs about migrants' reality in the host country were explored. Students also analyzed migrants' needs in order to be linguistically and socially integrated in the host country. And the multimodal materials they had selected were revised to check whether they were appropriate for the migrant population. Finally, participants were required to design multimodal materials to attend to migrants' language learning needs. Written texts, images, videos, realia were used in the classroom on the part of the educators and the students. So, different modes of meaning were used to facilitate comprehension, to show previous ideas or to illustrate concepts and beliefs. At the end of the project participants answered some reflection questions about the experience. Besides, participants' awareness of contemporary racism was measured before and after the project.

3.3. Results and Conclusions

Regarding quantitative data related to awareness of contemporary racism, there is a strong correlation ($r = .85$) before and after the project. This implies that the six-week program did not alter participants' thoughts about racism or how it affects migrants' opportunities. A moderate correlation ($r = .47$) was also observed between awareness of racism and sex, showing females slightly higher levels of awareness after the project. As for age, there is a moderate negative correlation ($r = -.44$) due to the older student, who was 68. The answers to the reflection questions point to an uneven awareness process influenced by different variables: previous experiences and knowledge, individuals' views, or team members. While some students are conscious of how their knowledge and beliefs have changed ('before this I was not so aware of the difficulty migrants have because of not knowing the language of the country'), others mainly focused on their own learning difficulties during the project. However, most of them acknowledged to be motivated by working on something that can be useful for real life and for their future jobs. They also felt proud about the effort made and the product they had created.

Learning by Design and multimodal approaches allowed participants to get immersed in an intense and motivating learning process. Even though data about racism awareness did not change (most of them were already conscious of that), in a short period of time, their awareness about migrants' situation and needs (mainly related to language learning) increased, as they recognized. In some cases, even empathy was awakened ('I felt really affected by the inequalities that these people had to suffer'). However, consciousness of migrant learners' needs does not entail being able to design proper teaching materials for them. Thus, although groups were able to identify appropriate topics to be dealt with (moving around in a city, going shopping, or applying for a job), less than 50% of them managed to design activities adapted to migrant learners' discussed profiles. The use of multimodal elements was successful in most of the cases; but the level of the activities seems to be a problem because participants consider them 'too simple', which somehow contradicts their own experiences as language learners. Individuals' differences should also be considered, though. Our data seem to indicate that females tend to be more aware of migrant learners' situation and needs. Age could also be relevant, being older participants less aware of racism, which involves denying a real situation. On the other hand, results highlight the need for long lasting projects where participants discuss and contrast their positions. When it comes to creating learning materials, further difficulties arise. Student teachers not only need to be exposed to and analyse sample materials, but they also need to be monitored and to get formative feedback so that they can identify aspects to be improved. Besides, as some participants affirm, having the possibility to use the materials created would be beneficial to reinforce their learning process. These are considerations we regard as essential in the design of preservice/service teacher development courses aimed at working with the migrant population.

4. CONSUMPTION OF PRESENT-DAY MUSIC VIDEOS: A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

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4.1. The study

Music and images share the power to bring our emotions to the surface and transport us to dreamlike places at any time and location. Meanwhile, the media articulate messages and colonize our subconscious. Reflecting on what we see and hear could help us foster our visual literacy, but it also could underscore the need for a culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue in the present day.

Current consumption of audio-visual media is extremely high, as is the power of the media to replicate and disseminate stereotypes. Hence, reflection appears to be a rare element in the current constantly changing world of technology and screens. Consequently, there is a need for critical skills for filtering information, as well as the abilities to decode messages received from both audio and visual channels. Accordingly, it is important to introduce audio-visual literacy to attempt to understand this content by using critical reflection. Furthermore, the societies in which we will live in the near future appear to be extremely complex.

However, do we know what types of representations and values are present in mainstream music videos? In other words, what messages do we perceive from music videos? Audio-visual media, due to their ubiquity, represent a valid source for gaining access to cultures within the context of adults' language education, so these media are used in both formal and informal learning. This contribution's primary purpose is to present the recurrent topics on music videos focusing on the portrayal of women. The qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti was used in examining a corpus composed of the forty-seven most viewed music videos in Spanish in the summer of 2019, disseminated over large digital platforms. To analyze the content, the principles of multimodality and audio-visual narrative were considered.

