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How do students experience the NMP as a tool for developing their reflexive function? An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Abstract

The growing phenomenon of disadvantaged and non-traditional students increases the risk of educational underachievement and drop-out in the university context at European level.

Within the European funded project INSTALL (*Innovative Solutions to Acquire Learning to Learn*) coordinated by Naples University/SINAPSI, it was developed a qualitative methodology - Narrative Mediation Path (NMP) - consisting in a group training process targeted to disadvantaged students. NMP, based on the psychological concept of mentalization, also known as reflexive competence, combines into one methodology four discursive modules: Metaphoric, Iconographic, Writing and Bodily. The use of a "multidimensional" narrative, promotes a progressive cognitive and emotional involvement of the student; a gradual transition from exploration of the entire university experience to a specific and individual experience and a gradual evolution from a reconstructive function of the formative experience to a planning function that allows students to act in an effective way in the university context.

The present study employed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), a qualitative approach that combines a dedication to understanding the lived experience of the participant with recognition that achieving such an understanding requires interpretative work on the part of the researcher. Verbatim transcripts of the six interviews served as raw data for the study.

The results suggest that the use of different discursive modules supports the students in developing their reflexive competence during a formative experience which enables them to better adjust to the university context.

Keywords: reflexivity, IPA, narrative mediation path;