4.2. Results and Conclusions

The results of this study show that parts of the current music videos in Spanish, disseminated through global music-streaming services, reflect the content on democratic competences (values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding). In addition to this content, other themes emerged. The first focused on the image of women. Most music videos continue to display a stereotyped portrayal of women, such as woman's objectification and her relationship to man, or praise of beauty and youth. The second most frequent topic concerned young people's portrayal, in which praising youth became a recurrent topic. The next subject related to the portrayal of social classes, where the upper-middle-class was the most prominent group, migrants were never included. But not only that, the music videos portrayed a clear delimitation of classes through different variables associated with leisure activities and the display of material goods. This difference also becomes more evident since connection between the classes was not illustrated. The last topics were eroticism and hedonism. Entertainment and the pursuit of pleasure as a lifestyle were covered extensively by showing young people linked to music, dance and the consumption of both alcohol and drugs. Hence, the hedonistic lifestyle remains aspirational in the present day, according to a part of the music videos analyzed. Finally, eroticism was explicitly and widely represented in the sample.

To conclude, this study highlights that parts of the music videos in Spanish currently disseminated through worldwide music-streaming services reflect some content on democratic competences. Most music videos display a stereotyped image of women, young people, hedonism, or eroticism. However, these music videos could be used in foreign language-learning situations to attempt to decode this content by using critical thinking. Thereby, educators can support learners in becoming independent thinkers and active citizens. Accordingly, music, audio-visual media, and critical visual thinking by working with the democratic competences from language learning in adults' education could become extremely useful as an approach to today's complex and culturally diverse societies (Sánchez-Vizcaíno, 2022; Sánchez-Vizcaíno & Fonseca-Mora, 2020).

5. COMBATING STEREOTYPES AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADULT LEARNERS AT RISK IN NEW YORK CITY

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5.1. Introduction

Hostos Community College, Bronx, NY, is a Hispanic Service Institution (HSI). The United States' federal government legally recognized such higher education institutions as degree-granting and accredited organizations that serve more than 25% Latinx/Hispanics. Hostos serves 60% economically deprived Latinx/Hispanic adult learners. Despite this, HSIs, community colleges and Latinx/Hispanics confront formidable challenges which impact student motivation and graduation rates (Wilds, 2000).

In the late 60s, Hostos pioneered by being the 1st higher learning institution in the US teaching a majority of courses in Spanish. Nowadays, only a handful of courses (other than Spanish language ones) are still taught in Spanish. Recently, as of April 2022, a renewed institutional push in Hostos' educational linguistic policies is seeking to expand Spanish speaking course offerings. Given the historical marginality of Latinx/Hispanics within the US, this push seeks to address such linguistic needs by asserting that culturally and linguistically proud students do academically better. This case study seeks to experimentally explore this assertion at Hostos, which a growing body of literature supports.

This work determines the relationship between motivation, a better self-esteem of being Latino and the use of a TV Show in Spanish in a Caribbean Society and Culture class taught remotely in English with students from Hostos Community College in The Bronx. The participants in this quasi-experimental study are 20 adult students from different sections of the same class divided into a control group and an experimental group. From the pool of students available in this class, both native Spanish speakers and heritage speakers were selected to populate the experimental and control group. To measure the degree of their linguistic and cultural self-esteem and the motivation to take the class, at the beginning of the Summer Session I 2022 a closed questionnaire was passed. The two groups were subjected to the same teaching methods and style in class, except for the experimental group, where the teacher used the last 25 minutes of each class a Hispanic TV show for adult learners to identify the linguistic strategies used by the main characters to build their own identity, working at the same time on socio-cultural contents such as stereotypes. At the end of the semester, the same closed questionnaire was given to analyze any changes. The main results of this study seem to point out that this socio-emotional and multi-modal approach (New London Group, 1996) mitigates negative effects of learners' attitude toward Hispanic culture and being a Latino in The Bronx.

5.2. Conclusions

This kaleidoscopic vision related to the needs of the 21st Century literacies on adult education evidences several relevant issues. Firstly, that the epistemological tradition in the field of multilingualism is still not sufficiently implemented in new educational programs to meet adult migrants' needs. While digital literacy has been more explored, a need to increase the research quality standards when researching multilingualism and multiliteracies has also been found.

Secondly, that pre-service teachers are not frequently trained for adult language education but that they can feel motivated by working on something that they consider useful for real life and for their future jobs. A six-week training course does not seem to alter participants' thoughts about racism or how it affects migrants' opportunities but helps to raise awareness about the needs of this vulnerable population.

Thirdly, that adults (and adolescents) may consume media products that do not enhance democratic values but eroticism, hedonism, classicism and sexism. So, visual literacy and critical thinking are very much needed for a more inclusive and responsible citizenship.

And finally, that adult migrants' socio-emotional literacy has to be addressed in the language classroom as well. Reflecting on stereotypes and linguistic strategies used by the main characters of TV shows to build learners' own identity can help to motivate adult learners to take their language classes.

To sum up, the immediate future of adult language education is still plenty of challenges. Many and of different nature are the literacies to be developed. The necessary and essential improvements to be incorporated in adult language education require a coordinated work between institutions, the implementation of education programs based on strong research results and the appropriate training of future adult language teachers.

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Should I Stay or Should I Go Now. Conditions of Participation in Literacy and Adult Basic Education (symposium)

Abstract - Participation in literacy and adult basic education courses is seen as an opportunity to improve literacy skills in adulthood, promote social participation and create equal opportunities (OECD 2016). However, participation rates in these courses are relatively low. Thus, this symposium will focus on the complexity of participation behaviors and learners' barriers to participation in literacy and adult basic education programs. Four recent studies, which refer to learners' behavior at different stages in the process of participation, will be discussed. The guiding research question is: What dynamics of retention and drop-out can be observed specifically in literacy and adult basic education?

KEYWORDS: Literacy and adult basic education, drop-out, retention, participation behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

Empirically sound evidence on motives, motivation and barriers to participate in learning opportunities has been found in adult education research (Beder, 1990; Tighe, 2013). However, it is still disputed, why some participants stay enrolled in courses for years, while others drop out (Pickard, 2013). There is consensus that structural factors (including educational institutions and regulating governments) determine individual actions of all persons involved, that is, teachers, learners, and organizers (Bören, 2009, Philipps, 2019). As to learners, reasons for (non-) participation in adult education and decisions to stay in or to abandon learning opportunities are conditioned by multi-layered factors that can be situational, institutional, or dispositional barriers (cf., Chain-of-Response Model of Participation in Continuing Education by Patricia Cross, 1981). Accordingly, the (potential) learners' behavior is based on a continuous positioning of the individual towards the environment (Thalhammer, 2022).

The challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic also have transformational consequences on literacy and adult basic education, not only affecting the course formats, but also the conditions and decision-making processes involved in participating in these courses (Kaiper-Marquez, 2021). Figuratively speaking, the pandemic situation acts like a burning glass that sheds light on existing challenges and problems in the field (Käpplinger & Lichte, 2020). Finding ways to adapt learning opportunities to participants' needs and to maintain motivation is an ongoing challenge for literacy and adult basic education stakeholders (Porrás-Hernández & Salinas-Amescua, 2012). Considering possible improvements against the backdrop of the pandemic situation can stimulate important perspectives for post-pandemic times as well.

To better understand the complexity of participation behavior and the barriers of learners to participate in literacy and adult basic education, four recent studies are discussed in the symposium. The studies refer to learners' behavior at different stages in the process of participation, and are oriented towards the following key question: What dynamics of retention and drop-out can be observed specifically in literacy and adult basic education?

The studies highlight success factors in recruiting adults with basic education needs to educational programs (1), motivation and commitment of adults with basic education needs in daily life (2), strategies of dealing with drop-out in literacy and adult basic education (3), and factors or processes leading to retention or drop-out of young adults in acquiring an education equivalent certificate (4). All of the contributions are empirical investigations with multi-perspective and multi-method research approaches.

2. REACHING THE UNREACHABLES

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Still a significant share of our population with a low proficiency in literacy is not able to join courses in literacy and adult basic education. Therefore, it seems to be of importance to study ways of reaching out to low-skilled adult learners or adult learners with a low proficiency in literacy. The study ‘Reaching the unreachable’ analyses success factors concerning recruitment of adult learners for courses in literacy and adult basic education. Apart from an extensive literature study, firstly, about 200 adult learners in courses in literacy and adult basic education joined a quantitative study and, secondly, 30 adults have been interviewed by experienced experts with the aim of analyzing successful recruitment strategies. The results of the literature study as well as the quantitative and qualitative study show recruitment can only occur when meeting two basic conditions. First, prospective adult learners are admitting their experienced language problems only when these cause experience problems in their daily life. In this perspective they will admit this to someone in their close network. This type of conversation would be very unlikely to occur in a public setting. Instead, these adults are more likely to share this in a private discussion with someone from a well-known authority like work, the local authority, or someone from medical care (for example the family doctor). In these kinds of situations, it should be appropriate to discuss their literacy challenges. Public transport and other locations which are used for leisure activities seem to be less appropriate. Finally, the in-depth analyses of these conditions resulted in a new model which can be applied to ensure recruitment of adult learners for courses in basic education. These courses are based on four pillars: Relevance and interest (1), Positivity (2), Active (3) and Concrete / practical (4).

3. MOTIVATION AND COMMITMENT IN THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF ADULTS WITH BASIC EDUCATION NEEDS

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3.1. Introduction

Adults who lack core literacy skills are limited in the extent to which they can actively participate in society (Grotlüschen, 2020). Due to the personal and macro-societal consequences (Hanushek, 2010) of low levels of literacy, the high number of 6.2 Million adults with low levels of literacy, shown by the LEO Study 2018 (Grotlüschen, 2020), has caught substantial interest in Germany. While a considerable amount of large-scale studies measure literacy levels of adults and adolescents within Germany (Grotlüschen, 2020) and internationally (Lechner et al., 2021) and point to the importance of improving the literacy rate of adults, little is still known about the motivation profiles of adults with low literacy levels. Thus, this research paper addresses the motivation and commitment of these adults by applying mixed methods.

3.2. Methods

In the quantitative part of the study, standardized face-to-face interviews with 534 adults with low levels of formal education¹ and 1041 adults from a population-representative sample were conducted. The respondents answered questions regarding their value and moral conceptions, behaviour and thought patterns and their commitment in daily life.

In qualitative interviews, 20 adults with low levels of literacy provided answers in regards to the levels of commitment they show in different contexts. By applying focus group interviews, 11 educators in the field of basic education and functional literacy as well as 10 operators in other professional fields, such as administrative agents, medical professionals and teachers, shared their experience in working with adults with low literacy and educational levels.

3.3. Results and Discussion

(1) Value and Moral Conception: When comparing the value and moral conceptions of the two groups of adults, the quantitative data showed that adults with low formal education tend to assess individual and societal values and moral conceptions as less important than adults derived from a population representative sample. However, the reverse applies to some few values and convictions: Firstly, adults with low literacy skills valued 'having children' higher whereas adults derived from a population-representative sample valued 'having a good profession' higher. Secondly, in regards to participants' perspectives on educational aspirations, adults with low literacy skills seem to have more fatalistic convictions in that they attribute their life and development opportunities primarily to fate rather than to personal effort. Finally, adults with basic educational needs rated 'to have fun and enjoy life' as more important than the population-representative sample.

(2) Behavior and Thought Pattern: In line with the findings, individuals with low formal education choose instant gratification over delayed gratification in that they tend to treat themselves first before taking care of tasks. Individuals derived from a population-representative sample, however, tend to choose the reverse order. Regarding the adherence to schedules, further differences were found: Significantly more individuals with low formal education level than individuals derived from the population-representative sample reported to have regularly stayed away from appointments during the last year, without calling them off.

(3) Commitment in Daily Life: The comparison of the adherence to a variety of appointments revealed, that low educated adults take appointments with medical facilities and administrative bodies more seriously than appointments at advanced training courses, which alphabetization courses would be an example of. Furthermore, the closer the circle of people was, they had an appointment with, the higher their adherence towards these appointments.

In line with the quantitative findings, the qualitative findings from the focus group interviews, testified that the degree of commitment among adults with low literacy levels is context specific. While they show high levels of commitment within their supportive and close environments, consisting of their families and private circle of friends, they show less reliable compliance outside of this network. Their close environment, which was perceived as both stabilizing and compensating, operates in a functional and dysfunctional way. It works in a functional way by providing a supportive and protected space, in which the members of this inner circle provide care and dependability for each other. However, it also works in a dysfunctional way by inhibiting the initiation of activities outside the familiar settings and, therefore, leading to a lack of drive to change something about the situation.

By integrating these and further findings on the motivational capacity of different contexts, we discuss how to best utilize the motivational capacity of different contexts in order to initiate and benefit the learning journey of adult with

¹ Selection criteria for this group: German-speaking, between the ages of 16 and 64, highest level of education: not to be higher than 'school leaving certificate' (equals 9 years of education), not have planned to start, started already or completed any form or training or apprenticeship prior to the interview, not permanently resigned from working life yet.

low levels of literacy. The knowledge of the unique features of the motivation profiles of these adults creates the basis for educational, systematic and political derivatives.

4. UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH DROP-OUT IN LITERACY AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

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For adult education practice, and thus also for the specific field of literacy and adult basic education, a variety of actors and actor constellations are relevant: Following the theoretical approach of Educational Governance, the achievements of continuing education organizations can be seen as the result of the coordination of actors (Koller, Arbeiter & Schemmann, 2020). In the contribution to the symposium, the controlling influences from different levels of action (e.g. teaching-learning process, organizational level, institutional level, national and supranational level) (Schrader, 2008; Boeren, 2017) are considered as they become relevant in dealing with drop-out in literacy and adult basic education. Drop-out is understood to be a phenomenon in which people discontinue their participation in continuing education before the regular end of the program (even if they were registered for the education program and have participated in it up to a certain point) (Thalhammer et al., 2022). It is assumed that different actors (educational planners and teachers) have different attributions of meaning and ways of dealing with the phenomenon of drop-out in literacy and adult basic education. Gruber (1985) identifies three main ways of dealing with drop-out: acceptance, reduction and prevention.

The intention of the contribution to the symposium can be specified by the following two research questions:

1. What strategies do educational planners and teachers have in dealing with drop-out in literacy and adult basic education?
2. How can the attributions of meaning and ways of dealing with the phenomenon of drop-out be systematized, considering the controlling influences from different levels of action?

The results are based on a multi-perspective qualitative interview study in the field of literacy and adult basic education in Germany: The perspectives of experts at the planning level (nine interviews with educational planners) and at the teaching-learning level (thirteen interviews with teachers) are being considered. Based on a qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz, 2014), the three ways of dealing with drop-out (Gruber, 1985) are examined with regard to the cooperation between educational planners and teachers in literacy and adult basic education. These three strategies for dealing with drop-out are shaped by the respective institutional context and organizational environment. Each generates different forms of collaboration and guiding influences. The interaction of the two levels of action (planning and teaching-learning level) differs in these three variants of dealing with drop-out:

1) If the reasons for dropping out are not located in the teaching-/learning context, the drop-out of participants is accepted by educational planners and teachers. The life context-dependent motives for drop-out are recognized. This is justified by the basic principle of voluntariness in adult education. Educational planners and teachers are aware of the limits of their professional responsibility. However, the educational planners still show the participants possibilities to keep in touch and to re-enter the program.

2) For the reduction of drop-out, possible causes for drop-outs are sought in the organization or implementation of the courses (problem analysis). Appropriate measures are developed. For example, course conditions are optimized so that as many participants as possible are able to participate permanently. In order to improve the conditions of participation for the participants, close cooperation with other institutions (e.g. socio-educational support) takes place before or parallel to the course. Educational planners and teachers emphasize the importance of realistic expectation management (not only towards participants but also towards teachers), which is influenced above all by restrictions due to financial support modalities. In particular, teachers expect measures to reduce drop-out at other levels of action (especially on the organizational level or the national and supranational level).

3) Measures to prevent drop-out take place as a reaction to (threatened) drop-outs in order to avert a particular drop-out as far as possible. In search for reasons (problem analysis) and in finding solutions (reaction), close cooperation between educational planners and teachers is crucial in order to be able to consider the individual needs of the participants. In this context, teachers have to meet target group-specific requirements: E.g. knowledge of formal support structures, course content relating to their living environment, didactic flexibility, building trusting relationships. In addition, other actors may need to be involved in finding solutions (e.g. private environment). The prevention of drop-out is not only aimed at remaining in the course, but also at finding alternative learning settings (e.g. change of course) or enabling future course participation.

Data analysis also shows that attributions of meaning and strategies for dealing with drop-out depend on various factors that guide action (e.g. course format, funding modalities, institutional culture, individual understanding of the roles of the relevant actors). These factors influence above all the cooperation between educational planners and teachers, whose particular significance in the context of drop-out can be shown on the basis of the empirical material. The contribution of the symposium demonstrates the interdependence of actions in dealing with drop-out in literacy and adult basic education at the different levels of action in a multi-level system. It thus ties in with the debate on the coordination of action in literacy and adult basic education.

5. TRAJECTORIES OF JOUNG PEOPLE IN COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION: SUCCESS FACTORS IN ADULT TRAINING CENTRES IN CATALONIA

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This study, led by the University of Barcelona, directly addresses the symposium research question by exploring the dynamics of retention and drop-out among young adults taking basic education courses in Catalonia, Spain. The study focused on a particular group of young adults, those entering adult education schools to complete a secondary education equivalent certificate having left compulsory education with no qualifications. The aim of the study was to better

understand the factors and processes that lead to persistence or abandonment among this group of young adults. Overcoming the risk of social exclusion of young people who have not completed compulsory schooling is one of the fundamental challenges of youth policies. Education beyond the compulsory stage has a key role to play in meeting this challenge. Mechanisms to promote the educational progress of young people have diversified significantly over the past few decades. Reducing the difficulties caused by drop-out and ensuring suitable educational opportunities for young people is a fundamental part of any modern political strategy (Carrasco & Molins, 2018; González-Rodríguez et al., 2019). The development of actions, programs and also of instruments has been an important workspace shared between the different areas responsible for the processes through which young people transition between educational stages and work. The study was carried out in three phases. In phase one we analyzed enrollment data on GES courses from fourteen adult education schools covering the academic years: 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21. Phase two involved a survey of 234 current GES students (response rate 11%), as well as detailed descriptions of the context of each of the fourteen centers. In phase three we carried out two focus groups with current students and two focus groups with teachers, followed by fifty semi-structured telephone interviews with previous GES students who had not completed their studies. In this presentation, we will focus on how and why these young people access this particular program of study and analyze the facilitators and inhibitors of persistence / drop-out. In exploring the findings, we focus on teachers' and students' descriptions of the factors that impact on the success, or not, of their educational experience drawing conclusions about the reception, curriculum, and organization of such educational experiences. The study suggests that policy makers should focus on designing strategies establish institutional mechanisms to support students as they transition between and beyond educational stages, and to promote networking among staff to increase transfer of good practice. The curriculum plays a key role in supporting, or not, the persistence of students in literacy and adult basic education courses. Tutors in the adult schools in Catalonia, emphasized the need for the curriculum to mirror the particularity of adult schools as centers rooted in their own socio-cultural territory, with a socio-community mission to generate opportunities for success. As such they should foster a specific educational practice for adults; one that is active, critical and participative. Teachers have a key role to play, as in any educational setting, and as we see in many adult literacy and basic education contexts, teachers' employment conditions, professional development, and the curriculum that they work with are all areas that require consideration and reform to ensure the professionalization of the workforce. The figure of an advisor or mentor also appears to be highly influential in students' trajectories, helping the tutors to bond with their students, and facilitating transitions. This was also in line with other findings that personalized attention and closer support are essential at this educational stage – implying that teachers should have time for individual and group tutoring. We conclude that as these students have differential profiles to those of young adults who have remained in other parts of the education systems and so they require, and deserve, an educational environment which has been designed with their needs and their interests of in mind.

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